



**A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT ON**

# **Sustainability**

 Presented by  
The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council  
June 2015

Approved by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council  
and sent forward to the President

Prepared by The University of Texas at Austin Staff Council  
Annual committee on Sustainability

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## **Executive Summary**

According to The University of Texas at Austin Office of Sustainability webpage, “The University of Texas at Austin strives for excellence in advancing environmental stewardship and sustainability on our campus, in our academic and research programs, and in our public service and outreach activities.”<sup>1</sup> Staff Council’s 2014/15 Sustainability Committee focused on five key issues that were brought to their attention by UT Staff.

1. Need for a Sustainability Map and resource page
2. Rebates as incentives for purchasing energy efficient equipment for labs and other equipment
3. Sustainability literacy video for campus
4. Recycling fact sheet and communications
5. A sustainable use of the West Mall Fountain in front of the Texas Union

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<sup>1</sup> The University of Texas at Austin, Sustainability Page, <http://www.utexas.edu/sustainability/>

## **Introduction:**

Sustainability at The University of Texas at Austin is a key issue on campus. This is the third year that UTSC has recorded staff interest in being better campus stewards and in the university improving sustainable operations. President Powers supported campus sustainability and related goals, which are highlighted in the President's Steering Committee's [Natural Resource Conservation Plan](#) adopted in February 2011. Some key goals outlined in the plan are:

- An average of 20% energy and water reduction at the building level by the year 2020
- Reduction of water by 20% with at least 40% of total water use coming from reuse/reclaimed sources
- Reduce the total amount of waste going to landfill by 20% and recycle 50% of the total waste stream
- By 2020, 5% of all energy consumed by UT Austin facilities will be produced by renewable resources

The Sustainability committee is focused on assisting staff to better understand campus sustainability efforts, investigating issues that have come forward, and aligning itself with The University's sustainability mission.

Several of the issues and ideas brought forth by staff addressed the general need to have better communication between sustainability operational staff and the UT staff community. In response to this, this committee hosted two Sustainability Staff Luncheons in the fall and spring. Presentations were made by key representatives from the Sustainability Roundtable Group (an informal UT roundtable group hosted by the Office of Sustainability). Both luncheons were attended by more than 100 staff members, graciously hosted by the Office of Sustainability, and catered by the Division of Housing Food Services. In lieu of its success, we will be hosting future Sustainability Staff Luncheons.

### **Sustainability Map:**

To provide a comprehensive visualization and resource of sustainability on campus, staff proposed developing an interactive map that displays where sustainable resources are located, such as recycling stations, LEED buildings, and water sensitive landscape. The team assigned to this “mapping project” quickly discovered that a student group was recently awarded a Green Fee for a similar project.

In order to understand the student’s scope and ensure that duplicate efforts were not created, the team invited students to present at our monthly meeting. At the close of their presentation it was clear that the student sustainability online map and tours will be an asset for staff and satisfied UTSC representatives. The Office of Sustainability is working closely with students and has agreed that UTSC representatives will also review the map to ensure that it can serve staff, students, faculty and visitors and become a key resource for campus sustainability and future efforts.

### **Rebate incentives for equipment on campus:**

To align ourselves with the University’s commitment to reducing energy consumption on campus we are proposing a feasibility study on how we can integrate equipment rebates for faculty and staff on campus.

In spring 2014 the issue of “no incentive” for purchasing efficient equipment for labs was brought to our attention by a staff member who participates in UT’s Green Labs program. UT’s Green Labs program is a soft behavior program that relies on the end user to change their behaviors in the lab in order to reduce resource consumption. Examples of these behaviors are turning off the hot plate, reducing the fume hood sash, and turning off pipette cleaners when not in use. These behaviors do lead to energy reduction, but there is no financial incentive to participate and the impact of these behaviors is insignificant in comparison to high energy equipment loads.

Our committee believes more significant energy savings can be realized through an incentive

based rebate program that offsets the cost of purchasing higher efficient equipment in labs and office spaces.

We met with the Energy and Water Conservation Program (EWC), which manages campus operational projects and behavior programs that lead to energy reduction, and discussed partnership and guidance for rebates on campus. EWC staff reported struggling to achieve the purchase of higher efficient equipment on campus because departments have their own budgets and there exists no institutional policy supporting efficient equipment on campus. Absent such a policy, EWC staff expressed interest in an incentive-based rebate program that would offset costs as a result of projected energy savings.

Collaborating with UTSC, EWC came up with a general outline of how an equipment rebate program would be designed. In general, the program would be geared towards providing rebates for purchasing high energy efficiency equipment on campus such as ultra-low freezers, energy star refrigerators, and bio safety equipment. Funds recuperated by an equipment rebate program could potentially allow for the creation of a modest offset account for setting aside money to replace other aging and high energy equipment.

UTSC is proposing that over the course of FY2016 a feasibility study is conducted on campus that determines if such a program would be successful. UTSC would continue to lead this study in collaboration with the EWC program and Utilities and Energy Management. This study will include six deliverables that would be reported to the President in FY 2016:

- Market analysis of which high efficient equipment is being purchased
- Understanding of funding sources for equipment purchases - grants, departments, MO&E, and STARS funding
- Integration into UT's business financials
- Survey of staff and faculty interests in a program
- Integration into UT's Purchasing processes
- Energy impact of purchasing efficient units versus current purchasing practices

The team would also explore to the possibility of instituting an energy efficiency policy for purchasing high power drawing equipment, instead of rebates for campus, and will consider the financial impact for the end user and the potential overall energy reduction.

### **Sustainability Literacy Video:**

The goal of a sustainability literacy video would be to educate and engage staff on campus on how UT Austin is integrating sustainable practices on campus and how they can contribute.

In FY2014, UTSC worked with the Office of Sustainability and other units on campus to assess peer institutions sustainability literacy programs and videos and formed a collaboration between the Office of Sustainability, the Energy and Water Conservation Program and the Zero Waste Initiative. Working with the feedback from these three departments, the committee developed a proposed content outline and recommendations for a literacy program within their “A Report to the President on Sustainability.”<sup>2</sup>

The initial video content has been developed and the raw footage needs editing by a student or staff member who is experienced in production. Unfortunately, there has been no progress to report about the video at this time due to lack of funds and organizational changes. Nevertheless, the Office of Sustainability is interested in moving the project forward and will include it as part of the strategic planning process.

### **Recycling fact sheet/communication:**

Communications is a key element for staff to understand how to adopt sustainability practices on campus. In the spring, several constituents expressed frustration about not knowing how campus waste is managed. Concerns included: What can I recycle? Where can I recycle item X? What can or cannot I put in a recycling bin?

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<sup>2</sup> UT Staff Council Sustainability Subcommittee, *A Report to the President on Sustainability*, [https://www.utexas.edu/staff/council/documents/UTSC\\_2014\\_sustainability\\_report.pdf](https://www.utexas.edu/staff/council/documents/UTSC_2014_sustainability_report.pdf)

In response to these issues, we met with the newly hired Zero Waste Coordinator to ask if we could assist her in the development of informational flyers and outreach as a response to these questions. The response from the staff member was that she was not ready to communicate to all staff about recycling until she has developed clear processes and systems to help support her efforts. We agreed to support her program once appropriate policies and procedures are in place and help with staff communications.

### **West Mall Fountain:**

The West Mall fountain has not been in service for several years due to a broken water pipe. Repair costs and the need to reduce water use have made the pipe repair a low priority. Our committee supports new functions and designs for the West mall fountain in hope of creating a more usable space and to promote the use of sustainable products and features.

Several years ago the School of Architecture had a design competition for new uses of the fountain area. The top three designs were selected from this competition and presented at a design meeting for the renovation of the West Mall Building. At that time it was suggested that the designs and cost for any redesign or repurposing of the West Mall fountain be funded through the West Mall Building construction project. That project is still seeking funding and there is no known start date, nor is it a guarantee that the funding will be able to support the redesign of the West Mall Fountain.

Appendix A, a design of the fountain being used as a solar station, is an example proposed by a UTSC member.

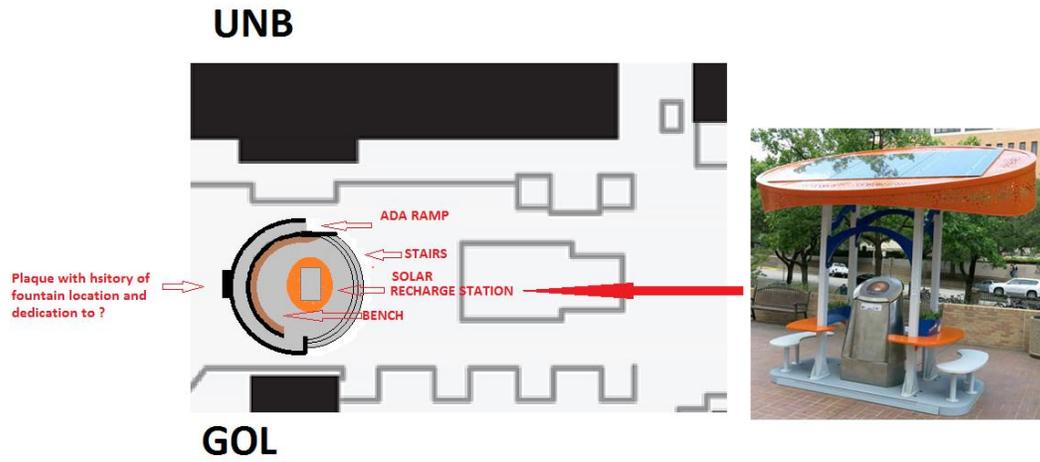
We would like to involve many different departments on campus with the design and use of this area. We are currently in discussion with the University Unions and have discussed plans with the School of Architecture. Additionally, we would like to bring Beth Ferguson to the table from Solo Design Lab- designer, and builder of the current UT Solar Stations, to determine if this location is feasible for a solar charging station. She recently completed a study on campus, highlighted in *The*

*Daily Texan*, looking for possible future solar station locations.

**Conclusion:**

The UTSC Sustainability committee strives to continue the discussion and mission of the University of Texas at Austin being good stewards of our campus resources and an asset to staff. Depending on staff priorities, we plan to continue working on all five of these subject matters throughout FY 2016, focusing the majority of our efforts on renovation plans for the West Mall Fountain and a feasibility study of rebates as incentives for purchasing energy efficient equipment for labs and other equipment.

# Appendix A:



Fill in existing fountain to create a level platform. In the center place a solar recharging station. Have an ADA accessible ramp that goes around the west half of the location. Low stairs for access from the east. bench on the interior and exterior side of the ADA ramp. Place a plaque on the west side facing Guadalupe that mentions the history of the location and a dedication to whomever. Everything fabricated from recycled materials.

