



Sustainability Planning Opportunity Finder

This set of questions will assist units with developing a baseline of their current sustainability efforts and identify new opportunities on a more specific level than the maturity model questions. Below is a set of questions for each of the five areas listed, as well as helpful resources for each area.

This resource will help units nurture a holistic view of their activities. Taking the time to assess current activities now will be beneficial for setting sustainability strategies that support the goals of your unit.

Areas of Assessment:

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View and utilize the entire Sustainability Planning Guidebook online:

www.sustainability.psu.edu/guidebook

Assessment of Sustainability in a Unit's Teaching and Co-Curricular Areas:

- Does your unit offer academic courses with sustainability content?
- Does your unit offer any undergraduate or graduate sustainability-focused certificate, major or minor degree programs?
- Are your academic advisors equipped to match student interest in sustainability with appropriate concentrations and/or courses?
- Has your unit developed and implemented specified competency-based sustainability learning outcomes?
- Does your unit offer any *immersive experiences* related to sustainability?
- Does your unit have an ongoing program to encourage students to conduct sustainability research?
- Does your unit provide students with opportunities to engage in sustainability-related activities outside of the classroom (e.g., clubs, symposia, student-run enterprises, etc.)?
- Does your unit apply the “campus as a living laboratory” concept, by using campus infrastructure and operations as living environments for multidisciplinary student learning and applied research in sustainability?
- Do your faculty teach community engaged courses for sustainability, like partnering with local governments or non-profits through the Sustainable Communities Collaborative, or some other program?

Discover Resources in the Teaching & Co-Curricular area:

Sustainability Leadership Minor

<http://sustainability.psu.edu/learn/students/minor-sustainability-leadership>

The Intercollege Minor in Sustainability Leadership allows students in any major to incorporate sustainability as a significant theme in their undergraduate degree program. Through a combination of coursework, immersive and applied experiences in sustainability, students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they'll need to become sustainability leaders in their respective fields.

Food Systems (FDSYS) Inter-College Minor

Faculty Coordinator: Dr. Clare Hinrichs, cch11@psu.edu

The Food Systems Inter-College Minor requires 20 credits. In addition to FDSYS 490 and FDSYS 495, students must select at least three additional credits of a 400-level course towards the minor. At least six credits in the minor must be unique from the Prescribed Courses required by the student's major program(s).

City Semester Philadelphia

The City Semester Philadelphia Program is a unique semester-long, affordable, urban, educational experience for Penn State students. Students will be placed with community partners that have been chosen based on Penn State Center Philadelphia's mission of advancing equity, inclusion, and quality of life. In-depth, community-based learning while residing in Philadelphia for the entire semester offers transformative experiences.

<https://citysemesterphiladelphia.psu.edu/>

City Semester Pittsburgh

City Semester Pittsburgh is a unique learning experience for Penn State students of all majors and backgrounds. While living in the heart of Pittsburgh, students participate in a rewarding internship with a prominent community partner, take relevant online courses, and join fellow students in an urban sustainability course taught at the Penn State Center Pittsburgh space in the Energy Innovation Center. Come explore real-world issues in climate action, architectural design, clean energy, landscape architecture, urban equality, education, and more.

<https://pittsburgh.center.psu.edu/student-opportunities/city-semester-pittsburgh/>

Faculty Development Workshops

Workshops in sustainability education at Penn State fall into three main categories: shorter workshops, primarily held during the semester, multiple-day workshops, held in the summer for faculty who wish to create or revise sustainability-focused courses and seminar series done in cooperation with academic units. In all cases we work with faculty to help them find ways to incorporate more sustainability concepts and practice into coursework across the university curriculum. Contact: Peter Buckland, pdb118@psu.edu

Overview of Sustainability-Related Courses and Degree Programs

Our list is not exhaustive, but it is a good start. You and others can help make it even better by providing information on courses and programs in your unit.

<http://sustainability.psu.edu/learn/students/sustainability-related-degree-programs>

Sustainable Communities

The Sustainable Communities Collaborative (SCC) is the University's strategic platform and opportunity to develop an innovative University/community collaboration that engages Penn State Faculty and students in existing courses from across the University through real world, community-identified sustainability projects.

<http://sustainability.psu.edu/sustainable-communities>

Assessment of Sustainability in a Unit's Research:

- *Do your unit's faculty members conduct research on sustainability topics?*
- *Does your unit support one or more research centers or sub-units that conduct research relevant to sustainability?*
- *Does your unit discuss ways of reducing the environmental impact of lab and/or field research?*
- *Does your unit look for or create funding opportunities for sustainability research?*
- *Does your unit reward sustainability research as part of promotion and tenure?*
- *How does your unit support transdisciplinary research?*
- *Does your unit have an ongoing program to encourage students to publish sustainability research?*

Discover Resources – for Research:

Expert Database

The Expert Database connects sustainability scholars at Penn State. This searchable database of research faculty expertise is a collaborative effort of the Penn State Institutes of Energy and the Environment (PSIEE) and the Sustainability Institute. Search by name of researcher, theme, department, or keyword. You may also request to be added to the Expert Database to highlight your own research efforts. https://iee.psu.edu/researchers_all

Funding Opportunities The Institutes of Energy and the Environment offer [Seed Grants](#) annually to foster basic and applied research on strategic interdisciplinary topics. There are five themes for these funds including Climate and Ecosystem Change, Future Energy Supply, Health and the Environment, Smart Energy Systems, and Water and Biogeochemical Cycles. In addition to the Seed Grants, the Institutes hosts a database of funding opportunities on [its website](#).

Living Lab Collaboration Opportunities

The Sustainability Institute staff wants to hear about *your* proposals for using Penn State campuses, facilities, and power purchase agreements in courses, research, and outreach activities. SI and the Office of Physical Plant encourage the development of Living Laboratory projects that use and improve Penn State operations while directly enhancing the University's academic, research and service activities. Desired projects increase the sustainability of our own operations, serve as model projects for others outside of Penn State, and directly benefit student education. <https://sustainability.psu.edu/living-lab-collaboration-opportunities>

Assessment of Sustainability in the area of Public Engagement:

- *Does your unit offer short courses, certificate programs, workshops, film series or conferences on sustainability topics that are open to the general public?*
- *Does your unit have formal partnerships with the local community, including school districts, government agencies, non-profit organizations, or other entities, to work together to advance sustainability within the community?*

Discover Resources in the area of Public Engagement:

Sustainable Communities Initiative

The Sustainable Communities Collaborative (SCC) connects University Park faculty, students, and staff with local communities to address sustainability challenges through an engaged, collaborative effort. Innovative University/community-based collaborations are developed to engage PSU faculty and students in existing courses from across the University with real world, community-identified projects to meet the partnering community's sustainability priorities. Each project is a facilitated effort, involving interdisciplinary faculty expertise and students, co-led by a key community leader and the University's SCC staff, to help develop and support thriving, healthy communities and advance student learning about the scholarship of sustainability. Each year, the program supports about 40 projects in about ten communities across the state, engaging over 400 students. Contact: Ilona Ballreich, ixb20@psu.edu
<http://sustainability.psu.edu/sustainable-communities>

Sustainability Experience Center

The nine-acre Sustainability Experience Center (SEC) at University Park is a destination for students, teachers, business leaders, and citizens to experience and experiment with ways to apply the practices of sustainability to food, water, building materials, and energy systems. Located at SEC is the MorningStar Solar Home, a net-zero home that produces as much energy as it consumes. To schedule a tour of the Sustainability Experience Center:
<https://sustainability.psu.edu/sustainability-experience-center>

Assessment of Sustainability in the area of Operations:

- ***Does your unit use sustainable practices when planning events and functions (e.g., using reusable or compostable plates and utensils, giving preference to sustainable caterers, etc.).*** Our short [Green Meetings Guide](#) can offer some ideas.
- ***Does your unit participate in Penn State's materials reduction, reuse and recycling program?***
 - The University has provided opportunities to avoid single use water bottles, take-out containers, coffee cups, and plastic bags with our water bottle filling stations, Green2Go, Coffee Cup Discount, and EcoCoin programs.
- ***If your unit resides at the University Park, Berks or New Kensington campuses, does it participate in composting program?***
- ***Does your unit consider sustainability when making purchasing decisions (e.g., energy efficiency, recycled content, reduced packaging, durability, low toxicity, etc.)?***
 - Resources on sustainable purchasing are at <https://purchasing.psu.edu/sustainability>
- ***Are your unit's administrators and purchasing agents familiar with the guidelines in Penn State's Energy Conservation Policy, AD 64?***
- ***Does your unit offer a condensed work week or telecommute option?***
- ***Does your unit encourage employees to commute to and from campus using more sustainable options, such as walking, bicycling, vanpooling/carpooling, taking public transportation, or riding a campus shuttle?***
- ***Does your unit help your community understand how to use the Zimride online ride-matching service for Penn Staters?***
 - Resources on these commuting and transportation services are available at: <https://transportation.psu.edu/>
- ***Does your unit participate in a program in place to recycle, reuse, and/or refurbish all electronic waste generated by the unit?***
- ***Does your unit have policies to restrict paper use? (i.e. Is your unit's default to not print course catalogs, course schedules, and directories, but instead make them available online?)***
- ***Are your unit's printers set to automatically print duplex?***

- ***Does your unit encourage employee participation in professional development opportunities in sustainability? (e.g., Environmental Forum, Speakers Series, conferences, etc.)***
 - To find out about news and opportunities, sign up for Mainstream at <http://sustainability.psu.edu/mainstream>
- ***Does your unit have one or more Green Teams?***
 - For Green Team resources go to <http://sustainability.psu.edu/green-teams>
- ***Do your unit's employees participate in Penn State's Green Paws (sustainable office practices) certificate program?***
 - For Green Paws resources go to <http://sustainability.psu.edu/greenpaws>

Discover Resources – Operations:

Green Paws Program

The Green Paws Program allows Penn State staff and faculty members to apply knowledge of sustainability to daily practices. The program is built around Green Paws Action Checklists that outline high impact actions employees can do immediately to green their workspace.

Contact: Lydia Vandenberg , lydia@psu.edu, 814-863-4893

<http://www.sustainability.psu.edu/greenpaws>

Green Teams

The Green Teams initiative educates and engages Penn State's employees in sustainability. Green Teams comprise faculty and staff who volunteer their time to learn about sustainability, and how these concepts can be applied to their unit. The Sustainability Institute supports Green Teams with free workshops (on sustainability, recycling, energy, behavior change, communications, budgeting, and more), hosting challenges, and publishing a newsletter.

Anyone can sign up for the [monthly newsletter](#).

<http://sustainability.psu.edu/green-teams>

Waste Management

Penn State has committed to manage our waste in a more holistic manner based on recommendations from the [Waste Stream Task Force](#). The recommendations focused on reducing waste through programs such as Green2Go, guiding our purchases with a Sustainable Purchasing Policy, and educating our communities on closed loop strategies and recycling.

<http://sustainability.psu.edu/recycling-and-composting>

Energy and Environment:

You can find out the greenhouse gas emissions of any Penn State campus, use an interactive energy conservation chart, read about investments Penn State is making in energy conservation, and learn what you can do to reduce energy use and more.

<http://sustainability.psu.edu/climate-action>

Transportation:

Every day tens of thousands of us commute to work and to classes, go back-and-forth to meetings, and all of this adds up to a lot of fuel, emissions, and cost. Every day Penn Staters are reducing this impact by car-pooling, walking, biking, busing and tele-commuting. Learn more about these activities and what resources exist for your commute. (Note: this website features information and resources mainly for University Park Campus)

<https://transportation.psu.edu/>

Assessment of Sustainability in the area of Governance and Administration:

- *Is there an individual, committee, or council within your unit charged with promoting sustainability activities and initiatives?*
- *Does your unit give positive recognition to interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary research during faculty promotion and tenure decisions?*
- Does your unit have a sustainability literacy goal for your staff and faculty?
- *Do your unit's Faculty Activity Report guidelines request identification of sustainability-related teaching, research, and outreach activities?*

Discover Resources in the area of Governance and Administration

Penn State Sustainability Strategic Plan

The plan will help spur ideas for how to embed sustainability into a unit's organizational culture and processes. The plan presents the Penn State definition of sustainability, three sustainability principles and three goals with a number of strategies under each.

<https://strategicplan.psu.edu/>

Penn State's Sustainability Planning Guidebook and Resources

On our [Sustainability Planning website](#), one can find the guidebook, along with a host of materials to learn more about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), case studies of units developing their sustainability plans, and sustainability progress at Penn State.