

Meeting Minutes Sept 16, 2021
Meeting Notes

Meghna Tare began the meeting, introduced Bhargavi Jeyarajah the Sustainability Coordinator, and invited all the current members of the Sustainability Committee present to introduce themselves

Abeer AlMughrabi (Civil Engineering)	Marshay Booker (University Booker)
Andy Nelson (History)	Megan Hein (Chartwells/Maverick Dining)
Bear Lunce (Commons and University Center Operations)	Morgan Chivers (Library)
Bryan Samuel (VP for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)	Nick Paton (Special Events Facilities)
Charlie Brooks (Procurement and Payment Services)	Peggy Semingson (Linguistics and TESOL)
Chris Morris (History)	Ramon Ruiz (EH&S)
David Albart (University Center Operations)	Robb Chock (Facilities Management)
David Locke (UTA Police)	Sean Armstrong (Maverick Dining/Chartwells)
Dax Kuykendall (Campus Recreation)	Sharon Carey (Facilities Management)
Debbie Sandoval (Inventory and Distribution Services)	Stephanie Edgett (UC Operations)
Douglas Klahr (CAPP Dean's Office)	Susan Dequeant (Center for Service Learning/CRTLE)
Gautam Das (Engineering)	Todd Smith (Parking and Transportation Services)
Herb Booth (University Advancement / Media Relations)	Jordan Sligar (student)
John Hall (VP for Campus Operations)	Kevin [surname?] (Science)
Lauren McLain (OFM)	Amber Raley (graduate student)
Li-Ya Mar (Modern Languages)	Don Lange (Facilities Management)
Mari Duncan (Apartment and Residence Life)	Amruta Sakalker (PhD student) Bobby Childress (University Analytics)

Meghna began the meeting proper with a brief overview of what the Office of Sustainability does on campus:

The office was established in January 2010. "We have come a long way since then." In 2015, they launched the Institute for Sustainability and Global Impact (ISGI) under Pres. Karbhari's strategic plan. In March 2019, they established Regional Centers of Expertise for Education on Sustainable Development (RCE North Texas), the only one in Texas. It is part of a UN program. Just two months ago, they launched the North Texas Food Policy Alliance (NTFPA). Only 2% of institutions of this type are embedded in academic institutions like UTA. The NTFPA is actively involved in drafting food policy for the entire country under the Biden Administration.

The goal of the Office of Sustainability is to educate the community and campus about the importance of "systems thinking and acting sustainably."

There are three elements to the Office of Sustainability's scope: operations (waste management, transportation, community garden/composting, energy efficiency, sustainable dining, etc.), education and research (working with faculty on research projects/grants, student engagement, applying for grant funding), and engagement and outreach (events on campus, Food Recovery Network, MavsGoGreen student organization, working with NCTCOG/EPA/etc, Office Green Team).

The Regional Center of Expertise (RCE) engages with public, private, and non-profit partners in North Texas. It has implemented projects like a Water Quality Report Card for the Trinity River. Meghna showed a map of the North Texas RCE on a map of all the RCEs in the world. RCE North Texas has already received three awards from the United Nations University.

The North Texas Food Policy Alliance is the only such regional alliance in Texas. It is also a partnership between public, private, and non-profit entities. It has applied for \$250,000 in USDA funding (we have 17 letters of support for that funding).

Meghna noted key information of water conservation to demonstrate UTA's developing operational efficiency: between 2009 and 2019 there was a 22% increase in campus space and just a 10% increase in water consumption, while by 2020 there was a 44% increase in space with just a 4% increase in water consumption. Similarly, the emissions inventory shows that despite campus space increasing by 7% from 2016 to 2019, greenhouse gas emissions fell by 13% over that span. The energy utilization index (EUI) shows a similar downward trend (toward efficiency). Single-stream recycling has grown in recent years, as has food waste composted (currently, 40-50 tons of pre-consumer food waste from dining services, coffee shops, and hospitals are composted each year, and used in mulch on campus).

UTA is just one of seven American universities to use a Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) framework for its sustainability report. It includes social and economic impacts, not just environmental ones.

Meghna noted UTA's numerous sustainability-related awards, including the Times Impact Rankings, NACUBO's 2018 Excellence award, and awards from the United Nations University, STAR

(State of Texas Alliance for Recycling), EPA, UNESCO, and Air North Texas-NCTCOG. UTA has also presented to multiple boards and councils.

Initiatives for this year include starting a university sustainability committee, electronic waste program, bike share program (delayed to spring 2022), a Bike Friendly Campus application, launching the Faculty Advisory Network on Sustainability, a new sustainability blog, a student engagement program (Eco Rep), expanding the Office Green Team Program, launching the North Texas Food Policy Alliance, and a new quarterly sustainability newsletter).

Meghna instructed all attendees to open Jamboard. On the second page, titled SWOT Analysis, are columns for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The attendees then conducted a "mind mapping" SWOT analysis to "understand the internal factors within your organization that you can use to pivot, modify, or improve things." Meghna then demonstrated how to type a "sticky note" to place under one of the columns in Jamboard. After completing the exercise, the meeting attendees created the following sticky notes in the following order:

Strengths:

- Engaged and knowledgeable faculty
- Great campus partners
- Campus leadership support
- Side-by-side trash and recycling bins
- Content area experts
- Strong, experienced group to brainstorm
- A leader sustainability (compared to other universities)
- Energy management and efficiencies

Weaknesses:

- Awareness among students?
- Need audits to catch gaps in effectiveness within existing initiatives
- Societal norms
- Lack of engagement from the students "uncool"
- Great programs that fizzle out
- Sometimes siloed efforts that could be more collaborative

Thinking of sustainability only as an environmental issue

Single-use items such as to-go boxes within dining

Dependent on funding from the state

Opportunities:

Opportunity to collaborate with the City of Arlington (especially Downtown)

Partner up with manufacturers to take back their products for recycling

Reflect on the ways that the pandemic helped us to be paperless and consume less (potentially)

Opportunities to reframe climate issues from the DEI lens

Students who are not aware of what sustainability is

Situated within the Metroplex with multiple partnering opportunities and alumni

Leveraging social media and digital media to promote awareness

Awareness for contractors and clients that visit UTA/CPC

We need to grow our programs and make them user friendly for all of the UTA community

Threats:

Students who do not care about sustainability

Political agendas

Misinformation

Complacency

We need to re-engage with each new class of students that comes into UTA

City of Arlington policy pressures

Vested interest in existing systems

Staff that do not care about sustainability

Wrong-headed thinking, ignorance

Potential for greenwashing

Meghna then announced that attendees would be separated into three break-out rooms. Each group conducted a sticky note exercise with the same question: "What do you want the Committee to accomplish?" The columns for each were organized around Operations, Education and Outreach, Academics, and Community Engagement.

Peggy suggested creating outdoor learning spaces on campus.

Summaries from breakout rooms

Morgan's group focused on the ways that UTA can be a leader in the DFW community as well as partnering with Arlington. The university can share its intellectual and transportation resources more broadly than with just the local community. Another goal is increasing awareness through campus outreach. Morgan's group focused largely on operations and how the campus, "as a small city, can be more sustainable and resilient."

Abeer's group discussed operational matters, including recycling construction materials. They also discussed a marketing campaign across campus. Don: "We have more video screens on campus that are begging for content" that could be utilized. They did not discuss much about academics, but touched on bringing academic components to the residence halls and apartments. Engaging students who live off-campus is really important, too, when it comes to sustainability. "Are we partnering with some of those large apartment complexes?" Earth Day and service learning projects were among the major themes in their community engagement section.

Meghna's group (summary given by Peggy) "had a lot of great ideas." They suggested improving signage around trash/recycling, reusing items in the dining room, book clubs, cross-department collaborations, sustainability educators in Student Affairs (and/or the departments), recognition on custodian uniforms if they have received training, one-page information sheets from departments, identifying sustainability possibilities in courses, making "Climate Crisis 101" a required course for freshmen and/or orientation session for new employees, having campus thrift events, having a monthly climate book recommendation in the library, outdoor learning, a "running for the environment" event each year, and t-shirts for students. Meghna spoke about the "caught green-handed" promotion that gave gift cards to students for making good choices. She also talked about the "cupanion" program, which never really caught on.

Meghna noted that between now and the next meeting (on November 18), the committee will sift through these ideas, condense them, and polish them. Meghna: "An idea is just a dream unless you do something with it."

One attendee elaborated about the groups. She noted that different people may be interested in different categories and not everyone has to work on the same thing. She proposed subgroups or task forces formed around the topics committee members are most interested in.

Morgan mentioned that "sometimes forming working groups is the right thing to do...but there is not a lot of momentum." He suggested sharing the notes from the Jamboards with everyone and then let people volunteer in the areas they are interested in. This will allow the asynchronous continuation of this conversation.

Meghna thanked everyone for their time, participation, and enthusiasm. This is "a starting point...for bringing about change on campus." She encouraged everyone to keep adding sticky notes to the Jamboards through Friday afternoon.

S:

1. Recycling/ Composting (11)
2. Engagement
3. knowledgeable faculty (111)
4. Great campus partners
5. Campus leadership support (11)
6. Location in the region
7. Energy management and efficiencies

W: Lack of

1. RAPID program connection to transportation modes.
2. Awareness (111111)(social norms and habits)
3. Prioritization (Funding, admin support) (11)
4. Continuity (11 1)
5. Audits/ monitoring (1)
6. Comprehensiveness
7. Inclusion

O:

1. Partnering/ Collaborate (City of Arlington, Recycling programs, DFW partners, mass transit, alumni, climate higher ed alliance with North Texas universities) (111111)
2. Paperless/ online format
3. Reframe climate issues
4. Awareness (social media) (111111111)
5. Expand programs (1)
6. Program stability

T:

1. Carelessness (1)
2. Political agendas (11)
3. Ignorance (Misinformation) (11111)
4. Status quote (11)