

Luther College Center for Sustainable Communities Strategic Plan

History and Context:

The Center for Sustainable Communities (CSC) was founded in 2013 to unite existing sustainability efforts at Luther and provide a vehicle for new ideas and initiatives. The Center coordinates all of Luther's sustainability efforts and promotes sustainability throughout the region. Initially the work of the center was organized around Four Program Areas:

1. Food and Wellness
2. Energy and Climate Action
3. Land Stewardship
4. Education and Outreach

2013 Strategic Plan

A 2013 strategic plan for the center focused work on the following six goals:

1. Integrate and embed sustainability into the mission and operations of the college
2. Develop an energy and climate program with emphasis on education and community energy systems
3. Enhance Luther's land stewardship program with increased emphasis on community education and collaboration
4. Sustain food and wellness programming with strategic growth in food production and education
5. Expand and deepen outreach initiatives to serve as a catalyst for sustainability in the region
6. Fully endow the Center and create a structure for long term fiscal and organizational sustainability

The complete strategic plan is available at

<http://www.luther.edu/sustainability/about/strategic-plan/>

Current Planning Process

In Spring 2018, the CSC embarked on a process to develop a new strategic plan to guide its sustainability work moving forward for the next three years. We hosted 8 community input sessions with students, faculty, and staff at the college as well as engaged community partners (100-150 people total) organized around two goals:

1. Shape a Shared Vision for Sustainability at Luther, (10 year timeframe) including operations, student learning, and community outreach.
2. Determine Goals and Priorities for the next 3 years to guide the work of the Center for Sustainable Communities.

Participants were asked to reflect on questions about sustainability at Luther -- If you are on the Luther campus 10 years from now, what should be different? What will you see related to

sustainability at Luther that is new? -- and in the community -- What is our shared vision for sustainability in Decorah and Northeast Iowa? What do we want to see in our community that would indicate that we are realizing this vision?

Next Steps

Coming out of those input sessions, the core staff of the center worked to distill themes and develop an overall structure for moving forward. We worked with a facilitator and a smaller group to set priorities and provide feedback as we worked to finalize the plan. Now we are seeking final input from a wider group as we work to complete the plan in the coming weeks.

MISSION, VISION, VALUES

CSC Mission Statement

Rooted in our call to be good stewards of the Earth and responsible citizens in the global community, **the mission of the Center for Sustainable Communities at Luther College is to promote sustainability and be a catalyst for change on campus and in the region** through education, outreach, and collaboration.

Definition:

Luther defines sustainability broadly as integrated action to address environmental, economic, and social challenges in order to ensure a more just, equitable, and ecologically healthy world.

Core Values:

Place	Equity
Stewardship	Integrity
Community	Resilience
Relationships	Hope

Shared Vision(10 year perspective):

Sustainability is embedded at Luther College with all students experiencing an inclusive community and a model of living and learning that challenges the dominant paradigm. Our carbon neutral, zero waste, campus and intentional culture connects people to place and campus to community through transformative experiential education. Luther is a partner and a leader in enhancing equity and community resilience on campus, in Decorah and throughout the Driftless Region with a national reputation for academic excellence and sustainability innovation.

While the Center for Sustainable Communities is known and respected as a catalyst for change, sustainability is woven throughout the entire fabric of a vibrant and hopeful campus and culture.

STRATEGIES

Operational Sustainability (OS): The nuts and bolts of our campus infrastructure including energy, waste, food, purchasing, transportation and all aspects of our physical campus.

I. Implement initiatives to be a regional leader in operational sustainability

1. Achieve the 70% greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goal in Luther's Climate Action Plan and develop strategies to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
 - 1.1. Research and implement projects to increase the efficiency of campus operations
 - 1.2. Commission and implement a campus energy master plan that is consistent with our goal of carbon neutrality by 2030
 - 1.3. Develop innovative financial partnerships to install more solar PV plus storage on campus
 - 1.4. Implement a web-based building dashboard tool to educate the community about real time energy consumption and renewable energy production
 - 1.5. Utilize campus networks to increase energy conservation through behavior change
 - 1.6. Research the feasibility of carbon sequestration offsets developed in partnership with state and regional land conservation groups
 - 1.7. Update Luther's Climate Action Plan per the terms required by [Second Nature](#)
 - 1.8. Enhance sustainability in transportation for students and employees as well as with college sponsored travel

2. Develop and implement a zero-waste plan that continues reductions in landfill disposal (achieve 70% reduction from 2004 baseline by 2021 -- 2017-18 was more than 50% below baseline).
 - 2.1. Expand waste and recycling infrastructure to increase the amount of waste diversion
 - 2.2. Educate all campus constituencies about our waste reduction goal and related GHG emission reductions
 - 2.3. Explore elimination of single use, disposable containers on campus such as water bottles and packaging in the grab-n-go line
 - 2.4. Work with all departments on purchasing and source reduction
 - 2.5. Explore innovative partnerships such as community composting to leverage partnerships and economies of scale

3. Increase the consumption of sustainably-produced food and expand food education for students, faculty, and staff by working with the Sodexo and other partners to:
 - 3.1. Develop and implement sustainability goals and metrics for dining services that are related to specific food and dining goals in STARS and the [Real Food Challenge](#)
 - 3.2. Set new numeric goals for local food procurement and meat purchases
 - 3.3. Improve the quality of food and student satisfaction with campus dining

- 3.4. Develop a long-term staffing model for the College Farm that increases student responsibility while developing a sustainable business model
4. Advocate for sustainability in all building projects (new or renovations), including Main and the Regents Center
 - 4.1. Work with Facilities Management and contractors to assist with implementation of Luther's [Green Building Policy](#).
 - 4.2. Collaborate with committees working on plans for Main and Regents to share ideas and examples of ecological design (e.g. daylighting, accessibility, commuter shower, etc.)
 - 4.3. Promote best practices in stormwater management (e.g., permeable paving), water reduction (waterless urinals), and waste infrastructure, etc. for all building projects
 - 4.4. Educate the campus community and the general public about the benefits of sustainable design and green building practices
5. Integrate and maintain sustainable practices in grounds management including a focus on enhanced opportunities for learning, recreation, and connection to place

Applied and Integrated Learning (LN): Work with faculty and staff to create place-based, experiential, and community-based learning opportunities that utilize high-impact pedagogical practices.

II. Make sustainability a part of every student's learning experience while creating place-based, experiential, and community-based learning opportunities

1. Work with faculty to integrate sustainability into the curriculum
 - 1.1. Utilize faculty development workshops and learning communities to create place-based, experiential, and community-based learning opportunities
 - 1.2. Advocate for inclusion of sustainability (including social justice) in revisions to the general education curriculum
 - 1.3. Increase the number of academic credit-earning internships and community-based learning opportunities by fostering and strengthening relationships with businesses and organizations
 - 1.4. Support student-faculty research on sustainability
2. Expand sustainability opportunities via co-curricular activities and organizations
 - 2.1. Collaborate with other centers on campus and foster stronger connections with community groups
 - 2.2. Create transformative learning opportunities like Endeavor Together and explore expanding the latter for all incoming students
 - 2.3. Increase the number of non-academic credit-earning internships and community-based learning opportunities by fostering and strengthening relationships with businesses and organizations

- 2.4. Nurture the creation and persistence of sustainability-oriented student groups such as the former Environmental Concerns Organization (ECO)
 - 2.5. Work with the Center for Global Learning to incorporate appropriate aspects of sustainability into each Study Away experience, calculate the related carbon footprints, and find ways for students to mitigate them
3. Strengthen sustainability education for pre K-12 students and attract more sustainability-focused students to attend Luther
 - 3.1. Refine the Sustainability Scholars Program and secure funding to expand the program
 - 3.2. Continue outreach and environmental education programming for various audiences including area teachers
 - 3.3. Develop programming for middle school youth and high school students interested in sustainability and utilize our network of teachers, counselors, and alums to recruit more youth to enroll at Luther
 4. Leverage campus operations as an opportunity for learning/research/innovation
 - 4.1. Work with faculty and the new Center for Teaching and Learning to help faculty make curricular connections to the campus physical plant
 - 4.2. Utilize data from campus operations for teaching and research

Campus Culture (CC): The “feel” of the place, especially the student culture, and the many ways that sustainability and inclusion are evident and embraced by all campus stakeholders. From res halls to the cafeteria, labs to playing fields, we want a sustainable campus culture.

III. Create a more sustainable culture where students, faculty, and staff live, learn, eat, and play

1. Design a multi-dimensional sustainability education initiative
 - 1.1. Implement sustainability education in the residence halls utilizing students as peer educators or eco-representatives
 - 1.2. Work with Student Life to catalyze more intentional living arrangements like Luther’s [Sustainability House](#)
 - 1.3. Utilize student educators to do more educational events and initiatives
 - 1.4. Pilot “Adulthood 101,” and educational program for students that focuses on key skills like cooking healthy meals, energy management, and financial literacy
 - 1.5. Educate and engage the community about our goals for campus operations including zero waste, sustainability in dining, and Luther’s Climate Action Plan
2. Collaborate with other centers on campus to develop joint programming including speakers, events, and workshops
 - 2.1. Focus on positive and inclusive messaging that reflects and promotes the center’s core values
 - 2.2. Explore award programs or other efforts to improve morale and create a stronger and more inclusive campus culture

- 2.3. Work with Human Resources to revitalize a sustainability orientation for new staff and faculty in partnership with CEPE and CIESS

Community Resilience (CR): Our work beyond campus to do sustainable community outreach and to assist communities and partner organizations to create and implement community resilience plans and projects.

IV. Catalyze movement toward more sustainable communities in collaboration with community partners while creating experiential learning opportunities for students.

1. Help communities engage in resilience planning and implementation
 - 1.1. Develop a timeline and process to sign and implement the [Second Nature Resilience Commitment](#)
 - 1.2. Assist the City of Decorah's efforts to create a multidimensional Sustainability Plan and integrate Luther students in the process
 - 1.3. Work collaboratively with community stakeholders to market the quality of life in Decorah and northeast Iowa
2. Foster a regional approach to sustainability
 - 2.1. Deepen and expand collaborative work on community flood resilience within the watershed of the Upper Iowa River
 - 2.2. Collaborate with Winneshiek County on studying and protecting environmental assets
 - 2.3. Explore innovative models for a regional food system
 - 2.4. Continue to work with the [Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative](#) on regional approaches to education about healthy food and wellness
 - 2.5. Explore with community leaders ways Luther can help promote economic development in the area

V. Leadership, Capacity, and Visibility (LCV): Luther's standing as a sustainability leader, our institutional capacity to our work and how we communicate (internally and externally) to create greater visibility for sustainability on and off campus.

1. Create or renew structures to support the Center and sustainability on campus
 - a. Reorganize and revive the Campus Sustainability Council and its task groups.
 - b. Consider establishing an advisory committee for the work of the Center
2. Secure funding needed for the long-term health of the Center and implementation of this plan
 - a. Work with the Development Office to fully endow the Center for Sustainable Communities
 - b. Seek grants to support particular initiatives

- c. Support the Development Office as they seek support for specific initiatives such as the renovation of Main and the Regents Center, [Endeavor Together](#), and the Sustainability Scholars Program
3. Strengthen the regional, state, and national reputation of the Center by developing and implementing an expanded and improved communication plan with targeted messages and specific strategies for:
 - a. Students
 - b. Faculty and staff
 - c. Prospective students, families, teachers, and influencers
 - d. General public
4. Improve Luther's national and regional visibility by achieving a GOLD rating through STARS