

Sustainable Idaho Initiative: Learning Together, Leading the Way

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A Steering Committee of faculty, staff and students will be created at the proposal stage.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

"Sustainability is about remaking the human presence in the natural world in a manner that will allow all current and future humans to be healthy; have strong, vibrant, secure and thriving communities and nations; have economic opportunity for all; and restore and maintain the integrity of our life-support system - the biosphere."

Society for College and University Planning

The comfortable lifestyles we in the developed world enjoy today carry with them hidden, and not so hidden, costs. Consumerism, environmental degradation, and urban sprawl are some of the consequences of unsustainable behavior. People are increasingly aware of our ecological footprint and are questioning the path that the developed world is on, a path that the developing world is also following. Can our ecological systems tolerate six, eight or ten billion people living the American lifestyle? Can our economic systems remain strong and vital at the end of the age of oil? Can our communities and social systems thrive in the 21st century?

By signing the Talloires Declaration, the UI has stated its objective of becoming a sustainable institution. The 58th Idaho Legislature has directed Idaho's universities toward an

educational focus on sustainability. To function as productive global citizens of the 21st century, our graduates need revolutionary educational programs that prepare them for the critical jobs they will do and the difficult choices they will make; our research must focus on solving real, complex, multifaceted problems; and our outreach efforts must be aligned with the needs of today's communities. Now is the time for the UI to lead the change that will result in healthy and vibrant organizations, vital economies, sustainable environments, and fair and equitable societies. The goal of the Sustainable Idaho Initiative is make the UI sustainable by 2025.

DESCRIPTION OF INITIATIVE

WHEREAS, the state of Idaho and its institutions of higher education have profound responsibility to increase awareness, knowledge, technology and tools that will lead the state of Idaho to a prosperous and sustainable future; . . . THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the First Regular Session of the Fifty-eighth Idaho Legislature, the Senate and the House of Representatives concurring therein, that an educational focus on sustainability will lead the state of Idaho to the realization of its economic aspirations, environmental goals, and beyond our greatest expectations for the future. Institutions of higher learning are encouraged to set an example by implementing steps to achieve a sustainable community, with the ultimate goal of a sustainable Idaho.

Idaho Legislature April 6, 2005

The Sustainable Idaho Initiative: Learning Together, Leading the Way will catalyze institutional transformation by creating a vibrant, visible, interdisciplinary learning community of faculty, staff, and students to integrate sustainability into the activities of the University of Idaho. The commitment, creativity, passion, curiosity and camaraderie among the initial group working on this initiative have been inspiring to everyone involved. This community will implement the Talloires Declaration signed by President White on March 3, 2005 which requires bringing sustainability into our curriculum, research, outreach and campus operations. The role of institutions of higher education is not only to teach, but also to learn. In crafting the vision, priorities and actions described in this initiative, we have been guided by the experience of the handful of universities that have begun such initiatives (Barlett and Chase, 2004), and will adapt their experiences to the unique role of a land-grant, research-intensive institution in Idaho. We will invite a sustainability mentor from another university to work with the Steering Committee, a subset of the faculty, staff and students committed to this initiative, in implementing our goal.

Currently, the UI consists of disciplinary communities with overlapping interests and diverse expertise. There is no formal structure for collaboration and interdisciplinary work among these communities. Collectively developing a shared vision of the future involving sustainable learning environments and sustainable operations requires changing the status quo. Implementing a comprehensive and long-term vision will have to involve all aspects of who we are as the University of Idaho. Our goal is to change our current structure to one that supports problem solving and interdisciplinary thinking. This initiative will lead to outcomes that include a more sustainable future for ourselves, citizens of Idaho and the world, and future generations.

The Sustainable Idaho Initiative will create the critical infrastructure elements – a multi-faceted leadership team, multiple pathways and a sustainability fund – that will enable our goal to become reality. Our strategy will be based on multiple small-scale prototyping, where we learn from our successes and mistakes on small projects before we move to a larger scale.

Providing Leadership

Our initiative will create a leadership structure to spearhead implementation of sustainability across the university. A Steering Committee of faculty, staff and students will set policy and provide advice throughout the term of the initiative and beyond. Initially, leadership and management will be coordinated by the Steering Committee with assistance from the Environmental Science (EnvS) Program office. Immediate objectives will be to appoint an

academic Sustainability Director (2/3 time, rotating faculty), a staff Sustainability Coordinator (with UI and ASUI support), and several student leadership positions (part time, rotating).

The Sustainability Director will:

- work with UI faculty and administrative leadership to remove barriers toward full faculty participation in interdisciplinary teaching, learning, research and outreach;
- provide leadership for integrating sustainability into the curriculum, research and outreach of the university, and coordinate all aspects of the project;
- work closely with the Steering Committee, coordinator and student leaders on policy, goals, outcomes and assessment;
- manage a competitive process for allocating monies, called the Sustainability Fund;
- seek external funding to make the initiative financially sustainable.

The Sustainability Coordinator will:

- coordinate student and volunteer involvement to increase campus sustainability;
- work with the director to obtain external funding for sustainability projects;
- assist the director in managing activities supported by this initiative.

The Student Leaders will:

- work to recruit and coordinate student volunteers toward the accomplishment of projects that improve the sustainability of UI operations and activities;
- promote the concept of sustainability to the larger student body and governments;
- make recommendations on the allocation of money from the Sustainability Fund for student focused activities.

In order to provide highly visible leadership this effort should be housed in an autonomous space. It must be centrally located on campus with adequate room to accommodate the participants, as well as offer a place for necessary resources and projects.

Integrating Sustainability into the Curriculum

An important component of integrating sustainability into the curriculum involves *projects that provide transformational learning opportunities for students, faculty, and staff*. We plan to create a learning environment that optimizes student and faculty growth through assessment rather than evaluation. Our vision is to connect sustainability education with operational improvement through experiential learning projects on our campuses and in communities and enterprises in our state and region. These projects can be integrated into courses at all levels and provide research and design opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students. We will:

- create and deliver workshops to 100 faculty members on integrating sustainability and experiential learning activities into existing curricula and courses (a grant proposal for a 2006 summer workshop was submitted in November 2005 to the EPA);
- fund the development and startup of a minimum of 10 new courses on sustainability across campus;
- work with the CORE Coordinator to infuse CORE courses with sustainability concepts (discussions about a Sustainable Living course have already begun).

Infusing Sustainability into Research

By *infusing paradigms and concepts of sustainability into research*, the impact of the research will surpass other institutions in its innovation, responsiveness, and significance. Fiscally and strategically, UI will become more competitive for federal, state, and private research initiatives that focus on research and education that support sustainability. We will:

- sponsor a speaker series to bring diverse leaders in sustainability to campus;
- provide seed grants for interdisciplinary sustainability research, travel for researchers (faculty and students) to present their work, and fund graduate student research;
- facilitate collaborative interdisciplinary research activities across campus by hiring a

- proposal writer to position teams competitively for future grants and projects;
- seek more external funding that will support sustainability research activities (one such proposal was submitted to NSF Partnerships for Innovation Program in June 2005).

Modeling Sustainability in Operations and Outreach

UI campus facilities, and communities in Idaho, the region and the world will become educational laboratories for sustainability. Using the educational model of experiential and service learning, the UI campuses and our communities will gain from the knowledge, collaboration, experience and enthusiasm that are generated through this initiative. We will:

- develop indicators of campus sustainability and measurable improvement goals;
- perform a university sustainability assessment and disseminate the results as a report card to serve as a baseline against which future improvements can be measured annually;
- use the Sustainability Fund to provide seed grants for student projects that promote sustainability on our campuses and in our communities;
- work with local NGOs and city officials to integrate university and community sustainability efforts;
- engage the ideas and talents of outreach and extension faculty and the Service Learning Coordinator to extend sustainable practices into communities throughout the State by creating opportunities for students to work on sustainability projects;
- create a "Sustainability Experience" that will support travel to off-campus locations (local, national, & international) where students will intern with community organizations or humanitarian groups to engage in sustainability learning and project work;
- create a loan fund whereby organizations on campus can borrow money to implement entrepreneurial sustainability projects; funds will be repaid with project earnings.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT RELATIVE TO THE CRITERIA

This initiative will have a profound impact on our institution and its graduates. It is designed to bring the UI national recognition for leadership and excellence in sustainability and environmental stewardship across all our core activities – teaching, research, outreach and campus operations. Even more important than this national leadership position, we aim to empower our graduates to be leaders in society's effort toward creating a sustainable future. This initiative meets all eight components of the strategic re-investment criteria.

It is an innovative, clear and distinct statement about renewal of people, programs, and place. This initiative not only provides renewal and transformation of the university, but is part of a fundamental transformation in how we as a people view and create our future. While our interdisciplinary effort advances all five of the President's strategic themes, its achievement is absolutely central to achieving excellence in environmental stewardship (theme 4) and sustainable design and life style (theme 5).

It enhances collaborative, integrative, and multi-interdisciplinary activities. Promoting university-wide collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts is the heart of this initiative. This will be achieved, in part, by developing a structure that helps to overcome barriers to interdisciplinary activities. The Sustainability Fund will allow transactional leadership across college, department and organization boundaries. The initial organizing impetus for this initiative was Environmental Science Program faculty and staff. Since 1993, the environmental science community has been working across disciplines and building alliances across campus. The EnvS relationship with the Enriched Learning Environment community will help develop the strategies necessary to success as it relates to learning outcomes, reliable measurements, and assessment.

It addresses the land grant mission of teaching and learning, discovery and creative activity, and outreach and engagement. A key aspect of this initiative is to affect institutional transformation by integrating teaching, discovery and outreach through creating learning

communities. This transformation will begin on our campuses and, with extension faculty support, expand to engage communities in Idaho and the region.

It enhances and promotes diversity, including developing international dimensions and perspectives. Our initiative will create opportunities for international sustainability experiences for students, faculty and staff as well as bring speakers with international perspectives on sustainability to campus.

It contributes to Idaho's environmental, economic, social, and cultural well-being. This initiative will help make Idaho a more sustainable place and richer environmentally, economically, socially and culturally. By using innovative sustainable practices it will transform business as usual to meet "the triple bottom line" (environment, society and economy).

It leverages existing resources demonstrating a high degree of commitment from units. The EnvS Program is a mature, successful interdisciplinary program with an existing Director, staff and Core Faculty. With the EnvS Program acting in an advisory capacity to the Steering Committee for this initiative, we can rely on this extensive network of faculty, staff and students and our collective knowledge and experience at making collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts work. This initiative will also support and build on the efforts of existing clubs and projects that have initiated sustainable practices on this campus.

It will generate new resources that will allow for continuation and growth. The creation of new, stronger interdisciplinary research teams committed to sustainability and environmental stewardship will develop expertise that can compete successfully for federal and private grant money. The Sustainability Director, in coordination with the UI Office of Development, will network with alumni and donors to support our continuing and expanding efforts. In addition, by consistently graduating exceptional students who demonstrate expertise from improved learning environments, the UI will be attractive to employers, alumni and donors.

It has already engaged the commitment and passion of people and units. All co-PIs are committed to integrating sustainability into their teaching, research, and outreach activities. Very large groups of faculty, staff, students and community members have met and communicated many times over the past six months, both on and off-campus, committing their time and displaying their passion for bringing sustainability to the UI. People have said, "I believe in what we are trying to do" and "This gives me hope." Molding a future where the UI takes a leadership role in sustainability will inspire and invigorate UI constituencies.

FIVE YEAR TIMELINE (ASSUMING FUNDING BEGINS APRIL 2006)

- Hire Sustainability Director and Sustainability Coordinator (Spring/Summer 2006)
- Create campaign to raise awareness of sustainability concerns (Spring 2006, ongoing)
- Identify experiential learning projects by working with facilities (Spring 2006, ongoing)
- Advertise for and recruit sustainability mentor for UI (Spring 2006, Spring 2007)
- Deliver five Sustainability in the Curriculum workshops (Summer 2006, annually)
- Build the Sustainability Fund by writing grants (Summer 2006, ongoing)
- Create a Sustainability Speaker Series, deliver one per semester (Fall 2006, ongoing)
- Meet with administration to create incentives for this work (Fall 2006, Spring 2007)
- Create sustainability CORE classes with the CORE Coordinator (Fall 2006, ongoing)
- Develop indicators of campus sustainability, then carry out assessment (Fall 06, Sp 07)
- Establish campus-wide awards for excellence in sustainability (Spring 2007, ongoing)
- Establish off-campus student experiential learning projects (Spring 2007, ongoing)
- Identify a permanent space for sustainability offices (begin Spring 2006)
- Publish the Campus Sustainability Report card (Fall 2007)
- Expand sustainability outreach effort (Fall 2008)
- Conduct yearly sustainability assessment activities, publish results, celebrate successes
- New sustainability courses become self-sufficient (Spring 2009 – Spring 2011)

- Redo campus report card to measure sustainability improvements (Spring 2010)
- Graduate first group of global citizens (Spring 2010)
- Complete and dedicate a high profile campus sustainability project (Spring 2011)

SIX-YEAR BUDGET

Sources of Funds	year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5	year 6	Total
Strategic Investment Grant	330,000	330,000	330,000	330,000	330,000	0	1,650,000
External Grants (net)	30,000	100,000	190,000	300,000	400,000	450,000	1,470,000
Donations (net)	10,000	50,000	80,000	100,000	160,000	200,000	600,000
Student Initiated Fee	0	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	250,000
20% of Project Savings	0	20,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	140,000
Projected Total Funds	370,000	550,000	680,000	810,000	970,000	730,000	4,110,000
Uses of Funds / Investments in Excellence							
Personnel Costs							
Academic Director (67%)	56,390	58,645	60,900	63,910	67,670	71,050	378,565
Coordinator (partial)	12,000	12,600	13,200	13,800	14,400	15,000	81,000
Student Leaders	32,000	44,000	46,000	59,000	62,000	65,000	308,000
Grant Writer (P/T)	10,000	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	18,000	83,000
Fringe Benefits	23,409	24,393	25,377	26,610	28,091	29,447	157,327
Operating Expenses							
New Courses	30,000	70,000	80,000	70,000	40,000	0	290,000
Curriculum Workshop	40,000	45,000	50,000	52,000	55,000	58,000	300,000
Student Projects	43,201	69,362	81,523	87,680	104,839	91,503	478,108
Hosting Mentors	40,000	40,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	120,000
Speaker Series	18,000	16,000	16,000	17,000	18,000	12,000	97,000
UI Report Card	20,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	25,000	25,000	100,000
Marketing & Promotion	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	95,000
Awards for Excellence	5,000	15,000	15,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	95,000
Misc. Operating Expenses	5,000	5,000	7,000	8,000	8,000	10,000	43,000
Research Seed Grants	15,000	35,000	50,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	280,000
Student Research	0	25,000	40,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	215,000
Campus Loan Fund	0	10,000	20,000	20,000	10,000	0	60,000
Expanded Outreach	0	0	30,000	60,000	80,000	90,000	260,000
Travel Costs							
Director & Coordinator	10,000	10,000	10,000	12,000	12,000	15,000	69,000
Research Travel	0	20,000	25,000	35,000	35,000	35,000	150,000
Off-Campus Experiences	0	15,000	20,000	30,000	35,000	35,000	135,000
Capital Outlay							
High Profile Project	0	0	40,000	75,000	200,000	0	315,000
Total Investments	370,000	550,000	680,000	810,000	970,000	730,000	4,110,000

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