Meeting Notes
Recorded by Elias Platte-Bermeo

Meeting Attendees
Ellen Dux, Mark Ewalt, Farris Sukkar, Elias Platte-Bermeo, Joshua Sierra, Martin Howell, Tara Davis, Naomi Martinez, Jill Sohm, Gary Polakovic, Peniel Park, Ana Orvieto, Genevieve Giuliano, Rebecca Lonergan, Zelinda Welch, Nichelle Mitchell-Huizar, Emily Sandoval, Gabe Valenzuela, Dan Mazmanian, Isabella Caltabiano, Kyle Konis

Agenda
1. Introductions and goals of the meeting
   a. This group--and attendees at last week’s pre-meeting--represents the “USC Sustainability Culture Club” as the key experts and ultimately drivers of campus sustainability engagement
   b. This is the second of 2 meetings centered on outlining campus engagement goals for the 2028 Sustainability Plan
2. Sustainability website Google analytics review
   a. See slide deck for information on the most visited pages of the USC Sustainability website
   b. Currently, the site has pages dedicated to sustainability in education and research, we owe it to the community to tell a more fulsome Education & Research story at USC on the USC Sustainability website so long as there isn’t another centralized tool for communicating this story
3. 2028 Sustainability Plan development timeline overview
   a. At our engagement pre-meeting, we spent considerable time getting attendees up to speed on the 2028 Planning process, describing how Engagement is no longer its own standalone vertical because it’s primarily a tool for achieving the plan’s other major goals
   b. After today’s meeting -- the last full SSC planning meeting -- SMEs and their respective teams will spend the remainder of the year mapping out plans/initiatives and outlining rough costing
   c. We have had one formal opportunity to speak to President and senior administration; they indicated that we are on the right track and reaffirmed senior administration’s commitment to aggressive sustainability goals
   d. “Engagement” in the 2028 planning process is broadly defined as co-curricular education, marketing, communications, and outreach.
i. We are focused on increasing engagement around sustainability by encouraging sustainable behavior change and promoting/marketing built environment initiatives undertaken by the university.

ii. This involves engaging students, staff, faculty, and alumni; however, it also can involve strengthening ties to the broader community through external partnerships.

e. In the 2028 Plan, “Engagement” will rely on a distributed network of all the players in this room—-and more. The Office of Sustainability will continue to be a driver of sustainability education and engagement, but successful sustainability engagement ultimately requires buy-in and sustained effort from stakeholders across the campus.

i. Consider how your teams may support sustainability engagement at USC by:
   1. Communicating 2028 Plan status
   2. Educating new employees and students about the 2028 Plan, and the sustainability initiatives your unit is responsible for.
   3. Conducting outreach and/or informational campaigns to your unit’s alumni, city contacts, community stakeholders, etc.
   4. Training staff to comply with sustainability objectives.

ii. Consider how your teams can drive sustainable resource use behavior change.

iii. Consider how your sustainability engagement initiatives can help to achieve USC’s 2028 Plan carbon neutrality, zero waste, and water goals.

f. Groups on campus who have high touch points with students, staff, faculty, and the greater community are crucial in baking sustainability into every area of campus life by incorporating it into what they already do.

4. Review 2028 Plan engagement strategy + initiatives
   a. Examples Initiatives (See Appendix)
   b. Open Discussion
      i. USC Culture Change town halls have begun and may represent an opportunity to incorporate sustainability into USC’s mission to not just be “less bad” but to be an example to other universities.
         1. By attending town halls and repeatedly speaking up about our concerns, we can ensure that sustainability is noted as a priority among the community.
         2. This message should be spread to all students, staff, and faculty we know who feel strongly about sustainability.
ii. The Human Resources Steering Committee is formulating new onboarding → Rebecca and Mark will explore opportunities to incorporate sustainability into faculty onboarding
   1. Rebecca will bring up sustainability to Felicia Washington, but there needs to be many more voices
   2. Each member of the SSC has an “HR Leader” for their unit who sits on the HR Partners committee which oversees these new onboarding changes; opportunity to make change through each person’s chain of command

iii. Jenn Giuliano asked if Deans fit into our Engagement strategy since our various schools are so decentralized
   1. Dan noted that members of schools were not satisfied by the current green.usc.edu website because it doesn’t touch on what’s going on per school
   2. The President’s office has outlined a new sustainability website for the entire university

iv. Dan noted that the term “training” may not be the right choice; people generally don’t want to be “trained” to be a good sustainability citizen
   1. Dan wants to use messaging emphasizing “Group Empowerment” instead of “Training,” especially when messaging to students
      a. Ellen pointed out that OoS is exploring opportunities to create a Student Sustainability Council to help empower students to make campus change
   2. Mark believes it’s important to make the distinction between training and group empowerment at the right time and for the right groups. “Training” needs to come into play when it’s time to execute specific change
      a. Example: training for kitchen staff, office managers, and event managers on how to go zero waste

v. Gary noted that Central Communications has developed a plan to communicate to campus news media outlets and through Central Communications outlets all the sustainability happenings around campus. Example: 2019 Climate Forward conference through Dornsife

vi. Rebecca noted that we need to make the distinction between events where the topic is sustainability and where we hope to make the operations of events more sustainable—and then effectively communicate both of these
vii. Earth Day 2020: we are hoping that Earth Day 2020 becomes a more coordinated spectacle to better engage the campus community

1. ESA has hosted Earth Month in April for the past 5 years
2. Ana asked how to involve grad students at HSC in Earth Month and other sustainability events
   a. Brooke Bell is our greatest GSG advocate at HSC; in the future, there will be a dedicated GSG Director of Sustainability who may help integrate sustainability events into the culture of HSC
3. Rebecca proposed creating a “Sustainability Week” in April--possibly through Academic Senate Sustainability Committee--modeled after “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Week” where there are student events and faculty symposiums.
   a. DEI Week is organized by vice provosts; we would need to determine who would organize a Sustainability Week
      i. Rebecca and Kyle will dialogue with Academic Senate
   b. It would be important to incorporate diverse perspectives of sustainability by having programming from faculty, staff, and students. A running theme could be the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
      i. Jenn believes there are probably already existing faculty events focused on sustainability and environmentalism planned for the days around Earth Day
   c. Gabe brought up that this is the same framework as “USC Welcome Experience”
      i. For an upcoming “Sustainability Week,” Student Affairs could serve as the backbone, but would need the support of the campus informing them of what all is taking place. Student affairs could fill the gaps in programming through USG/GSG
   d. Office of Sustainability could wrap their Spring Sustainability Forum into this event to showcase staff accomplishments
4. Ellen wants to focus on assembling a critical mass of people during “Earth Week” which culminates in some sort of rally/demonstration

5. Currently, there’s no centralized system for getting information from various schools
   a. Paul Adler is convening faculty who say they are focused on environmental/climate research, so this could serve as our primary group of potential speakers for Sustainability Week events

6. Kyle believes that, if a Sustainability Week comes to fruition, we should offer a variety of programs mixing passive listening with workshops and other active participation sessions. This may help unite the community and address the persistent issue of loneliness on college campuses.

7. Since CRUE has not taken the lead on programming, Student Affairs will take ownership of April 22-23
   c. Coliseum Zero Waste Program
      i. 1050 tons of waste have been diverted from landfill out of 1200 total tons of waste generated since the Zero Waste Program’s inception
         1. Overall diversion rate of 91%
      ii. Sustainability engagement is often about expanding on programs already in place, then leveraging these programs/initiatives as assets. Athletics operates the highly successful zero waste program at the Coliseum and can leverage this as an asset to improve waste sorting infrastructure in other Athletics facilities and educate the community on Zero Waste.
   d. Gary believes USC should create an annual award to recognize faculty, staff, and students doing sustainability work. The award should come from the President’s office so it carries appropriate weight
      i. There may be opportunities to increase engagement around the Tyler Prize
         1. Administration of the award still happens at USC, but the presentations and the dinner are now in DC
         2. UCLA’s Alex Hall won a prestigious climate science award which both helped Alex’s own research and showed the UCLA community--and Los Angeles community--that UCLA cares about understanding and mitigating climate change
   e. In planning how to engage the campus community, we need to discuss incentivizing sustainable behavior change
i. Rebecca wonders if sustainability could eventually be incorporated into staff merit-based raises or other incentive tools.

f. Tracking Progress - Key Performance Indicators
   i. Students:
      1. # student-led sustainability initiatives
      2. # participants in green student groups
   ii. Faculty:
      1. # sustainability-related and focused courses
      2. # of sustainability research projects/published papers
   iii. Staff:
      1. % of staff who complete sustainability training module
      2. # of department-led initiatives
   iv. Public
      1. # community partnerships with sustainability organizations
      2. # sustainability related press releases
   v. All Groups
      1. # of in-person, sustainability-related engagement events
      2. # of sustainability conference attendances
      3. # social media shares and engagement
      4. # of visitors to USC sustainability website

5. Next Steps
   a. This concludes the formal, public-facing planning process of the 2028 Plan.
   b. We will continue communicating progress on how each group is modeling plans and costs required to meet our proposed goals.
      i. This process will, over the next number of months, help determine whether the university actually has an appetite for this level of fundamental change.
   c. Beyond the main goals currently outlined in our preliminary 2028 Plan goals, there are several other important initiatives currently in the research and discovery phase:
      i. “Clean Skies” initiative to offset carbon emissions from business travel
      ii. Subsidized loans for Electric Vehicles through the USC Credit Union; may also apply to hybrid vehicles
      iii. City of LA Urban Trees Initiative; currently working with the City and campus stakeholders to align with the City’s goals
      iv. Native Plants—we are brainstorming how to transform the campus to more native landscaping over time, while balancing concerns about urban heat islands
      v. Experiential Learning
1. Currently, there’s no blanket program facilitating experiential sustainability education
2. OoS has submitted a request for an Experiential Learning Coordinator to help align courses with operational campus initiatives. Currently benchmarking against UCI and Cornell programs
3. OoS may not indefinitely be the right location within the university for a person in this role
   vi. Public access “Green Revolving Fund” to avoid problems of 2020 Plan where students, staff, and faculty didn’t have the upfront capital to deliver on sustainability initiatives and projects
d. There is still no clear answer on whether the university will undergo changes to its organizational structure as it relates to sustainability
   i. Many teams are certainly discussing this, since university org. structure influences every part of how effectively we can execute the 2028 Plan
e. Dave Galaviz and his team are very willing to work with all of us to incorporate community partners into any future campus sustainability happenings
APPENDIX -- POTENTIAL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Engagement Ideas Captured in 1/24 Meeting:
- Green Team/Green Leaders at every level (students, staff, faculty) to act as social sustainability champions
- Annual “Hackathon” that brings in industry folks to pose sustainability-related problems and challenges teams to compete to engineer a solution
  - Duke has a model for this called “Blueprint”
- Department competitions to help incentivize staff changes
  - E.g. most recycled paper, best waste diversion, etc.
- Fairs to demonstrate how to behave sustainably at home
  - E.g. how to compost and recycle at home
- Host an “Eco-Swap” for departments to share ideas about sustainable supplies and equipment they use

Engagement Ideas Captured in 1/15 Meeting:
- Facilities – equipment/infrastructure
  - Ex. Waste bins at Athletic facilities
    - 20% are easy to use right; rest are not available
- Infrastructure & equipment funding – budget planning cycle needs to be factored
- We need to know what the challenges/barriers are - start of the dialogue is now, but not the end
- Staff Assembly – implemented green meetings initiative that was well received, there is more appetite for this among staff assembly
- Zero Waste events – expand to broader set of events
- Already working on engagement of their own will
  - Student affairs
  - Staff assembly
- University Events Committee
  - Meets Wed.
  - Wide range of events that could be reached
    - Existing zero waste football games are the model to build from
      - Basketball to start zero waste games in Feb
- @HSC – no marketing/comms regarding sustainability – where do we start?
- Opportunity - lists/stickers of how to be sustainable
  - Ex. Napkin holders that say “please take one”
  - Consistent branding/messaging logo based on recycle symbol, light bulb replacement
- Signage @ sinks (all sinks on campus) w/ water conservation message
• Comms folks need/want stories/content (2 way comms between OOS and communications team
  ○ Can be big or small
  ○ Make it human
  ○ Give #s to tout success
• OOS to bring on marketing/comms person
• Sustainability Week on campus?
  ○ Tie in Earth Day celebrations
  ○ Student assembly does something but could be greatly expanded and connect to broader groups
• Earth Day Off – campus service projects?
• Large outdoor event for Earth Day
  ○ Local entertainers
  ○ Make it campus wide/McCarthy quad
• Welcome Experience group could be an asset
  ○ OOS to consult, provide content but use existing functions and groups to leverage those groups as a “vehicle” for sustainability
• Curriculum-level
  ○ School of architecture promotes sustainability, but their program has students that are creating a lot of trash for school projects. Could OOS come in and consult?
  ○ Grant program to fund sustainability-oriented projects from students
  ○ Grant program exists now but needs to be expanded
• Sustainability Prize, Ex. Wrigley Sustainability Prize
• Green Office/ Business certification through the City
  ○ Zero waste has been a barrier in the past but maybe this connect to 2028 goals
• Procurement – swag, marketing materials, sust. Vetting
• Food services – sustainability engagement

Auxiliary Services Potential Engagement Initiatives:
• Early Fall – Freshman Welcome Pack (introducing/explaining Sustainability to our new housing residents)
• Early Fall – Messaging/Engagement on Waste Management via Dining venues
• Early Fall – Food waste Audits begin/Nutritional and plating education (messaging/engagement)
• Early Fall – Messaging pushing Waste Management/ZW during Football season at tailgates
• Mid Fall – Energy competition (now that meters have been installed, this will move back to Fall) (messaging/engagement)
• Late Fall – Winter Shutdown (more energy conservation education) (messaging/engagement)
• Early Spring – Food Waste Audits/Nutritional and plating education
• Early Spring – Recycling push campaign (messaging/engagement) hoping to be able to tie this in with the OoS doing Recyclemania for the campus.
• Mid Spring – Meatless Monday Engagement (meatless options/healthy plating) (messaging)
• Mid Spring – Water conservation education (engagement/messaging)
• Late Spring – Partner with OoS and campus partners for “Earth Month” activities
• Late Spring – Waste (move out) (Engagement/Messaging)