

University of Kentucky - Statement on Sustainability Policy and Principles

The University President and senior administrative staff approved the policy as proposed by the Advisory Committee in January 2009.

Section I. Commitment

The University of Kentucky recognizes that in its mission to improve the lives of Kentuckians, its greatest challenge in our time is to engage the University community to create policies and programs that will simultaneously advance economic vitality, ecological integrity and social equity, now and into the future. As such, it calls upon all levels and constituencies of the University to participate in a continuous and on-going effort to institute the teaching, research, and practice of sustainability and to establish an institutional culture of sustainability.

Section II. Definition

Sustainability has been variously defined and popularized over the past two decades. The most well-known and quoted of definitions defines sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Brundtland Commission Report). Others have defined sustainability more simply as "equity extended into the future" (Herman Daly). Still others have seen the transition to sustainability as associated with "moving from linear to cyclical processes and technologies" (Karl Henrick-Robert). More ambitious and encompassing is the definition of sustainability that see it as a "local, informed, participatory, balance-seeking process, operating within its Sustainable Area Budget, exporting no harmful imbalances beyond its territory or into the future, and thus opening the spaces of future opportunity and possibility" (UK Center for Sustainable Cities).

Section III. Cardinal Principle:

The Sustainable Campus as Exemplar. The University of Kentucky strives to be an exemplar in the application of sustainability principles and practices and to become a sustainable campus by utilizing participatory techniques, such as multiple scenario-building, which bring diverse perspectives to the on-going process of building a sustainable campus.

Section IV: Other Supporting Principles:

Subd. 1. Leadership. Through its pursuit of excellence in advancing sustainability education, research, outreach, and stewardship, the University of Kentucky strives to be on the cutting edge of educational, scientific, technological, social, and cultural advances in scholarship, to take the leadership role in demonstrating the feasibility of inventions of sustainability and resource efficiency, and to produce trained specialists, informed citizens, and public and other leaders knowledgeable of the meaning and wisdom of sustainability and its practices.

Subd. 2. Commitment to Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Sustainable Research. In its aspiration to become a sustainable campus that fosters sustainability in the wider community and

across the Commonwealth, the University shall (a) promote innovative, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research projects in the natural sciences, engineering, agriculture, design, business, social sciences, and humanities to inform campus operations as well as the broader community; and (b) engage in collaborative projects and programs to translate these University efforts into programs that foster sustainable towns, cities, and regions.

Subd. 3. Education. If this University is to meet its obligations to pave the way to a sustainable world, its primary mission of educating present and future generations of students must better address the many facets of sustainability through curricular innovation. Undergraduates must be prepared to become engaged citizens involved in facing the challenges of climate change, global pollution, soil depletion, oil and other natural resource scarcities, and the mounting water crisis with interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary understanding, scientific and technical enlightenment, and cultural and social sensitivity. Graduate students and professional degree candidates must be educated and trained to tackle these same problems as civic professionals through professional knowledge and wisdom, and civic commitment, and community leadership.

Subd. 4. Community Engagement. As a land-grant institution and the Commonwealth's flagship university, the University of Kentucky shall promote community outreach activities that enrich citizens, businesses, public and civic entities in the Commonwealth and beyond in living a more spiritually wholesome, physically healthy, and culturally harmonious relationship with their natural and built environment. Whether in its relations with the local community, the Bluegrass region, the entire state or its other geographic touchstones, the University's responsibilities as societal exemplar and educational laboratory of sustainability entail the necessity of forging new and enduring partnerships with these agencies to build a sustainable future for all.

Section V. Implementation

Subd. 1. Administration. The University administration of its sustainability program shall include a presidentially-appointed Sustainability Committee and a Sustainability Coordinator reporting to the Vice President for Facilities Management to advance sustainability goals informing administrative policies and procedures in the areas of planning, decision making, execution, assessment, and reporting. These policies and procedures shall rely on scientific analysis and support the efforts described in subds. 2-6 of this section. The primary responsibility of the Sustainability Coordinator will be to facilitate these activities through participatory, collaborative means. The Sustainability Coordinator shall also be responsible for publicizing the work of campus sustainability programs and their outcomes among students, faculty, staff, administrators, and the larger public. The President's Cabinet will promote the University's sustainability agenda within its domain of influence and report to the campus community how it is advancing the culture of sustainability in support of these policies.

Subd. 2. Operations. Each University unit shall participate in an ongoing University-wide collaborative process that seeks synergies and sustainable balances in the areas of physical planning and development, including building and infrastructure; operations; transportation; purchasing; and waste management and abatement. The results of this process will include:

- a. meeting and working to exceed all applicable and emergent energy, building, and resource conservation regulatory requirements;
- b. working to prevent pollution at its source;
- c. working to attain carbon neutrality;
- d. reducing dependence on non-renewable energy and encouraging renewable energy alternatives;
- e. and fostering the use of a life-cycle cost evaluation process in campus purchasing and construction.

Subd.3. Unit Planning. Each University Unit/College will demonstrate a commitment to developing the University's leadership role in a culture of sustainability by: incorporating sustainability principles across the curriculum, rewarding sustainability-related research, teaching, and service.

Subd. 4. Funding. A continuous revenue stream for funding this sustainability initiative should be generated by the Vice President for Facilities Management. In addition, savings generated by successful natural resource conservation and campus-wide synergies should be re-invested into subsequent sustainability initiatives and for the benefit of the University.

Subd. 5. Accountability. The Sustainability Committee through the direction of the Sustainability Coordinator shall propose to the President measures of success in the implementation of the principles outlined in this policy in consultation with appropriate faculty, staff, students, and experts in the wider community.

Subd. 6. Reporting. The President or delegate shall report to the Board of Trustees annually on the progress toward implementing this policy to identify opportunities for subsequent improvement and greater synergies in University teaching, research, service and outreach, planning and operations.