

CMP Sustainability Working Group
Review of Proposals
DRAFT October 2, 2015

What problem are we trying to solve?

Humans are using natural resources and systems in ways that are incompatible with universal human development and global equity. These effects are not lost on our students. However, the complex and daunting nature of challenges stemming from climate change and unsustainable resource use can lead to disengagement and psychological distancing. Smith will prepare students to become the next generation of sustainability leaders **using our institution as a learning lab and demonstration site** for ways to change systems and organizations and promote innovation. In so doing, we aspire to be a model to other campuses, communities and the world.

Common themes

A number of strategic planning proposals invoked themes of sustainability. Some of these were operational, others focused on educational approaches. Collectively, they spoke to a desire that Smith demonstrate **leadership in sustainability**.

The intersection of the operational and educational is important, as it is an area in which Smith can excel. Using our **campus as laboratory** for student investigation, analysis and problem solving was a theme that ran through many proposals. While students might actually design and develop a project that would be implemented on campus, the laboratory idea extends to the use of campus data, campus behaviors or campus communications.

As we seek to demonstrate leadership and innovation, we need to support and incentivize the best ideas from across campus. This will require both institutional support and sometimes funding (as some of the best innovations need piloting, or may have additional cost). A **sustainability innovation fund** should be established to support the best ideas from across campus.

Operationally, there were a number of themes among planning proposals. Four of these stand out as priorities.

- **The Smith campus landscape** is a unique and a beloved hallmark of the college. Many proposals cited needs to change, upgrade or improve how we manage or think about our landscape (e.g. proposals about turf, the pond and parking lot management). To this end, we believe that there should be a renewed focus on planning future landscape development. This renewed effort should be viewed through a sustainability lens -- one which considers:
 - the role of the landscape as a pedagogical tool,
 - how we will reduce our environmental impact,
 - recognizes the place of our landscape within the community and region,
 - promotes biological benefit (ecosystem services), and
 - ensures that the landscape adapts to a changing climate.

- **Sustainable food culture** - Food and the dining experience are also hallmarks of the Smith experience and identity. A number of proposals have called on the college to continue to improve sustainability and local foods in dining operations. Therefore, enlightened food practices, work with local farmers and community based organizations should be an focus of our efforts.

- **Continued decarbonization** is a global need, one which we need to continually recommit to on our campus. As we develop a decarbonized institution, we demonstrate leadership toward a decarbonized economy.

- **Innovative spaces** - The more than 100 buildings that make up the Smith campus are our second most valuable asset and one which should be used wisely. Without expansion of enrollment or programs, we should not expand our gross square footage, and perhaps even shrink it by using buildings creatively and collaboratively. We believe that this will have the side benefit of creating a sense of vibrant learning communities on campus. To incentivize this effort, we imagined a “venture fund for space innovation” that would provide upgrades to spaces where there is greater sharing and collaboration.

What do we fail to gain?

If we do not follow these strategic initiatives, we are exposed to a number of risks. Our greatest risk is that we enable a culture that allows, and give permission for students to remain disengaged from, or worse, in a state of despair about the global sustainability challenge.

In addition, we have a reputation for stewardship and sustainability that is at stake. Student applicants, alumnae and faculty prospects are interested in “what Smith is doing.”

Continued focus on sustainability helps us to “future proof” the organization. It keeps us engaged in long term risk reduction from expected changes in weather, supply chains, disease, other adaptive challenges that could be costly.

Cost Dynamics

Investment in sustainability now will likely reduce risk and enhance business continuity. Potential step changes in how we use energy could see significant savings (for example the approximately \$1M we save each year as a result of the cogeneration project, or the 2% reduction in electricity used between FY 2014 and 2015). However, some initiatives will involve spending more where we will not have a direct payback. Examples include improving the nature and quality of food in dining, or upgrading our landscape such that it performs a more robust set of ecological and pedagogical services.

Engaging the campus as a laboratory will mean that sometimes we might spend more on a given project so that it serves as an educational experience. This delta could be paid for by an innovation fund, or through some other form of cross funding for educational and operational initiatives.

Finally, as we engage more students in using the campus as an exploration for positive change-making, we may need additional funds for student summer research, internships etc.

What are next steps?

- Follow and/or enact the recommendations of forthcoming Climate Change Working Group
- Update SCAMP (possibly based on above)
- Update Landscape Master Plan

- Inventory current campus as lab (operational x educational) initiatives
- Funding

Membership

- Laurie Fenlason
- Michael Howard
- Bob Newton
- Jeff Ramsey
- Amy Rhodes
- Dano Weisbord

Appendix: Proposals Grouped by Common Themes (as presented at 9/3/15 CMP retreat)

Sustainability/Environmental Leadership

(81, 87, 140, 141, 142, 145, 151)

- How do we create the next generation of complex thinkers, environmental leaders?
- Use campus as teaching/research laboratory (landscape, buildings, college data, student behavior etc.)
- Learn by doing/solving real problems
- Blur the line between operations and curriculum
- Intense summer experience: address “wicked problems in a changing world”
- Permaculture experiments at MacLeish
- Review/align the governance of related programs (already happening)
- Sustainability innovation fund

Landscape master plan reboot

(38, 70, 108, 119, 128, 156)

- Revisit/update landscape master plan in light of sustainability values and best practice
- Ground covers -- fewer pesticides, organic land management
- Hardscape
- Permeable spaces
- Sustainable management of river, pond and any other regional ecosystems

Innovative spaces

(61)

- Fewer spaces, higher quality, flexible, multipurpose
- Fewer custom labs, offices etc for individual faculty
- Incentivizing shared space (including financial (renovation) incentives

- Venture fund for shared space innovation

Sustainable food culture

(86, 89, 162)

- Enlightened food practices, work with local farmers and community based organizations
- Dining/food culture that reflects sustainability values