

Smeal College of Business Sustainability Council Charter

Institutional Context for Smeal Sustainability: Penn State's Sustainability Strategy

"Sustainability is the simultaneous pursuit of human health & happiness, environmental quality and economic well-being for current and future generations."

— Penn State's Sustainability Strategic Plan, 2012

Penn State is a public research university that educates students from Pennsylvania, the nation and the world, and improves the well-being and health of individuals and communities through integrated programs of teaching, research and service. The University has embraced sustainability as a foundational principle that enriches all of its pursuits and missions and is committed to advancing the understanding and resolution of sustainability challenges on campus, in our communities and around the world (sustainability.psu.edu).

The Sustainability Institute (SI) was created to lead Penn State toward the University's sustainability mission:

a comprehensive integration of sustainability into the University's research, teaching, outreach and operations that prepares students, faculty and staff to be sustainability leaders in their professional, personal and civic lives.

Sustainability at Smeal College of Business

In 2011, a task force that broadly represented Smeal faculty and staff began preparing a comprehensive sustainability strategic plan for the college. Dean Whiteman approved the plan in December 2012. The plan articulated a vision for sustainability teaching, research and outreach for the Smeal College, which continues to guide our efforts into our next phase of growth.

The plan states that our vision is that Smeal will be one of the best business schools in the world in the area of sustainability through our teaching, research, outreach. We will move toward this vision as we pursue our mission:

1. **Through our teaching**, we will enhance the understanding of sustainable business practices and produce knowledgeable graduates prepared to apply these practices at work and at home. We will do this by offering students an extraordinary education that is supported by curricular and co-curricular innovation.
2. **Through our research**, we will create knowledge relative to sustainable business practices and their impact on businesses and on society. We will do this by reinforcing the strong culture of discovery that exists among our faculty and, more broadly, enriching the Smeal community by extolling and practicing diversity, honor, integrity, and sustainability within it.
3. **Through our outreach**, we will work with industry and government to collaboratively provide thought leadership in understanding and implementing sustainable business practices, and demonstrate within Smeal how these business practices can enable organizational success. We will do this by reaching out directly and through diverse media to learners, educators, business people, and alumni.

Smeal Sustainability Council

Purpose

The Smeal College of Business Sustainability Council ensures the effective implementation of the college's Sustainability Strategic Plan and provides strategic guidance and support to effectively integrate sustainability into teaching, research, outreach, and operations.

Fundamental to our approach is the recognition of two dimensions of the business of sustainability: *enterprise integration* (characterized by operational improvements that save energy, water, etc) and *market transformation* (characterized by product and business model innovation) (Hoffman, 2016). Forward-thinking businesses and business schools are focusing decision-making, innovation and investments on *market transformation*. The Council will likely need to focus on both dimensions simultaneously. However, the goal of market transformation should be what guides our discussions, analysis and action-taking.



Figure 1: Continuum of sustainable business engagement by Andrew Hoffmanⁱ

The specific purposes of the Council include the following responsibilities:

- **Provide input** on the implementation of the Smeal Sustainability Strategic Plan and the renewing of the strategy when requested by the director of sustainability
- **Contribute ideas** for new collaborative and cross-disciplinary initiatives that involve faculty, students, staff, and alumni from multiple departments as well as other colleges
- **Dedicate time and effort to lead initiatives** either with other members or with colleagues, students, staff outside of the Council
- **Act as an ambassador** for Smeal's sustainability leadership and for sustainable business in general within and beyond Smeal, both listening for ideas and input as well as informing and advocating where appropriate (e.g. at departmental meetings, other committees, professional and academic societies)
- **Represent the expertise, unique interests, and needs of your department** while considering how to advance the entire college's efforts
- **Promote and support the effective integration of sustainability** into the core academic and research priorities of the college and that applied learning and research opportunities for students are prioritized
- **Seek opportunities to engage the Sustainability Advisory Board** including as speakers, student mentoring, project partners, sources of internships, etc.
- **Connect the college to appropriate people, groups and resources** in your network that can provide expertise, funding, connections, and opportunities for faculty, students, staff and alumni

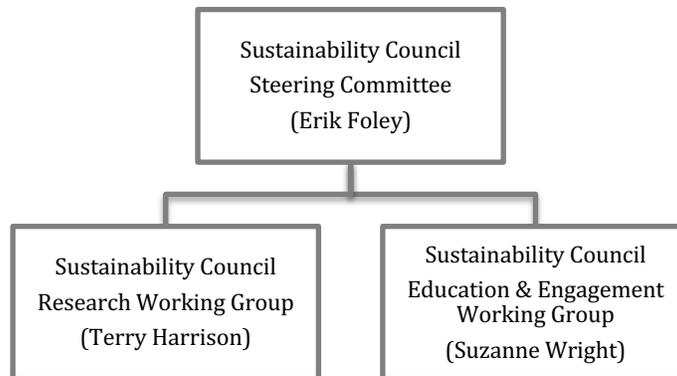
Membership

Composition: The Sustainability Council consists of an Oversight Committee and two Working Groups. The Oversight Committee and Working Groups aim to include representatives from each of the college's academic and support departments, a staff member leading the Smeal Green Team, and other members from the faculty, staff, and student ranks at the discretion of the director. (Note: suggestions for a student advisory board and a community advisory group have been suggested in the past and these will be considered as we move forward).

Term: The Oversight Committee and Working Group membership are staggered one and two year appointments. Terms may be renewable for a maximum of 2 times. Terms run with the Penn State fiscal year and partial years will count as a full year unless otherwise specified.

Organizational Structure

Council leadership: The Smeal Director of Sustainability chairs the Sustainability Council Oversight Committee and someone appointed by the director, with input from the working groups and college leadership, chairs each Sustainability Council Working Group.



Oversight Committee: consists of the Smeal Director of Sustainability and chairs of the working groups. This group meets twice a year to review progress of the working groups, identify and work through common issues or barriers, and ensure timely reporting and communication with the college dean and other key stakeholders.

Working Groups: these groups are designed to act with a high level of autonomy and a “bias to action” in the college’s aspiration to be one of the best business schools in the world in the area of sustainability through our teaching, research, and outreach. The working groups are expected to identify and implement (and/or recommend) a combination of short-term/quick win projects and longer-term/big win initiatives.

Each Working Group is expected to develop an annual work plan that will guide and ground their discussions and action-taking.

Research Working Group (RWG): a team of research faculty focused on bringing attention to, supporting and advancing sustainability-focused research within the college. This group is the primary mechanism for realizing the College’s aspirations to improve rankings and research impact.

Specifically, the RWG studies and assesses internal scholarly productivity, strengths and weaknesses as well as external trends and research expertise in business research for sustainability order to make recommendations for supporting sustainability research at Smeal. Of particular interest is exploring collaborations with other Penn State colleges.

Members:

- **Terry Harrison**, Chair, Professor of Supply Chain and Information Systems, Earl P. Strong Executive Education Professor in Business tharrison@psu.edu
- **Paul Shrivastava**, Professor in Management and Organization, Penn State chief sustainability officer and director of the Penn State Sustainability Institute paul.shri@psu.edu
- **Matt Gustafson**, Assistant Professor of Finance, mtg15@psu.edu
- **Johanna Slot**, Assistant Professor of Marketing johannaslot@psu.edu
- **Dan Cahoy**, Professor of Business Law, Risk Management DanCahoy@psu.edu
- **Jiro Yoshida**, Associate Professor of Business, Risk Management jiro@psu.edu

Education & Engagement Working Group (EEWG): a team of teaching faculty and staff focused on integrating sustainability into the total educational and career development experience of Smeal students both inside and outside the classroom. This group is the primary mechanism for realizing the college's goal of guaranteeing that every student graduates able to make the business case for sustainability.

Specifically, the EEWG studies and assesses internal capabilities and outcomes as well as external trends and best practices in business education for sustainability order to make recommendations for improving Smeal's teaching and support services for students. Of particular interest is exploring collaborations with other Penn State colleges.

Members:

- **Suzanne Wright**, Chair, Senior Instructor of Accounting *sma118@psu.edu*
- **Ron Johnson**, Senior Instructor in Management & Organization *rgj102@psu.edu*
- **Maurie Kelly**, Instructor in International Business *mck4@psu.edu*
- **Karen Winterich**, Frank and Mary Smeal Research Fellow and Associate Professor of Marketing *kpw2@psu.edu*
- **Judd Michael**, Professor of Business Management for Natural Resources Industries and Professor of Sustainable Enterprise, College of Agricultural Sciences *jhm104@psu.edu*
- **Ashley Rippey**, Director of Career and Corporate Connections *amp347@psu.edu*
- **Christine Novinskie Olbrich**, Administrative Support Coordinator, Undergraduate Education, Smeal Green Team Leaders *cxn108@psu.edu*

Council Operations:

Meetings: The Oversight Committee will meet 2 times per year and the working groups 4 - 6 times a year.

Notes and Action Items: Key decisions and action items will be noted at each meeting and sent out to the members within two weeks after a meeting and stored in an open online file accessible to all members.

Budget: the Smeal Director of Sustainability 's budget funds the work of the Sustainability Council, including the Oversight Committee and Working Groups. Proposed work requiring funding is brought to the attention of the director and sources of funding will be identified.

Decision-Making: the oversight committee and working groups will seek to make decisions where there is unanimity among the group. To accomplish this, the members work together to create a collaborative environment and ensure each decision is supported by:

- the right information about the opportunity/problem
- clear set of alternatives/options and a rationale for the chosen alternative
- clear goals tied a plan that is part of the college's overall strategic plan and sustainability strategy
- identified required funding amount, source and projected impact/return

Where unanimity cannot be reached, the chair (together with the director as appropriate) will act as tie-breaker utilizing the perspectives of the group and working in the best interest of the college.

Transitions: members who are absent without reasonable cause from three successive meetings of either the council or a working group will be assumed occupied by other priorities and unable to fulfill their duties as Sustainability Council member. Their position on the council or working group will be refilled as soon as possible.

If a member does not make a reasonable, good faith effort to fulfill his/her responsibilities set forth in this charter that will also be reason, at the discretion of the Council chair, for removal from the council. Their position on the council will be refilled as soon as possible

ⁱ Hoffman, Andrew. "The Evolving Focus of Business Sustainability Education." *EarthEd: rethinking education on a changing planet*, Island Press, Washington, DC, 2017, pp. 279-288.