Sustainability Literacy
Opportunities & Objectives Planning Document

Goal

Colleges and universities must exercise leadership in their communities and throughout society by providing the knowledge, research, practice, and informed graduates to create a positive and sustainable future. Cornell University has committed to “integrating sustainability into the curriculum and making it part of the educational experience for all students” as a part of the Presidents’ Carbon Commitment for climate action in 2008.

Learning Objectives
Working materials with potential for further exploration and refinement by an appropriate Cornell body

Definition - Consistent with the Sustainability Literacy Test and standard embraced by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Literacy is defined as “knowledge about our shared sustainability challenges as well as ways to create solutions to these challenges”.

Sustainability learning objectives have not been defined at Cornell. Existing institutional examples:

- University of California, Irvine Sustainability Learning Outcomes
- CalPoly Sustainability Learning Objectives
- University of Vermont Sustainability Learning Outcomes & Curriculum Proposal Form
- Dickinson College Sustainability Education Requirements
- ACPA College Students Educators International Sustainability Taskforce Student Learning Outcomes for Sustainability: Assessment Materials Guidebook

Additional References

- Rappaport, Anna. Degrees that Matter: Climate Change and the University. 2007.
Curricular Strategies

Current
Annual reporting for sustainability includes eight curriculum related data areas, each with several data subsets. Cornell reports publicly through STARS - Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, the national standard for sustainability performance reporting.

2017 STARS Report - Cornell University
Data areas available: Academics & Curriculum

- AC-1: Academic Courses
- AC-2: Learning Outcomes
- AC-3: Undergraduate Program
- AC-4: Graduate Program
- AC-5: Immersive Experience
- AC-6: Sustainability Literacy Assessment
- AC-7: Incentives for Developing Courses
- AC-8: Campus as a Living Laboratory

AC1- Academic Courses: Sustainability Courses at Cornell (2017 STARS Data) – 732 total courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability focused courses offered</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses that include sustainability</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total % of courses offered with sustainability</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total % of departments offering sustainability courses</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
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Opportunities
Cornell was one of the first institutions to include sustainability in accreditation. The following are considered exemplary methods for curricular sustainability literacy, with numbers of institutions reporting use:

Methods to provide all students with sustainability education (Second Nature, 2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability learning outcomes, tracks, or certificates in every academic major.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability learning outcomes embedding into General Education Requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use sustainability in fulfilling regional accreditation requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use sustainability in fulfilling state accreditation requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development offered to all faculty in sustainability education</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Additional assessment is needed to refine the appropriate methodology for Cornell University.
Co-curricular Strategies

Ongoing efforts to integrate sustainability literacy (inclusive of climate change literacy) into the campus experience through residential, co-curricular, engagement, and service opportunities should be developed and supported.

Current
- Collaboration with North Campus Faculty Programs and residential staff, including new Engaged Learning Where You Live course (BLOG 1250), Community Fellow role, and ALS2000: Leadership for Sustainability
- Trainings and resources provided for all residential staff (professional and student)
- Support and collaboration with New Student Orientation, including OL trainings, EcoRep volunteers, speaker events, large-scale events, club fairs, publications, and dinners
- Promotion of sustainability and climate change literacy for all graduate and undergraduate students through resource fairs, bi-weekly “Sustainable Campus Connections” newsletter (opt-in), SAO email to all student orgs, community events, dinners, campus-wide events, and Sustainability Month
- Maximizing outreach to off-campus students via campus partners, including Off-Campus Housing Office, Graduate School, and student orgs like Greeks Go Green
- Adoption, support, and expansion of residential energy reduction initiatives such as Energy Smackdown, Winter Setbacks, Building Energy Dashboard, and Earth Hour
- Adoption, support, and expansion of residential waste reduction initiatives such as Mini Bins, the Residential Compost Program, TerraCycle, Dump & Run, and RecycleMania
- Develop and support student orgs and student leadership initiatives, including the Student Sustainability Leadership Retreat, Student Leadership Summit, and the Golden Gorge Awards

Potential
- Integration into College-specific materials sent to students prior to New Student Orientation
- Mandatory sustainability and climate literacy online quiz taken by new students prior to arrival
- Student survey on sustainability & climate change literacy (every fall)
- Creation of “Student Sustainability Leaders” organization focused on creating sustainability solutions for residential buildings and communities
- On-going SCL support for sustainability intern focused on residential initiatives
- Cornell’s visible participation in Earth Hour, including high profile buildings like the Clocktower and the Johnson Museum of Art
- Large-scale service projects focused on energy and waste reduction organized with Alpha Phi Omega (APO) and Public Service Center
- Creation of permanent interior and exterior signage highlighting sustainable features of buildings and landscapes on campus
- Collaboration with Student and Campus Life Facilities on energy reduction initiatives such as converting washing machines to “cold water only”
- Develop and support of graduation pledge in which students pledge to consider social and environmental responsibility in future jobs and other decisions