

**University of Wisconsin – La Crosse
Joint Committee on Environmental Sustainability
2022-2023 Annual Report**

UW-La Crosse Sustainability Mission Statement

Prepared and approved by the UW-La Crosse Joint Committee on Environmental Sustainability December 6, 2013. Also approved by the UWL Student Association (December 11, 2013), Academic Staff Council (December 10, 2013), and Faculty Senate (February 13, 2014).

Mission

The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse will provide students, faculty, staff and the community with the knowledge and skills to be environmentally responsible and involved citizens who understand and consider the global effects of their actions and the actions of others. The University will strive to use and implement sustainable best practices while minimizing its carbon footprint.

Vision

The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is a campus where:

- Education and research prepare students, faculty, staff, and surrounding communities to engage in dialogue and positive action around sustainability.
- University leadership is committed to sustainability and will direct adequate resources toward the development of sustainability expertise and best practices on campus.
- Minimizing adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts of university operations is a priority.
- The understanding and concern for sustainability issues provides the foundation for dynamic campus collaboration and community for students, faculty, and staff.

Committee Membership

- Andrew Ericson – Chair – University Centers/ Sustainability Program Manager
- Grace Lopez Johnson – Vice Chair – UWLSA Sustainability Director
- Brandon Anderson – Meeting Recorder/Secretary – Faculty Senate Rep.
- Erika Holen – Students for Sustainability Rep.
- Blythe Pollard - Students for Sustainability Rep. (Spring only)
- Jake Johnston – Student Senate Rep.
- Carter Drost – Student Senate Rep.
- Cassandra Ziegler – Green Fund Coordinator
- Colin Belby – Faculty Senate Rep.
- Barrett Klein – Faculty Senate Rep.
- Lisa Pitot – Faculty Senate Rep.
- Chelsea Wyman-Green - Faculty Senate Rep.
- Steve Fulton – Academic Staff Rep.
- Derek Norby – Academic Staff Rep.
- Victoria Rosin – Academic Staff Rep.
- Pearl Bearhart – University Staff Rep. (until Dec 2022)
- Margot Higgins – Environmental Studies Rep.
- Veronica Pettigrew – Division of Diversity and Inclusion Rep. (until Feb 2023)
- Zachary Debroux – Residence Life Rep.
- Tom Venner – Facilities Management Rep.

Highlights of 2022-2023 accomplishments

New Sustainability Program Manager

Andrew Ericson started in this position on July 25th, 2022

- First full-time sustainability position at UWL
 - <https://www.uwlax.edu/news/posts/sustainability-starter/>
 - https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/uw-la-crosse-hires-first-sustainability-program-manager/article_cd445d6e-0f4c-11ed-8bba-ab228d0224ba.html
 - https://www.wxow.com/video/uw-l-hires-new-sustainability-leader/video_1c77ac84-e005-5e90-84e9-0c6a585b2792.html

Guest Speakers

- October 14th, 2022: Chancellor Joe Gow attended JCES (Joint Committee on Environmental Sustainability) as a guest speaker.

- December 2nd, 2022: Provost Betsy Morgan attended JCES as a guest speaker.
- January 27th, 2023: Physical Plant Director Scott Brown attended JCES as a guest speaker.
- February 24th, 2023: Vice Chancellor of Administration and Finance Bob Hetzel attended JCES as a guest speaker.

UWL campus sustainable highlights:

- December 14th, 2022: “A Sustainable Start” was posted on Campus Connection, which outlined the current state of UWL’s sustainability achievements. This included information on UWL’s 30% reduction in carbon emissions from electricity and heating related emissions.
 - <https://www.uwlax.edu/news/posts/a-sustainable-start/>
 - https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/uw-la-crosse-continues-to-improve-its-carbon-footprint/article_4ad35bde-7bd3-11ed-9e87-1b162c317558.html
- December 15th, 2023: Andrew Ericson, UWL’s Sustainability Program Manager was the guest speaker at the UWL Alumni Association’s “What’s New Wednesday’s” to discuss progressions on sustainability on campus and how to be sustainable during the holiday season.
 - <https://www.uwlax.edu/currents/sustainable-holiday-ideas/>.
- April 12th, 2023: Jonathan Foley, the executive director of Project Drawdown and a world-renowned climate scientist, visited UWL as the year’s Prairie Springs Lecturer. His lecture in Graff Main Hall drew roughly 300 attendees.
 - [Event Photos](#).
 - Watch the lecture here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU-7oYsDqME>
- April 17th, 2023: Sustainability Display at Murphy Library went live. This initiative was made possible because of a collaboration between Chelsea Wyman-Green and Students for Sustainability Co-Chairs, Erika Holen and Blythe Pollard.
- April 19th, 2023: The Campus Thread held the Campus Thread Fashion Show in the Student Union, with theme, “9-5 and 5-9”.
- April 21st, 2023: Earthapalooza, a student lead Earth Day celebration was held on campus in the Student Union.
- April 27th, 2023: Drift Cycle officially launched their 3rd season with an event at UWL on the Student Union lawn.

La Crosse Community highlights:

- January 12th, 2023: The City of La Crosse Common Council unanimously passed a Climate Action Plan.

- February 15th, 2023: The Community Transportation Academy (CTA) started on campus. The CTA was the result of a collaboration between 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, AARP Wisconsin and UWL. The CTA was designed to help bridge the gap between community advocates and transportation planning entities. Community members and UWL Students participated in this 10-week course.
 - <https://1kfriends.org/community-transportation-academy/>
- April 30th, 2023: The annual La Crosse Earth Fair was held at Myrick Park. Various UWL affiliates attended and tabled.

Additional Achievements:

- Facilities Management invested capital into brine equipment for campus winter maintenance.
- Through a partnership between JCES members, led by Zack DeBroux, and UWL Wellness and Health Advocacy, “Stall Seat Journal” had an environmental theme for the April Edition.
- The Environmental Studies Program began the process of changing their name to the Sustainability and Environmental Studies Program.
- The Department of Geography and Earth Science began the process of changing their name to the Department of Geography and Environmental Science and offering an Environmental Science major.

Bylaws Updates

JCES:

The committee determined that there was a need to update bylaws to update committee membership and provide clarifications on rules regarding quorum. Additional edits were made. This version of the bylaws can be found in the appendix of this document and on the JCES UWL site:

- A committee appointment was added for the department of Geography and Earth Science.
- The appointment for a University Centers representative was removed and replaced with an appointment for a sustainability coordinator or like position.
- The appointment for the Manager of UWL Environmental Health, Occupational Safety and Sustainability Program was replaced with a Facilities Management representative, as the manager position has changed in scope.
- The appointment for a STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) Assessment Coordinator was removed.
- Language surrounding quorum was revised to better align with what is included in the bylaws of other joint committees at UWL.

- The committee's Recording Secretary position was renamed to Meeting Recorder, and the UWL Sustainability Website Coordinator was removed.
- A requirement to produce an annual report was added as a duty for the Chair or Co-Chairs of the committee.

Green Fund:

Based on discussions between the Green Fund Coordinator, Cassandra Ziegler, and advisor, Andrew Ericson, it was determined that an update of the Green Fund bylaws was required to provide a process to use green fund monies to hire student employees. Additionally, changes were made to update the document and to remove unreasonable rules on uses of the green fund monies for mini grants. The updated bylaws were approved by the Student Senate and can be found on the Green Fund website.

Communication/Meeting Format

JCES utilized Microsoft Teams for the storage of all committee documents. The 2022-23 committee recommends the continued use of this JCES Teams location for future committees, to keep all the documentation in one place.

JCES used a hybrid meeting modality throughout the academic year. The committee found a successful set up in Union 2310 (Student Senate Chambers) by using the built-in camera and audio system, and a Microsoft Teams call. When that room was unavailable a set up with an Owl Lab Meeting Owl Video Conference Camera provided reasonable accommodations for online attendees.

Sustainability Program Manager

JCES benefitted from both having a dedicated staff member (Andrew Ericson) whose work aligned with the goals of the committee and having a representative at UW System Sustainability calls to learn more about progressions going on across the UW System.

Over the course of the academic year, JCES received numerous updates and presentations from Andrew Ericson on topics ranging from progressions on campus projects, analysis of campus carbon emissions, and UW System Sustainability initiatives.

In many cases, the discussions within JCES drove the work priorities for the Sustainability Program Manager. Given that the role now has a specified appointment on the committee, the collaboration between the committee and the full-time position will continue.

A more detailed report of the work of the Sustainability Program Manager for the 2022-23 academic year will be made available on the UWL Sustainability homepage at the end of June 2023.

Green Fund

The following Green Fund grants were passed by JCES:

- Fall 2022
 - Sports Club Solar Lights for North Campus Fields – \$15,000 – approved by Student Senate.
 - EV (Electric Vehicle) Charging Stations - \$30,000 – tabled indefinitely by Student Senate.
 - Drift Cycle Extension and Expansion - \$20,400 – approved by Student Senate.
 - Robin Wall Kimmerer Event – \$2,000 – mini grant.
 - Prairie Springs Lecture Series 2023 - \$2,000 – mini grant.
 -
- Spring 2023
 - Sustainable Supplies for Students - \$3,399.34 – mini grant.
 - Sustainability Social Media and Marketing Manager (Student Position) - \$3,000 – mini grant.
 - Parking Garage Bike Storage - \$4,999 – mini grant.

Mini Grants, which are those grants that are less than \$5,000, only require approval from JCES.

Subgroups

Following discussions within the committee during the fall semester, it was determined that creating subgroups based on the interest areas of the committee would be helpful in continuing progress. The following groups were created.

Bike Storage and Theft Prevention:

Membership: Derek Norby (lead), Chelsea Wyman-Green, Colin Belby, James Longhurst, Jake Johnston, Margot Higgins, Andrew Ericson.

Goal: Bike Storage/Theft Prevention: This subgroup discussed and brainstormed how to properly implement a wall rack in the university parking garage. The group considered how to promote this potential project, who to message about this, and how to leverage success to increase indoor bike storage. The subgroup considered whether this is an effective strategy to reduce bike theft, as well as what else may reduce bike theft.

Work: The subgroup discussed the concept of a wall rack for the existing parking garage. This concept was provided by Scott Schumacher, the Director of Construction and Planning. It outlined a bike rack placed in the southwest corner of the parking garage. Following a visit of the facility it was determined that the southeast corner of the building would be a better location for the rack. A green fund grant was written by Green

Fund Coordinator, Cassandra Ziegler, to fund this project. This grant was approved by JCES on May 5th, 2023. Additionally, regarding this project, the subgroup discussed plans to advertise the new bike rack, which included the creation of digital signs and additions to the Transportation and Sustainability uwlax.edu web pages. Beyond this project, the committee also discussed the need to further educate students on best practices for bike locking, which may come in the form of digital signs or in-person demonstrations. This committee identified enclosed bike shelters as being a future project to be explored to further prevent bike theft and encourage bike use.

Sustainability Classes:

Membership: Brandon Anderson (lead), Brian Pompeii, Cassandra Ziegler, Lisa Pitot, Alysa Remsburg, Laurie Harmon, Kelly Sultzbach, Andrew Ericson.

Goal: Sustainability Courses: Following our meeting with Betsy Morgan, it appears that it would be possible to tag classes as being sustainability related or focused. However, there are questions that still need to be discussed: What would the criteria look like? Who would review the courses and how often? How would it be useful for JCES/campus?

Work: The subgroup determined that it would be beneficial to track information on sustainability classes and determined that a self-reporting survey would be the preferred method of data collection. To be consistent with other campuses in their definition of a sustainability class, the subgroup determined that utilizing the definitions of sustainability classes that are used for AASHE (Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) STARS reporting was most logical. The AASHE STARS definition includes distinctions between Sustainability Focused and Sustainability Inclusive classes. Much of the conversation centered around what the data would be used for. Direct availability to students via class tagging or through the course catalog was not preferred due to potential confusion and general resistance to changes in the catalog. However, the subgroup did believe that the use of sustainability class data would be helpful for providing evidence for the abundance of classes for the new General Education requirement for the "Planet that Sustains Us." A plan to survey faculty from across the university was schemed to gather information on existing classes that would fit in the AASHE STARS categories, along with a question to measure perceived interest on increasing the prevalence of sustainability related courses. An abstract was created by Brian Pompeii:

Title: Identifying Sustainability-Related Courses on Campus to Bridge Disciplinary-Specific Gaps in Approaches to Sustainability Instruction at a Mid-Size Public Liberal Arts University in the USA

Abstract:

The Talloires Declaration called for higher education institutions to foster environmental literacy for *all* (Talloires Declaration 1990). This involves creating “programs to develop the capability of university faculty to teach environmental literacy to all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.” Part of the mission of the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse is to foster “the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge” while promoting a core value of “social, environmental, and economic sustainability (UWL 2016-2020 Strategic Plan).” ASHEE/STARS (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education/Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) is an assessment tool built to “enable meaningful comparisons over time and across institutions using a common set of measurements developed with broad participation from the international campus sustainability community.” This project uses a modified ASHEE/STARS survey to identify and assess sustainability-related courses across academic departments and programs at a mid-size public liberal arts university in the Midwest region of the United States of America. Our interdisciplinary team of scholars seeks to understand the prevalence and nature of sustainability-related learning objectives and teaching approaches across academic disciplines, while identifying potential barriers to implementing sustainability-based education at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse. As such, the following are primary research objectives: identify what courses might include sustainability teaching and learning, develop ways of valuing and measuring sustainability education from different academic disciplines, determine if there are any discipline-specific gaps in sustainability education, and outline preliminary ideas for addressing these gaps.

This abstract has yet to be submitted to IRB (Institutional Review Board) and progress was halted until at least the end of the Spring semester.

Native Planting:

Membership: Blythe Pollard (lead), Barrett Klein, Carter Drost, Steven Fulton, Tom Venner, Andrew Ericson, Kristopher Rolfhus, Tisha King-Heiden.

Goal: JCES has discussed salt, fertilizer, pesticide use, and monoculture landscaping practices. This subgroup should identify target areas of campus where switches should be made in land management. This group should also formulate questions to ask upcoming guest speakers (Scott Brown, Bob Hetzel, etc.) regarding grounds and landscaping.

Work: This subcommittee spent time collecting information on the state of native planting and sustainability in landscaping across higher education. They identified a couple of key resources on the subject including [Re:Wild Your Campus](#) and [Bee Campus USA](#). Discussions on where to focus efforts for increasing native planting landed on those

areas of campus classified as “Transitional Landscapes,” in the 2019 Campus Master Plan Update. In this plan, Transitional Landscapes are defined as, “Incorporate native vegetation that provides habitat, harvests stormwater, and provides shade. The existing endangered bee habitats adjacent to Wittich and Murphy Halls are prime examples of habitats to create in other transition landscapes.” These areas are generally around academic buildings. Additionally, this group discussed the use of chemicals on campus. The subgroup determined that a future meeting with facilities staff should be set up to further understand the use of chemicals on campus, and to see if there are feasible ways to reduce their usage. This subgroup continued to meet throughout the semester and has plans to continue over the summer to continue accumulating resources and engaging in discussions with campus stakeholders to determine how progress could be made. A meeting with campus leadership was supposed to continue discussions on the topic following the February 24th, 2023, JCES meeting, but that had to be postponed due to scheduling conflicts.

Campus Engagement:

Membership: Grace Lopez Johnson (lead), Erika Holen, Taylor Wilmoth, Zack DeBroux, Veronica Pettigrew, Victoria Rosin, Andrew Ericson.

Goal: UWL mitigation and resilience efforts can be spearheaded by JCES but require the entire campuses buy in to be successful. This group should discuss potential events to engage the campus community, and in a broader sense how to get people talking about climate action.

Work: This subgroup strategized ways to engage the campus on sustainability. The group identified a couple of key stakeholder groups as being targets for engagement; students (general), new students, staff and faculty, and alumni. The group spent most of their meeting times discussing ways to engage students, particularly students earlier in their college careers. However, there were discussions about the importance of hosting large events such as the Prairie Spring Lecture Series that could be used to engage a broader audience. Additionally, discussion on using the crowd funding resource called “Eagles Give,” to engage alumni was brought up by Taylor Wilmoth, however no formal plans were made to utilize this. For students, the group created many ideas including Earthapalooza, the environmental themed Stall Seat Journal, and leveraging existing communication tools such as Campus Connection and digital signage were talked about and implemented in the spring semester. To support the vision of this subgroup, the idea of hiring a new student intern to run the UWL Sustainability Instagram account (@uwlsustainability) and assist with marketing was devised and developed by Cassandra Zeigler, Grace Lopez Johnson, and Andrew Ericson. In April, a social media and marketing coordinator was hired, Hillary Harstad. An overarching theme across all the discussions in this subgroup was the desire to promote a positive and optimistic view of sustainability. Effectively, to avoid the doom and gloom outlook typically affiliated with

climate change. In the following academic year, the subgroup recommended that an effort be made to table, participate in Welcome Week activities, and create social media and digital sign content to engage a new population of students on sustainability initiatives on campus.

Recommendation for Continued Work

The 22-23 committee suggests that the following items be considered as areas of focus for the next JCES committee.

- Consider how to increase the meatless options on campus, and how to further engage campus dining with the work of JCES.
- Continuation of the work of the Native Planting subgroup.
- Support for development near off-campus student housing that promotes walkability, including a grocery store on West Ave.
- Implementation of the plans outlined by the Sustainability Classes subgroup to determine status of course at the university and future development.
- Development of actions to help achieve the goals outlined in the City of La Crosse Climate Action Plan.
- Consideration of AASHE STARS certification.

Bylaws - Joint Committee on Environmental Sustainability (JCES)

Bylaws update approved unanimously, 3/24/23 by JCES. Chair: Andrew Ericson, Vice-Chair: Grace Lopez Johnson

Activities and actions of this committee shall be guided by ideas expressed in the Sustainability Mission and Vision Statement included at the end of these Bylaws.

A. Specific duties and responsibilities of the committee shall include:

1. Recommending actions that promote environmental sustainability including, but not limited to:
 - Implementing the Talloires Declaration
 - Creating an institutional culture of sustainability
 - Educating for environmentally responsible citizenship
 - Fostering environmental literacy
 - Collaborating with stakeholders and promoting interdisciplinary approaches
 - Enhancing capacity of primary and secondary schools
 - Broadening service locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
 - Greenhouse gas reducing initiatives
2. Promoting discussions regarding environmental sustainability among students and staff.
3. Evaluating proposals funded by the Environmental Sustainability Reserve (“Green Fund”).
Prior to reviewing proposals, JCES will invite the UWL staff member who oversees the Green Fund account to briefly review the financial status of this account with the committee. For each proposal, JCES will use a two-step review process: The committee will first determine if the proposal meets the criteria for Green Fund proposals as established by the UWL Student Association. Proposals meeting these criteria will then be classified as highly recommended, recommended, or not recommended. All decisions made by JCES will be forwarded by the Green Fund coordinator to the Segregated University Fee Allocation Committee (SUFAC) for further review.
In addition to reviewing Green Fund proposals, JCES will also consider “mini-Green Fund proposals” submitted to the Green Fund. JCES has sole responsibility to approve or not approve mini-grant proposals, i.e., they are not submitted to SUFAC or elsewhere for additional consideration.
4. Recommending actions concerning environmental sustainability to the Chancellor and university community.

B. Committee Membership and Appointments:

1. Members of the committee shall include the following:
 - a. Six students:
 - Two members selected by the Students for Sustainability.
 - Student Association Environmental Sustainability Director.
 - Two members selected by the Student Association.
 - Green Fund Coordinator(s).
 - Should one or more student vacancies develop, JCES may solicit new members as needed.
 - b. Five faculty or instructional academic staff (selected by the Faculty Senate).
 - c. Three non-instructional academic staff (selected by the Academic Staff Council).
 - d. Two University staff (selected by the University Staff Council).
 - e. Environmental Studies Program faculty or academic staff representative (selected by the Director of Environmental Studies).
 - f. Geography and Earth Science Program faculty or academic staff representative (selected by the Chair of Geography and Earth Science).
 - g. Division of Diversity & Inclusion representative (this position shall be filled by a staff member or student at the discretion of the Vice Chancellor of Diversity & Inclusion).
 - h. Residence Life representative (this position shall be filled by a staff member or student at

the discretion of the Director of Residence Life).

- h. Sustainability Coordinator or like position, if there is no staff member in this role then this committee membership should be filled by the staff member serving as the Green Fund Advisor.
 - i. Facilities Management representative (this position shall be filled by a staff member at the discretion of the Physical Plant Director).
2. Other faculty, staff or students with significant sustainability responsibilities (for example, an academic sustainability coordinator, may be formally invited to join the committee by the Chair or Co-Chairs of the committee.
 3. Faculty and staff shall serve 3-year terms. To promote committee continuity, it is recommended that faculty and staff appointments be staggered and that interested students be re-appointed so that they may serve more than one year.
 4. Robert's rules of Order will be followed. A quorum shall be a simple majority of committee members. A quorum is necessary to conduct a vote. A simple majority of those voting is necessary to pass a motion. Voting occurs with a voice vote or a hand vote and any member can call for a roll-call vote. Proxy votes provided by members who cannot be in attendance will be shared with the committee by the committee Chair or Co-Chairs, as advisory information. Should a vacancy develop, the number required by quorum shall be reduced until a suitable replaced is found.
 5. JCES members will appoint the following during the convening meeting: Chair and Vice-Chair or Co-Chairs, and Meeting Recorder.

C. Meeting time

Given the large number of committee members, JCES will meet every other Friday at 11:00 am. An established meeting time will enable students, staff, and faculty to adjust their schedules in advance of applying for committee membership. Other special meeting times may be established, for example, to review Green Fund proposals.

- D. Changes made to JCES bylaws will go into effect at the beginning of the next academic year.
- E. The most updated version of the JCES bylaws should be found at the following at <https://www.uwlax.edu/chancellor/joint-committees/joint-committee-on-environmental-sustainability/>.
- F. It shall be the duty of the Chair or Co-Chairs to create an annual report at the end of each academic year to track progressions in the committee. The annual reports shall be made available at the link listed above.
- G. The committee shall report directly to the Chancellor.