Help Make CSUN Shine Brighter
Topic 4: Sustainability - Summary of input

The CSUN community has embraced sustainability. From individual efforts, to the work of CSUN’s Institute for Sustainability, to the CSU sustainability goals set by the Board of Trustees in 2005 and now being expanded, sustainability increasingly factors into our daily lives. As a CSUN planning priority, sustainability is now a key consideration in university operations. The Daily Sundial devoted its April 22, 2014 issue to CSUN sustainability activities, including an article about Student Housing’s new themed living community, the Matasphere, for students who share an interest in sustainability and conservation (http://sundial.csun.edu/2014/04/student-housing-to-promote-sustainability-with-new-living-community/). CSUN’s sustainability plan (http://www.csun.edu/sustainability/) serves as the blueprint for the university’s green efforts. The search for a campus Sustainability Manager is underway and we will soon have a person responsible for implementing/coordinating the various sustainability projects throughout the campus.

Affirming our institutional commitment to eliminate net greenhouse gas emissions from certain operations, and to promote climate research and educational efforts, in 2013, CSUN President Dianne Harrison added her signature to the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment. (http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/signatories/list)

We wanted to hear from CSUN students, faculty and staff about this critical issue, so in spring 2014, the following topic was posted on the Help Make CSUN Shine Brighter website:

As green initiatives multiply, managing those efforts with limited resources becomes increasingly important. What efforts should take priority and what creative ideas do you have for making CSUN shine greener?

A synopsis of the input received from the campus community is presented below, along with brief descriptions of related CSUN sustainability efforts. In many ways, your comments and suggestions serve as affirmation of numerous efforts already underway. Some suggestions are included in the Sustainability Plan, with implementation either in process or planned; your ideas help to flesh out these initiatives and will help shape how we move forward. Suggestions for improving campus sustainability not part of the plan will be considered for inclusion as next year’s action items are prioritized.

While it is good to know that we as a community share an interest in greening CSUN, your responses made it clear that the university can do a better job of educating about the use of resources, and communicating CSUN’s sustainability activities, plans, and aspirations.

Campus Grounds + Grounds Maintenance

Your suggestions included:
- Xeriscape: Use drought-tolerant or native species. (5)
- Increase number of trees (3)
  -- similar to those at VPAC

1 Numbers indicate the number of times a suggestion was made.
-- in front of library
-- northeast section of campus

- Stop watering grass. (2)
- Sprinklers
  -- Shut off when it’s raining (2)
  -- Adjust to reduce puddles and runoff
  -- Ensure sprinklers are working properly.
  -- Fix leaks
- Reclaimed water for landscaping (2)
- Reduce/replace lawns
  -- with climate-appropriate vegetation
  -- with stone decorations made by art students
  -- with synthetic grass
- Replace orange trees with oak, sycamore, chitalpa, mesquite, palo verde, pine or palms.
- Research LA county free tree planting incentive.
- Use desert succulents
- Encourage students to help maintain campus gardens.
- Add more benches along shaded walkways.
- Add more walkways.
- Use all trimmings/clippings for mulch.
- Brighten up gardens with colorful signs labeling plants (as in downtown LA).
- Rain barrels/capture rainwater (2)
- Ban leaf blowers.

The ongoing drought has sensitized all of us even more to the importance of reducing water use, and many of your landscaping recommendations reflect that concern. The university is looking at ways to conserve this resource. Physical Plant Management (PPM) is undertaking an extensive study of campus irrigated areas, and more trees will be planted. The campus is investigating bringing in recycled water for irrigation, as rainwater capture is not economically viable.

**Water Use (not related to landscaping)**

_Your suggestions included:_

- Replace bathroom faucets with timed/automatic versions. (3)
- Water use awareness campaign
- Campaign to encourage people to report leaky faucets.
- Install low-flow toilets.
- Waterless urinals
- Repair faulty water fountains.
- See San Francisco State effort to reduce water usage ([http://news.sfsu.edu/campus-asked-reduce-water-consumption](http://news.sfsu.edu/campus-asked-reduce-water-consumption))
- Remove waterfall simulator next to G3

A public message campaign will indeed help us to get the message out on reducing water waste and will be developed. The university has set a goal of reducing water consumption by 20%; a plan to help us achieve that goal is being developed. PPM is systematically replacing toilets with low-flow devices.
starting in high-traffic areas; all urinals are either waterless or low-flow. An inventory of aerators on all water flow devices is underway and these will be replaced or installed where needed.

**Power**

Your suggestions included:

- LED (light-emitting diode) lighting (5)
- More solar panels (4)
- Reminders to turn off lights when leaving classroom (2)
- Turn lights off when room not in use.
- Install light switches or timers in Oviatt wings.
- Rechargeable batteries
- Insulation on doors + windows
- Dim hallway lights during day.
- Shut off air conditioning when rooms are unoccupied.
- Collect energy from exercise machines in gym and use it to power lights.
- CFL (Compact fluorescent lamp) bulbs
- Fewer security lights on in buildings
- Solar powered outdoor lighting
- Research project on improving solar panel technology
- Update fuel cell to reduce maintenance + downtime.
- Update turbines + heat exchangers so the plant runs more efficiently.
- Lights on motion detectors

You are correct - we can go a long way in reducing energy consumption by reducing lighting. A major lighting retrofit has begun, to replace many outdoor fixtures with LEDs. This will be followed by replacement of indoor bulbs with LEDs. Staff is researching occupancy sensors and motion detectors; these are not always an economical or practical solution. The fuel cell generates 18% of the university's power, saving the campus $7 million over fifteen years. Much work has been done on the fuel cell to reduce its downtime, as well as on Central Plant boilers, to reduce energy use for heating and cooling.

**Paper, Plastics, Disposables**

Your suggestions included:

- Transition from paper to online forms (2)
- Stop using disposable plates and utensils at university events. (2)
- Homework submission system to replace printing
- Paperless record system
- Greater digital access to e-books and periodicals
- Eliminate printed receipts.
- Eliminate printed receipts unless requested by customer.
- Eliminate paper flyers; use email instead.
- Eco-friendly tissue products
- Replace paper towels with airflow hand dryers
- Give out free ‘CSUN Shine’ reusable bags
- Discount for using reusable bags at bookstore and food outlets
• Discount to those bringing their own Tupperware, mugs, silverware, etc.
• Ban all plastics; encourage using recycled goods.
• Eliminate one-use plastic containers; replace with recycled paper plates.
• Less plastic food packaging
• No Styrofoam containers

Many university processes are shifting to electronic and the campus is reducing paper use with electronic submissions and two-sided printing wherever possible. The University Corporation, which operates food services on campus, has introduced a number of ‘TUC Green Projects,’ including discounts to customers bringing their own mugs and eliminating the use of Styrofoam and plastic bags. Reusable bottles and bags are now available for purchase at CSUN Dining locations. And product testing is underway to find an eco-friendly option to replace plastics.

**Food + Drink**

*Your suggestions included:

- Filtered water filling stations (7)
- Farmers’ market (7)
- Local, seasonal, organic food in campus restaurants (4)
- More vegetarian and vegan options
- Less pre-packaged food
- Donate unsold food.
- Eliminate soda machines.
- Eliminate vending machines selling bottled water.
- Campus garden; use the produce in campus cooking
- Fit water fountains with refillable water bottle stations.
- See drinking water program at Humboldt State.
- Stop selling bottled water.

A suggestion that several of you made — providing filtered water filling stations — became reality this semester with the installation of FloWater refill machines at five campus locations. Now students, faculty and staff can fill reusable water bottles with chilled, filtered water. Additionally, drinking fountains have been retrofitted with water bottle refill hardware. On the food front, CSUN Dining uses local and organic produce, as well as organic tea and coffee.

**Recycling**

*Your suggestions included:

- More recycling bins across campus (9)
- Expand recycling - all paper, plastic, cans, corrugated material, etc. (5)
- Add bins in classrooms (2)
- Add compost bins (2)
- More comprehensive recycling with more publicity and more easy-access drop-off
- More paper recycling bins in library
- More clearly marked bins
- Expand while paper recycling to include cardboard and colored paper.
- End of semester, add paper recycling bins for students to dispose of class handouts
• Empty recycling bins more often.
• Consider Terracycle – program collects certain waste materials and recycles them into usable objects ([www.terracycle.com](http://www.terracycle.com))
• Every semester or annually – collect unused/unwanted office supplies, furniture, etc and make available to take as needed. Donate anything remaining to a school or shelter.
• Increase compostable materials used on campus.
• Composting mural

Expansion of the recycling capability depends to some extent on expansion of the physical facility. Associated Students is developing a new Sustainability/Recycling/Ecology Center that will have the capability to accept more plastics and process more materials. An in-building recycling program is beginning this semester; the results of this pilot study will help guide us on how to proceed throughout campus. In order to add composting bins and collection, infrastructure needs to be installed to process post-consumer waste. CSUN Dining does provide its vegetable and fruit peelings for composting in the campus garden.

**Transportation**

*Your suggestions included:*
• Install more EV charging stations (3)
• Offer incentives (example: prime parking spots) for carpools (2)
• Bike rental program
• Better bike racks
• Revise bike incentive program to include 12 parking passes/year for bad weather days.
• Provide biking program participants free access to gym to use showers.
• Increase parking fees and decrease bus fares for students/faculty/staff.
• Ride sharing program
• Hold meetings using Meet Up, Skype, etc, to reduce car trips to campus.
• Strongly and consistently advocate for more frequent and better public transit options.
• Add neighborhood shuttles to campus during the day (example: CSU Long Beach).
• Provide transportation system like Santa Monica’s Blue Bus.
• Allow electric cars to park next to a charger and unplug cars that have finished charging.
• Policy against vehicle idling on campus for all, including PPM, Parking Services and CSUN PD
• Sensors in lots and display board showing if and where there is available parking.

Adding electric vehicle (EV) charging stations is an ongoing effort. Associated Students and the Sustainability Institute are planning a bike shop and bike rental program; space has been the issue to date. Various rideshare options are available through CSUN Transportation Services and CSUN’s efforts to improve public transportation for its students, faculty and staff got a significant boost with the opening of the CSUN transit station in 2012.

**Other Suggestions/Comments**
• No smoking on campus (4)
• Offer BA and MA in Sustainability Leadership & Management.
• Use green cleaning products.
• Use real plants in classrooms as natural air filters.
• Beware that green measures do not increase student fees or decrease products/services.
• Don’t overburden with extreme measures.
• Annual online voting on proposed initiatives to help identify top issues for campus to address

The issue of smoking on campus was last semester’s topic on the Help Make CSUN Shine website and elicited much feedback from the campus community. A summary of that input can be found at http://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/Q3-Survey_Results.pdf. That led to the appointment of a task force on becoming a smoke-free campus; the task force expects to present its recommendations by the end of spring semester 2014.

Finally, we heard about a few individual sustainability-related efforts in the CSUN community. Every step brings us closer to greater awareness and a greener CSUN.

• **SHC Webinar Series 2014: Greening Student Health Centers and Clinics.** Health Center Director, Dr. Linda Reid Chassiakos presented a template for a paperless healthcare environment and electronic practice management system/health records as part of a series hosted by UCSB.

• **KCSN** General Manager, Sky Daniels is investigating a move to solar power for CSUN’s radio station.

• **Sigma Nu fraternity** volunteered to give CSUN’s green initiatives a ‘progressive push forward’ as part of its LEAD (Leadership, Ethics, Achievement, Development) program.

Many thanks for sharing your ideas and recommendations on this matter of importance for the university. It is good to know that we as a community share an interest in greening CSUN. Your thoughtful input and creative suggestions will help us reach our goal of a more sustainable campus for this and future CSUN generations to enjoy.