

## **College of Liberal Arts Sustainability Council Charter**

### **Sustainability at the College of Liberal Arts (CLA).**

In 2013, the CLA formed a committee that focused on promoting sustainable practices within the CLA, working in cooperation with the Sustainability Institute. This committee became known as the "Green Steering Committee" because it was designed to collaborate with Green Committees housed within several units within the CLA. In 2020, it became a subcommittee of the Sustainability Council, which then expanded its vision, mission, and goals beyond those initially set forth by the "Green Steering Committee."

#### **Vision:**

The College of the Liberal Arts will lead its students, faculty, and staff to contribute to the inspiration for, and the creation of a more sustainable world. We define a sustainable world as a diverse, safe, healthy, and just world for all planetary life where all live within a thriving environment that is ecologically viable over the long term.

#### **Mission:**

The College of the Liberal Arts will integrate efforts to infuse sustainability within its educational, research, and service roles to facilitate training for our undergraduate and graduate students, develop our participation and leadership in sustainability scholarship at Penn State and the larger academic community increasing our contribution to more extensive efforts to achieve a sustainable world, and support university efforts to achieve sustainable practices.

### **Values and Guiding Principles**

#### **1. Responsibility**

Sustainability is the responsibility of all community members and is essential to implementing the University's priorities. The College of Liberal Arts is committed to advancing the understanding and resolution of sustainability challenges on campus, in our communities, and around the world.

#### **2. Perspective**

Achieving sustainability is a fundamentally human challenge. The College of Liberal Arts, with its community of humanists and social scientists, offers a unique and essential perspective on defining, understanding, and attaining our sustainability objectives.

#### **3. Scholarship**

The College of Liberal Arts champions evidence-based research in the pursuit of sustainability. It supports wide-ranging and interdisciplinary sustainability-related research activities across the College, the University, and beyond.

#### **4. Teaching**

The College of Liberal Arts prepares all of its students to be responsible citizens and cohabitants of the planet by enhancing their awareness and understanding of sustainability issues within and beyond their fields of study.

## **5. Empowerment**

The College of Liberal Arts is committed to empowering all members of the University community to define, pursue, and achieve their individual and collective sustainability objectives.

### **Committee structure and goals**

The Sustainability Council will consist of an advisory committee, three standing subcommittees, and ad-hoc working groups as needed.

**Advisory Committee:** The advisory committee will consist of a Director/Chair of Sustainability (appointed by the Dean), chairs of the working groups, and per the discretion of the director/chair liaisons to PSU centers, institutes, and administrative committees. The committee will monitor activities across units within the CLA, institutes, centers, and sustainability councils in other colleges relevant for working groups activities, review the progress of the working groups, identify and work through common issues or barriers, and ensure timely reports and communications with the college dean and other key stakeholders.

**Subcommittees and Working Groups:** Acting with a high level of autonomy, the **subcommittees** and working groups are expected to identify and implement or recommend a combination of short-term/quick-win projects and longer-term/big-win initiatives. These groups will meet monthly or bi-monthly, as needed to fulfill their objectives. 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 Working Group and Advisory Committee members.

**Research Subcommittee:** The Research **Subcommittee** is a team of faculty and student representatives 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.

**Education Subcommittee:** The Education **Subcommittee** is a team of faculty and student representatives focused on integrating sustainability into the total educational and career development experience of CLA students both inside and outside the classroom. This group is the primary mechanism for realizing the college's goal of guaranteeing that every student graduate can make the case for sustainability within their field of study.

**Operations Subcommittee:** The Operations **Subcommittee** is a team of faculty, staff, and student representatives focused on identifying and recommending how the CLA and its members can responsibly use resources, care for the planet and future generations, and how it can work in

conjunction with similar efforts lead by the Sustainability Institute. This group is the primary mechanism for creating concrete mechanisms for the CLA to participate in protecting the planet.

### **Procedures and Policies**

**Decision-Making:** the advisory committee and working groups will seek unanimous decisions. If unanimity cannot be reached, the chair (together with the director as appropriate) will act as a tiebreaker utilizing the group's perspectives and working in the college's best interest. To accomplish this, the members work together to create a collaborative environment and ensure each decision is supported by:

- correct information about the opportunity or 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.

**Composition.** Distributed as evenly as possible within the advisory council and working groups, the advisory committee and subcommittees will consist of members representing those in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, and among faculty those who are tenure-line faculty and teaching faculty. Student representation will consist of both undergraduate and graduate students on the advisory committee and subcommittees. Requests for student applications will be made annually, and per the recommendation of the advisory committee and subcommittees, they will be appointed by the Dean. Staff will be members of the operations subcommittee, and if interested, they will also be invited to the subcommittees.

**Terms.** The Advisory Committee and Working Group members are staggered one- and two-year appointments. Terms may be renewable at the discretion of the Dean. Terms run with the Penn State fiscal year and partial years will count as a full year unless otherwise specified.

**Transitions:** members who are absent without reasonable cause from three successive meetings of either the council or subcommittees will be assumed occupied by other priorities and unable to fulfill their duties as a Sustainability Council member. Their position on the Advisory Council or working group will be refilled as soon as possible. Not making a reasonable, good-faith effort to fulfill responsibilities outlined in this charter will also be a reason, at the discretion of the chair or director, for removal from the council. Their position on the council will be refilled as soon as possible.

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**The following will not be a part of the charter but will be guidelines that can be used for each subcommittee.**

- **Leadership (Advisory committee)**
  - Provide input on implementing the CLA Strategic Plan, specifically concerning the CLA's goal of integrating and prioritizing attention to sustainability within its teaching and research goals.

- Act as an ambassador for CLA's sustainability goals within and beyond CLA, 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 diverse units, employees, and students within the CLA while also advancing the entire college's efforts
- Coordinate cross-connections among subcommittees and working groups
- Identify emergent themes across committees
- Keep informed about Sustainability Councils in other PSU colleges and communicate back to the full committee.
- Maintain communications with the Dean and Associate Dean for research
- Maintain the CLA webpage, updating events and webpage information, and communication with faculty in the CLA expert database.
- Monitor the progress of the committee
- ***Research Subcommittee***
  - Identify and track internal sustainability-related scholarly interests, productivity, strengths and weaknesses, facilitators, and barriers to such productivity
  - Track external trends and research expertise in the arts, humanities, and social sciences to make recommendations for supporting sustainability research and scholarship within the CLA.
  - Review and promote current and prospective sustainability-related connections within CLA and other PSU colleges and PSU centers and institutes that could enhance research and scholarship
  - Develop sustainability-related research networks that facilitate the research that allows members of the CLA to work collaboratively with other departments and units across the University.
  - Provide connections to alumni and funding agencies that facilitate research and scholarship in the CLA
  - Facilitate seed funding opportunities
  - Facilitate hiring with sustainability interests, including but not limited to co-hires and networking amount clusters of hires
- ***Education Subcommittee***
  - Identify and track courses that either partially or fully incorporate sustainability into their curriculum on the main campus and commonwealth campuses
  - Share information about course work with CLA advisors.
  - Track external trends and best practices in education in the arts, humanities, and social sciences to make recommendations for improving the CLAs teaching and support services for students.
  - Promote and facilitate the effective integration of sustainability into the core academic courses to enhance sustainability literacy among all students.

- Promote and facilitate sustainability-related learning, research, workshops, and co-curricular opportunities for students
- Provide information to CLA advisors that can aid the development of sustainability specialization and interdisciplinary training by helping undergraduates obtain sustainability leadership minor, undergraduate and graduate minors or dual degrees in other disciplines.
- Facilitate university events that demonstrate sustainability research and scholarship within the college of liberal arts
- Share educational events provided by the Sustainability Institute that are of particular interest to members of the CLA.
- ***Operations Subcommittee***
  - Review activities lead by the Green Teams
  - Coordinate activities and opportunities for participation in community sustainability events for members of the CLA
  - Keep abreast of sustainability operations occurring in other colleges and their possible implications and collaborations for the CLA.
  - Explore and encourage the use of CLA facilities for research and student experience in university sustainability projects.