



Sustainability Initiative
September 2008

Definition:

The CSUN “Green Core Team” defines sustainable development as that which *"meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"* (Brundtland Report, 1987). We argue that a decision is sustainable (and, therefore, ethical) when it balances economic, environmental, and social equity factors (Figure 1).

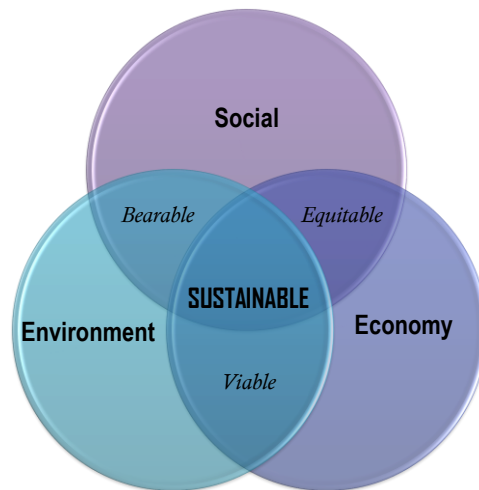


Figure 1. Three E’s of Sustainability (Environment, Economy, Social Equity)

Brundtland, G (ed.) (1987). Our Common Future: The World Commission on Environment and Development, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Purpose of the Initiative:

To become recognized as a university committed to sustainability in our academic programs, in our use of the environment, as well as our operations and practices. We will model ways to minimize environmental impacts, calculate the campus’s ecological footprint, establish metrics to track changes over time, and ensure that graduates are educated and knowledgeable about sustainability.

Anticipated Outcomes and Activities:

- Cost savings for institution and students
- Curriculum—general education program; sustainability degrees and certificates
- Employers seeking students with sustainability-related coursework/degrees
- Research, grants, and contracts

- Community engagement
- University image as “green” or “eco-friendly”
- External support—fundraising opportunities from enhanced image
- Facility design and construction
- Diminish ecological footprint
- Transportation
- Recycling programs; waste stream
- Student and faculty engagement in sustainability as a principle and in practice
- Economically-sustainable academic programs
- First choice campus for students concerned about the environment

Progress:

In 2007, CSUN installed a one megawatt fuel cell power plant, establishing the university and the CSU system as a leader in sustainable energy for academic institutions worldwide. Last year, CSUN produced 23% of its electrical power through clean energy technologies (solar panels, micro-turbines, and fuel cell power). CSUN is developing more on-campus student and faculty housing. This will decrease the need to commute and to park. We’re also constructing buildings that meet or exceed LEED standards. However, we appear to be lagging in other measures of sustainability (e.g., consumer goods recycling, academic programs, and curricular offerings). And we have not successfully “told our story” about our many successes. Acknowledging the essential priority of sustainability—and emphasizing sustainability as a core value of the institution—allows the university to fit activities with existing planning timelines and structures.

Planning:

Recognizing sustainability as a core value permits the campus to formalize interrelationships as demonstrated in Figure 2 as part of the university planning process.

First, the planning process vice presidents and deans undertake each year can include specific, measureable sustainability goals related to:

- campus operations and practices
- curriculum (re)design
- external fundraising
- research
- student employment

Second, the deans have drafted a charter for the Institute for Sustainability. Work in this institute will focus on research, teaching, community outreach, and fundraising.

Third, a stakeholder group comprised of faculty, staff, and students will bridge activities between divisions, faculty, staff, and students; organize on-campus events and activities; and facilitate interaction between campus operations and the Institute for Sustainability.

Figure 2. Possible Sustainability Interrelationships

