

Sustainability Committee Meeting

April 5, 2022

Welcome and introductions

Morgan welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the committee. He then introduced himself and had everyone else introduce themselves.

Student Education and Outreach Programs at UTA Library: Milaun Murry, Experiential Learning Librarian

Milaun presented on “Programming for a Sustainable Future,” about UTA Libraries Experiential Learning events. There are two separate sides, sustainable programs and sustainability efforts.

Their first program is Maverick Kitchen, which has existed for 4-5 years. It gives students affordable and healthy food options. It also focuses heavily on seasonal cooking. The program discusses food waste (such as in the ox tail stew recipe). The program also includes a plot at the campus garden, which is near the veterans outreach center. Currently, they are focusing on growing peppers for an event in the fall.

The next program is Sew Sustainable. It discusses sustainability in clothing and the impact of fast fashion on the environment. It creates educational content related to fast fashion. For example, one of these illustrates the impact that jeans alone have on the environment. This program also discusses sustainable clothing more broadly and focuses on textile skill building.

Another program is Bounty of Nature, which Morgan started and then Milaun took over. It is a month-long program in April that provides gardening workshops. It is tailored to student needs, such as teaching them how to build a vertical garden in a small space. It gives students the resources that they need to garden on their own. Another component is a composting workshop, which also gives students what they need to compost on their own (with worms). There will also be Bounty of Nature giveaways this year, including the tools and materials needed to start gardening at home.

The last program is MavAwareness. It focuses more on mental health, providing students access to mental health resources like yoga. MavAwareness brings in experts who then can teach students, with the library paying for it so students do not have to. A portion of MavAwareness focuses on sustainable eating, eating in a way that is healthy for the environment.

The library also works on reducing waste however it can, such as by using reusable dishes and cutlery (requiring dishwashing but minimizing waste), marketing (such as using a single small poster with a QR code instead of printing out handouts for students), and high reusability for anything purchased (they will generally not order anything they will not use multiple times within a three-month period).

Per a question from Morgan, Milaun noted the next worm composting workshop will be on April 21.

Per a question about turnout, Milaun said the last two years have been tricky. Pre-pandemic, most of their programs “were at capacity, pretty quickly.” They hope to get back to that.

All their events are on MavOrgs and the UTA Events Calendar.

The dining office is happy to collaborate with the Libraries about healthy eating and some of the wellness activities that they provide, like yoga instructors. Milaun noted the first collaboration event is on June 6.

Per another question, Milaun noted that these events are open to everyone on campus, including faculty and staff. She also mentioned that they are very open to collaboration.

Per a question, there is a waiting list (of about 100-120 people) for the community garden. Plots are allocated for the next year every December. The sign-up form for the wait list is in Meghna's office.

Service Learning Projects: Susan Dequeant, Associate Director, Center for Service Learning

Susan started by noting she has been in the Center for Service Learning since 2012. She works with faculty to help them add a service component to their courses.

Service learning is intentional work that involves a community partner that gives students a rich experience related to what they learn in the classroom and helps fulfill the needs of the community partner. Architecture students build a house that is sold at reduced cost to a first-time homeowner in one of the biggest illustrations of service learning on campus.

The difference between volunteerism and service learning is that volunteerism is working *for* someone while service learning is working *with* someone.

Service learning is part of the Maverick Advantage, the campus-wide initiative to encourage students to have experiences outside the classroom.

Almost all service-learning projects can fit into at least one of the UN's sustainability development goals. It may be necessary to align the service-learning project with the goals.

The most important part of service learning is reflection. Students need to think about what they are doing and why, so that it is not just checking off a task. Susan also recommends applying to be a Faculty Fellow to learn from faculty colleagues across different disciplines. Service learning "is very intensive" and includes a community partnership element that other programs on campus do not have.

There are many examples of recent service-learning projects, ranging from website design and teaching adults how to read to building sustainable gardens and working with students in underserved communities. Common to all of these are the educational goal as well as the service to the community. Other examples include producing videos/PSAs, testing public water for contaminants, providing data through statistics, writing grants for an agency, putting together programs to show food disparity, translating immigration papers or working as a translator in a hospital, and donating to a food drive.

Susan recommends thinking about who you see service learning connecting to the UN sustainability goals. Also, think about potential challenges and outcomes.

On April 6 and 7, they will be hosting a workshop on Experiential Learning Practices: Critical Reflection, Assessment, Research, and Scholarship. These two back-to-back events will be led by the author of the book, Dr. Star Plaxton-Moore.

Susan also mentioned the Faculty Fellows Program they have.

Per a question, Susan noted she is the liaison between faculty and the community partners. Both community partners and faculty will reach out to her. She serves as a sort of matchmaker between faculty and community partners. Some faculty already have ideas of whom they want to work with. One of the other attendees mentioned how CAPP did a service-learning project doing oral history interview with Arlington nursing home residents about their recollections of downtown Arlington before it was “revitalized.” This is an example of a very large-scale service-learning project; most projects will not be this large. He also emphasized the importance of sad or difficult moments in service learning.

Morgan noted that “service learning” and “experiential learning” are closely related, but some definitions state that service learning would be external to your home institution (UTA), though the FabLab has been partnered with multiple UTA service learning projects including the 3D printed campus map created by an Architecture class (now in the Dipert Welcome Center). Susan clarified that she was very open to UTA classes doing service learning projects with other departments at UTA, encouraging interested attendees to sign their departments up to be on her list of opportunities.

Meghna noted that UTA works with over 150 nonprofits in North Texas. One example was a project conducted with the City of Arlington on food waste data. UTA had a similar earlier project with the City of Plano. She encouraged anyone interested in such a project to reach out to her or Susan. Meghna has identified 300-400 courses on campus that are aligned with the UN’s sustainability goals. There were also air quality PSAs created by UTA students that were of such high quality that they were used for two years, and the students even received a cash award.

[Maverick Pantry: Alexis Perez, Emergency Assistance Coordinator, Student Advocacy Services](#)

Alexis began by noting the three pillars of Student Advocacy Services: education, advocacy, and support. The Maverick Pantry is part of this department. According to Feeding America, rates of food insecurity are due to systemic racial injustice and disproportionately affect Native American, African American, and Latino students. One third of college students in the U.S. face food insecurity. At UTA, 51.6% of a small survey experienced some sort of food insecurity, more than the national average.

The Maverick Pantry opened in summer 2019. It is located behind Pie Five. It includes toiletries, infant care items, non-perishable food, household supplies, and more. They have served 1,500 students to date. Inflation is a major cause of concern and use of the pantry now. They will be adding produce, eggs, and milk soon.

The Maverick Pantry also has a Professional Clothing Closet with clothing that has all been donated. They loan blazers and suits to students and allow them to keep other types of clothes.

There is also an Emergency Assistance Fund that provides a one-time \$500 grant. Students must be enrolled or in good standing to receive this grant. It can be distributed through MyMav or Visa gift cards.

There is an Amazon wish list that makes it much easier to donate to the Maverick Pantry. Drop offs can be scheduled by e-mail and delivered in person to the University Center. Monetary donations are also accepted.

So far, the Maverick Pantry has been able to meet most students’ needs. Allergies can be a challenge.

They have cleaning and household items, too. There are storage issues with some larger items, like vacuums. There will also be a free thrifting event on Earth Day (April 22).

Anyone who wants to go into the pantry needs to use their MavID. They run reports weekly to see if they have any repeat visitors.

Amazon wish list helps them get food delivered, because they do not have a van, and it also helps them prioritize what they need most. There are both food and toiletries on the wish list.

Sustainability Literacy Report: Bhargavi Jeyarajah, Sustainability Coordinator

Bhargavi noted the survey aimed to answer three questions related to the UTA community's sustainability literacy, what UTA's culture of sustainability is like, and how environmentally sustainable UTA's commuting patterns are.

The average score for the sustainability literacy portion was about 60%. Correct answers were 46% and 28% were "I don't know," which also scored partial points (it's important to be honest about what one does not know).

For the sustainability culture portion, the recycling assessment scored 63%, with the lowest score on plastic bags (only 39% knew that plastic bags were not recyclable on campus) and the highest score on cardboard (91% knew that cardboard is recyclable on campus).

The community survey revealed that 32% of students and 68% of employees commute via single-occupancy vehicles. This is mostly due to lack of available public transportation. 11% of students and 3% of employees walk or bike to campus.

The main themes of the comments were awareness and recycling, with public transit a distant third.

The key takeaways from the survey are a need for increased visibility of sustainability initiatives on campus, a need for more sustainability education, and a need for more recycling education.

Meghna asked all our departments to follow or tag the Sustainability Department. Most students do not look for sustainability, so having other departments help disseminate information relating to sustainability is very beneficial.

Earth Day event: Bhargavi Jeyarajah, Sustainability Coordinator

There are a variety of Earth Month events for April.

The Earth Day Fair will be on April 30 from 10 am to 3 pm. Bhargavi presented a QR code for signing up for tabling at the fair. The fair will have numerous departments, City Hall, and the Police Department all participating. The bike share program will also be featured.

Other Earth Month events can be found online: sustainability.uta.edu/post/earth-month-events-april-2022

Working Group Report

One of the committees (faculty/academic research) has not met since last fall. They do not have enough members on their committee. They need to recruit more people and make this committee more of a priority.

The operations committee is identifying spaces on campus that can be used for pollinator gardens to help prepare for Bee Campus USA application.

The facilities committee has been talking with Performance Solutions. They have prepared a preliminary study about putting solar on the UTA campus. Performance Solutions would like to have a presentation open to the UTA community, so they can go into detail about what they found. They looked at the MAC, UC, and CPC as three buildings capable of generating a total of 2.63 MW of peak power. That could save about \$240,000 in electricity purchases a year, or about 5% of total energy costs for a year. It would be about \$5.9 million to install and maintain all these solar panels over their lifetime, about a 20-year payback for this investment. All the rebates and incentives are either tax-based or designed for smaller scale, so they are not well aligned for a college campus.

The education committee has had a hard time making progress. They have been prioritizing recycling communication. They are starting to communicate more about recycling on social media. They are also looking to present to interested departments around campus.

Meghna noted \$500 sustainability fellowships for faculty.

Open Agenda items for discussion

Morgan would like to set up tours of successful pollinator gardens in the area. He wants to make these open to everyone on the sustainability committee. Successful pollinator gardens involve selecting landscaping plants for eco-region specificity. Also, unless gardening reduces your grocery purchases, it is not reducing your environmental footprint, whereas even very small pollinator gardens can make a real impact on the survival of imperiled pollinators.

UTD has become a certified Bee Campus USA campus. They have pollinator gardens with signage about the plant communities and areas on campus where people should not walk, for instance.

Per a question, Transportation has implemented a new bike share program that has helped reduce car trips already. There are 105 bikes on campus, which should double shortly. There have not been any problems detected with the program yet, but the program is “brand new” and is still not widely known. There are only three EV charging stations on campus right now, but they how to expand them, too. Meghna noted that we had a bike share in 2018 that was quite well used. There is also a new car share program on campus. Morgan noted there was a great turnout for Walkable Arlington’s bike audit.

Next meeting: **TBD (fall 2022)**