

Sustainability Charter Committee Minutes

Tuesday, October 19, 2021 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Zoom

Present: Matthieu Biger, Michelle Fravel, Joseph Haggerty, Erin Irish, Melissa Meisterheim, Laurie Ponto, Sam Schauer, Emily Schmitz, Mary Trachsel

Absent: Amber Crow, Isabella Mullins, Jenna Wischmeyer

Liaisons: N/A

Ex Officio: Tony Senio, Glen Rogers

Staff: Beth MacKenzie, Blake Rupe

1. Call to Order

2. Brief overviews of:

a) [Iowa Climate Statement 2021](#) “Strengthening Iowa’s Electric Infrastructure”

- The derecho helped us appreciate that our energy infrastructure is fragile. This had many indirect effects (impacts on food supply structure, lack of trees/green space and connection to urban crime, etc.).
- This statement is an annual press release from stakeholders across Iowa which serves as a signal to policy makers that there are people in this group who could provide input on these topics.
- Website includes past press releases as well, public signatures can be added. Email Erin if you would like to participate by signing the statement next year.

b) [Decarb 2040](#) “Positioning Iowa as an energy exporter in the coming era of deep decarbonization”

- A local effort with the goal of getting the conversation started across campus, committee members are encouraged to participate in meetings with this group.
- Charlie Stanier is the lead of the group.

c) Ideas Lab

- Goal is for faculty at multiple Iowa institutions to get together to create groundwork to be able to utilize federal grant money related to sustainability topics. This effort will be led by Stratis.

3. Review of “[Certified Bee Campus](#)” letter

- Working with students who are interested in becoming a “Certified Bee Campus.”
- First step is to have the president’s office support the effort – a letter to the president has been drafted by the students, faculty and staff working on this effort.
- Several other Big 10 campuses are Certified Bee Campuses.
- Next steps will involve, as an example, completing an application and recommending a native plant list and supplier.

- This will hopefully be seen as a compliment to the pesticide report that was published ~2 years ago.
- Committee members in attendance voted in unanimous support of the effort.
- Next step: the committee chairs will forward the letter to the Office of the President.

4. Plastics use on campus – and other Green Purchasing / “Zero Waste” matters

- Blake and Beth are very focused on becoming a Zero Waste campus and will be exploring what this looks like for our campus over the next 10 years; this will need to involve purchasing decisions.
- Blake and Beth provided an informative talk regarding plastic waste: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK-mo3FiQqA>
- Campus dining just launched a reusable container program
- Waste-to-energy is part of the discussion (done at Iowa State) but AT Iowa, we don’t have enough waste to power the campus and there are significant concerns about the contaminants that would be produced. For these reasons, reduction is the goal.
- Blake is currently working with other Big 10 institutions to explore the contracts we have with Coca Cola, Pepsi, etc. and how they address sustainability, plastic use, etc.
- A purchasing audit could be performed to help us understand our purchasing habits/contracts and how they relate to the Zero Waste goal
- Blake is working with dining and the county to ensure that we are shifting our University money to local farmers when possible. This type of effort could be considered for non-food purchasing as well.

5. [Ashton Prairie](#): potential for other uses?

- Currently a site for experiential learning/research.
- Erin had an idea for a new use: identification of a perennial cereal grain has been a goal to reduce the environmental costs associated with annual harvesting and a seed has been recently identified.
- It is possible that the Ashton prairie could be used as a site for students to explore the growth process for novel plants like this grain that are important for the food supply.
- Identification of places on campus for these living labs is important for multiple learning opportunities.
- As the Ashton Prairie project grows in size/scope, Blake is working to expand the Ashton Prairie website to be campuses wide instead of the individual course link.

6. Seeking feedback before 10/27 TIAA|Nuveen / UI HR meeting

- Nuveen is the subsidiary of TIAA involved in the farmland investments. Meetings will be held 10/27 to discuss the oversight of responsible investments.

7. Next meeting: Wed 11/17 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

8. Adjournment