

Culture & Communication



EEP

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UTA



Initiative

Enhance the role of sustainability in culture and communications through story-telling and collaboration

LEAD: Media Relations

with support from the Office of Sustainability

Definition

To promote a culture of sustainability, efforts are made to increase cross-university communication on sustainable initiatives and stories. Departments are encouraged to highlight their positive impact, and signage across campus is encouraged to raise awareness of sustainability and efforts to address climate change. Moreover, there's an emphasis on communicating sustainability content effectively, aligning messaging with recruitment efforts, providing educational walking tours, and highlighting the sustainability programs at new student orientations.



Resilience Co-benefits



Builds Community Connections



Grows Green Jobs & Opportunities



Supports Community Health



Enhances Environmental Quality



Fosters a Culture of Sustainability



Establishes UTA as a Regional Leader



Sustainability Messaging

The Office of Sustainability leads digital sustainability communication through its Instagram account which reaches nearly 900 people. Posts are made several times per month and feature events, campus amenities, volunteer opportunities, and interviews with students, staff, and visitors. While other UTA accounts amplify this messaging by tagging @gogreenuta in related events or activities, the digital strategy appears fragmented. Occasional newsletters provide updates about recent initiatives and events, and the Office attempted a Sustainability Blog beginning and ending in 2022. Student-led organizations like Mavs Go Green (active between 2020 and 2023), the Environmental Science Club, and the United Nations Association Mavericks demonstrate that there is a strong interest in sustainability, however there are challenges with continuous engagement that may be due to outgoing student leadership and a lack of transitional strategy.

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This disconnected approach to sustainability messaging extends beyond social media and long-form content. While the [UTA Eco-Map](#) identifies some helpful features such as bike racks and repair stations, recycling dumpster locations, and some student resources, this map fails to create a complete picture of UTA's campus assets, leaving out helpful waypoints like water bottle refill stations, recycling bins, and the Community Garden.

Untapped Potential for Knowledge Sharing

As an R1 Institution, UTA is recognized nationally to exist at the forefront of innovative research. This work is publicly available through UTA Libraries, which showcases journal articles across a wide array of topics, including circular economy, windfarm optimization, embodied carbon, and energy-saving investments, among other valuable research. While thought-leadership content, interviews with faculty and students, and sustainability workshops occur, they do not appear to be part of a coordinated and consistent strategy. The University lacks a systemic way to promote and celebrate this vast sustainability research and does not appear to be fully engaged with its potential for deeper engagement and discussion with students as well as the wider Arlington community.



Sustainability Communications

Educational Signage & Wayfinding

Transforming UTA's campus into an interactive learning environment through educational signage can help to passively increase interest in and awareness of the University's sustainability initiatives and research. This can be done through signage explaining how environmental features around campus like pollinator gardens, green infrastructure, native plantings, and wetlands benefit the community. Illustrating the impact of sustainable infrastructure can also be brought indoors by highlighting features like low-flow bathroom fixtures, energy and water conservation measures, and sharing the importance of reducing food waste. Further, strategic placement of sustainability-focused signage around the city of Arlington can serve both educational and promotional purposes, raising awareness of UTA's environmental commitments as well as showcasing University research or assets. Together with intentional identification of important waypoints which make sustainable choices more visible and accessible, this approach can help to transform campus navigation into opportunities for increased community engagement and recruitment of students interested in sustainability.



Source: University of Louisiana - Lafayette



Green Influencers

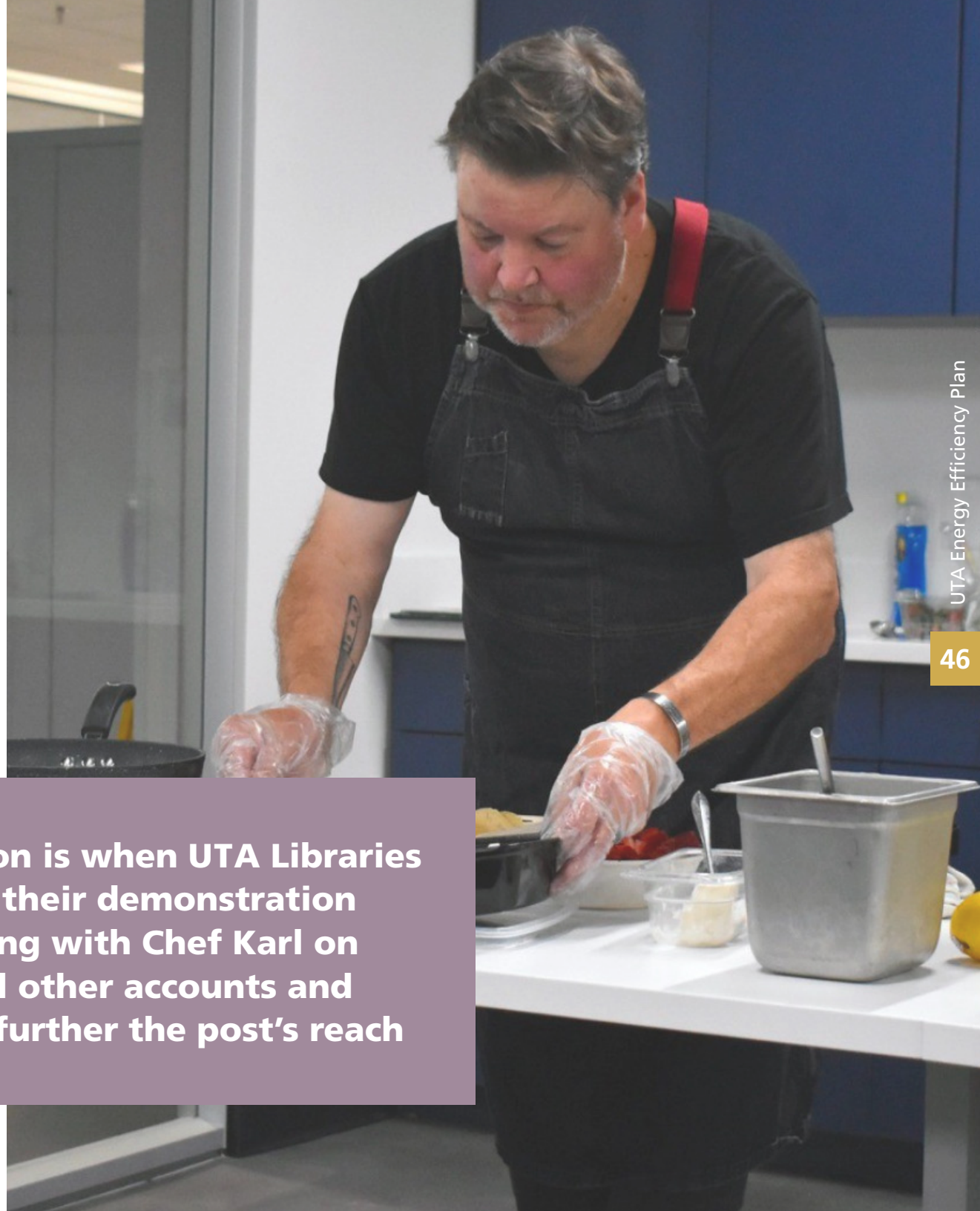
Transforming UTA’s fragmented sustainability messaging relies on a strategic approach for digital communication. Partnering with the Department of Communications to develop and implement digital marketing campaigns as part of student coursework can help provide consistency in content production. This academic integration ensures professional oversight of content quality while also giving students practical experience in an emerging field. Maintaining momentum through student leadership transitions will depend on the creation of a comprehensive communications playbook in partnership with the University’s staff marketing team. This guide will include content calendars, best practices, lessons learned, and protocols to ensure a smooth transfer between graduating and incoming students.

Considering expanding social media presence into other content platforms can extend the University’s reach to a younger audience seeking authentic insight into life on UTA’s campus. Regular content competitions with prizes can encourage student participation. This approach can increase the Office of Sustainability’s capacity to continue a regular stream of content while reflecting genuine student perspectives.

Those involved in UTA's Green Teams can expand their roles as ambassadors by serving as bridges between digital engagement and in-person events. Challenging these teams to grow their influence by coordinating messaging efforts can help ensure their departments are actively involved not only in interdepartmental activities but also in external efforts to strengthen sustainability messaging for new faculty, staff, and students ensuring all incoming Mavericks are involved in UTA's sustainability culture from day one.

An example of this in action is when UTA Libraries posted information about their demonstration of zero-waste vegan cooking with Chef Karl on Instagram, tagging several other accounts and using related hashtags to further the post's reach

Source: [UTA Libraries](#)



Harmonizing with Campus Strategy

In alignment with the [UTA Strategic Plan 2030](#) vision, the Office of Sustainability can establish a bi-weekly or monthly seminar series to connect more meaningfully with the wider community. This can be done through structured seminars showcasing leadership in sustainability. By inviting faculty, graduate students, and outside guests to present their research, these sessions can provide open discussion, garner interest in niche topics related to sustainability, and create valuable networking opportunities. These regular meetings can also provide ample short- and long-form content to be shared across social media platforms, helping to increase reach and garner outside interest in the sustainability research being done at UTA.

Further alignment with the Strategic Plan's goal of maximizing UTA's impact in the communities it serves through leadership and advocacy can be accomplished by championing the following efforts.

Enhancing in-class learning experiences by integrating sustainability initiatives into classwork can provide students with course credit while also creating impactful connections with the greater Arlington community. This can include implementing community-based research projects in partnership with organizations that are working at the local level to address the impact of climate on people and the environment and developing educational programming for K-12 students in which UTA students serve as mentors, guiding the next generation of sustainability champions.

Partnering with local businesses to develop training programs focused on Texas' energy future can ensure the local economy is engaged and prepared for this paradigm shift and provide internships for students so they can acquire the skills needed to successfully enter the workforce directly after graduation. This effort can include the establishment of innovation hubs that provide a space for faculty and students to interact with entrepreneurs and business operational leaders.

Developing a tracking system for volunteer hours can be helpful in maintaining detailed records of all University engagement efforts. This can provide both qualitative and quantitative data to use in applications for grant funding and awards by providing evidence of a sustained commitment to create a positive impact in the community. Students can assist the University in gathering this data through a portal where volunteer hours can be logged. UTA can incentivize this participation by providing an honors pathway where students can achieve recognition upon graduation for service to their community.



Increase cross-university communications on sustainable stories

ACTION ITEMS 4

Coordinate sustainability messaging to be part of campus on-boarding

Track all departments to understand how activities positively impact UTA through channels like e-newsletters and social media

Involve Communications students in developing awareness campaigns and social media presence as part of curriculum

Create a comprehensive playbook defining protocols for sustainability communications

Further the “story” of sustainability across UTA

ACTION ITEMS 4

Increase signage and visual indicators across campus with small notes about what has already been done to combat climate change

Distribute the UTA Sustainability story across key sustainability contributors in the region

Increase dynamism of sustainability communications and change how UTA communicates by embracing short form, highly visual content

Engage alumni network in sustainability success at UTA

Continue to expand community service opportunities on campus

ACTION ITEMS 4

Organize formal community events such as charity runs/ walks/bike rides which involve volunteer efforts, fundraising opportunities, and outreach activities

Provide **honors pathways** at graduation that involve volunteer hours completed

Clearly define the social impacts of sustainability and how it relates to campus life

Seek partnerships with local organizations, K-12 programs, and businesses to influence sustainability initiatives across Arlington

Expand office “Green Teams” program

ACTION ITEMS 3

Assign at least one sustainability champion per department to be included in all departmental decisions

Facilitate peer-to-peer support for 100% of UTA staff through sustainability-focused events, opportunities, and training sessions

Coordinate participation of green teams in social media to celebrate their efforts