



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Sustainability & Climate Action Plan

Establish a Sustainability Ambassadors Program

SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT(S) THIS INITIATIVE SUPPORTS

- 2 – Water Reduction
- 3 – Waste Reduction
- 4 – Transportation Mode Shift
- 5 – Energy Efficiency
- **7 - Sustainability Literacy**

INITIATIVE ALIGNMENT WITH THE CHARGE

- **Build Community:** The Ambassador program will aid in actively engaging the university's surrounding communities in the implementation of the Action Plan, fostering collaboration and input from diverse perspectives. Through these collective efforts, the university will cultivate a resilient and inclusive community that thrives in the face of climate challenges.

INITIATIVE DETAILS

Initiative Summary

This initiative proposes to establish a Sustainability Ambassadors Program to ensure the greatest participation in and understanding of the Sustainability & Climate Action Plan for students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors. Paid representatives, directed by the Office of Sustainability and other campus leaders responsible for the Plan's success, will serve as ambassadors and represent the university's diverse array of audiences. Ambassadors will promote sustainability through various educational initiatives and activities across campus including events, workshops, and green certification programs. Actionable items include:

- Create a structured program to recruit, train, and deploy paid ambassadors who will educate and engage the campus community on sustainability efforts and the Sustainability & Climate Action Plan through workshops, sporting events, art performances, and more.
- Ensure the program allows units to evaluate and enhance sustainable practices, fostering a culture of environmental responsibility across all departments.

Proposed Initiative & Background

Informing, educating, and investing our campus community members in all aspects of the Sustainability and Climate Action Plan is essential for the plan's success. We need Ambassadors of the plan to ensure

that all campus community members (students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors) have an opportunity to engage with and support the plan.

Establish a Sustainability Ambassadors Program to ensure the greatest participation in and understanding of the Sustainability & Climate Action Plan for students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors. Ambassadors will be paid representatives, under the direction of the Office of Sustainability and any other campus leaders responsible for the success of the Sustainability & Climate Action Plan and should be comprised of individuals who represent the university's diverse array of audiences.

Ambassadors will share the plan and educate campus audiences in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:

- Green Office Certification Program - Campus unit meetings & trainings, evaluation of sustainable practices
- HR workshops & seminars
- Participation & visibility in campus events – tabling, hands-on activities & demonstrations, etc.
- Sporting events
- Arts performances

Ambassadors will also facilitate the implementation of green event standards and practices, training and support of events, university facility services, and custodial staff in the application of sustainable practices as put forth in the plan.

Data Analyses to Support Initiative

Examples From Other Universities

The initiative is based on the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) and Texas A & M (TAMU) plans. “TRU has introduced the Sustainability Ambassador Program to foster a culture of sustainability on campus. Under this program, students are hired to serve as Ambassadors to train and inform their peers. Each Ambassador must interact with at least 500 of their fellow students each year to inform them of sustainability issues on campus to receive a tuition credit.” TRU’s plan included a gradual increase in the number of students hired as Ambassadors and informed by each Ambassador in each year of the plan.

From the overview of the TAMU plan: “Through large service programs such as The Big Event, service-learning programs such as Texas Target Communities, and global research and service initiatives such as the Center for Conflict and Development, Texas A&M University is leading the way for large, public research institutions to focus on service both inside and outside of the classroom. This work is connected to the university's history as a land-, sea-, and space-grant institution and links academic teaching and research with real-world applications addressing the nation's biggest challenges.” Our proposed Ambassadors program could be envisioned in serving a similar role at the University of Arizona.

The TAMU plan “recognizes that growing sustainability initiatives at Texas A&M will require additional education, outreach, and engagement opportunities for faculty and staff. The Aggie Sustainability Alliance coordinated by the Office of Sustainability is one such endeavor, but it is hoped that outreach to

faculty and staff will grow to include online training modules and/or in-person seminars coordinated through the Division of Human Resources and Organizational Effectiveness.”

TAMU’s Aggie Sustainability Alliance set forth clear expectations for individuals and campus units to become sustainably certified, with a mid-term plan goal of certifying 5% of campus and a long-term goal of reaching 10%. “The Office of Sustainability's Sustainable Office Certification (SOC) is evolving into the Aggie Sustainability Alliance (ASA) to increase the connectivity of sustainability supporters, advocates, and champions among Texas A&M's faculty and staff. The new program...allows faculty and staff to become individually certified for their sustainable practices on campus and identify their offices with ASA signage. By making sustainability champions easier to identify, faculty and staff interested in sustainability will more readily be able to find one another to build a stronger network. Once 35% of the individuals in an office are individually certified, the office can certify through an additional, office-specific checklist. Both the individual and office recognitions celebrate all three pillars of sustainability.”

Our proposal is to utilize the Ambassador program to further embed the Sustainability & Climate Action Plan as a regular function of student orientation and continuing education, faculty and staff professional development, alumni & parent relations, community engagement, and special events.

Data From the University of Arizona

Based on the number of survey responses and the limited involvement across campus audiences in the process (surveys, focus groups, events, etc.), we will need students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parent representatives of the plan to educate and inform their respective communities and the community at large.

Based on the Office of Sustainability’s Community Input Survey results from April 2023, “Education” and “Activating the Campus Community” ranked in the top 10 priorities for respondents, with the more general “Outreach” and “Communication” also receiving votes.

During the April 2023 kickoff event for the plan, respondents highlighted the need for green event standards and practices, opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to engage around sustainability issues (jobs, internships, community partnerships), and the need to establish a green office certification program.

In the August 2023 Student Input Survey, students listed “Engagement Opportunities” as the seventh highest priority for advancing sustainability and climate action on campus and providing students with opportunities to serve as Ambassadors for the plan would serve as one method for addressing this concern.

Resource Requirements & Return on Investment

Resource Requirements

- Staff Position – Full-time Ambassador Program Coordinator
- Incentives for Ambassadors (course credit, financial incentives, etc.)
 - Students – course/internship credit, paid student worker positions, graduation endorsement, other

- Faculty – relief from teaching a course, stipend, salary incentive, progress toward promotion, other
- Staff – stipend, salary incentive, progress toward promotion, paid positions, other
- Parents – tuition reduction, stipend, paid positions, perks such as arts & sports tickets, merchandise discounts, club memberships, other
- Alumni – similar to parents
- Staff time for program development, Ambassador training, Ambassador management

Return on Investment

- The return on investment of this initiative is unclear due to the highly qualitative nature of its proposed activities and the length of time to implement behavior change campaigns like those proposed here.

Potential Funding Sources

- Provost's Investment Fund
- Campus Sustainability Fund
- Private donors
- Corporate donors/sponsorship

Accountable Division(s) & Department(s)

- Office of Sustainability

Partners & Collaborators

- Human Resources
- Utility Facility Services
- Arizona Athletics
- Arizona Arts
- Housing & Residential Life
- Campus Life/Associated Students of the University of Arizona
- Campus Health
- Work & Life Connections
- Greek Life
- Marketing & Communications
- Staff Governance
- Faculty Governance
- Alumni Relations

Implementation

Length of Time to Implement

- Less than one year
- One to five years
- More than five years

Difficulty of Implementation

- Low
- Medium
- High
- Extremely High

Relative Timing

- Begin within two years
- Begin in three to five years
- Begin in six years or later

Metrics for Success

- Number of Ambassadors
- Representation of Ambassadors and participants across identified campus communities
- Ambassador events and Points of engagement
- Numbers of students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors engaged
- Numbers of students, faculty, staff, and campus units completing green certification
- Year-to-year funding levels
- Documented connections between Ambassador program participants and achieving other Action Plan goals on campus