



**A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT ON**

# **Sustainability**

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

Prepared by  
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Sustainability Committee

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## **Executive Summary**

Staff engagement is critical to the continued success of our university's sustainability initiatives. Although our students are transient, university staff represent the capacity to establish long-lasting sustainability practices on campus. Realizing this role, along with the lack of concise educational resources, the Staff Council Sustainability Committee proposed the creation of a virtual sustainability training module to be made available to all staff members. A collaborative effort has been established between the Office of Sustainability, the Energy and Water Conservation Program, and the Zero Waste (Facilities Service) Initiative guided by a vision and intended outcomes established in Staff Council. Production efforts have begun, and the completed module is not only intended to educate university staff, but spur the conversation regarding future sustainability projects and the development of a comprehensive training program.

## **Background**

The 2012-2013 Sustainability Committee served as the inaugural, formal partnership between UT Staff Council and the Office of Sustainability. Listed in the annual report, three projects were proposed for consideration by subsequent committees. One such initiative was, "an online campus sustainability training module available to all staff." A video training program fits within the Office of Sustainability mission, opens an opportunity for national recognition and trendsetting,

One of the Office of Sustainability's three focus areas is on university operations, defined in this way: "Offices and administrative departments across campus are dedicated to decreasing the university's operational footprint through areas such as resource conservation, green building, sustainable building occupant behavior, maintenance and restoration of natural ecosystems, green purchasing, waste reduction and diversion initiatives." Staff members are the cornerstone of these initiatives' success, but currently no training exists to teach them how to incorporate sustainability measures into their daily life on campus. Individuals are more likely to adopt practices that they fully understand. Our goal is to provide staff members with a concise, applicable virtual training covering a wide-variety of sustainability measures they can easily incorporate into their work routine.

In establishing this training, we are following in the footsteps of two prominent programs, Arizona State University's Sustainability Literacy Program and the University of Michigan's Blue Planet website. There are other institutions with targeted videos for recycling and energy use reduction, but developing this program now ensures that we are at the forefront of the movement, and able to make a major qualitative contribution by addressing multiple areas of sustainability specific to our campus. While the Michigan and the Arizona program both use positive reinforcement and competition to promote their programs, the Arizona literacy program helps the ASU administration integrate sustainability into the core definition of being staff at the university. Our Texas program will be further customized to fit with our institutional context.

The Energy and Water Conservation Program has posted fantastic results in its first full year of existence, working on building-level operational improvements as well as behavioral initiatives. Creating a sustainability video has been on The Energy and Water Conservation program's list of goals, but was not yet a top priority. Thanks to the work of the Staff Council Sustainability Committee, they can join with Zero Waste and Office of Sustainability in taking a big stride in fulfilling this sustainability initiative. Although focused on educating staff, the video provides information pertinent to faculty as well as students.

## The Training Module: Content

During the Staff Council annual retreat, all members shared comments and concerns heard from colleagues or wondered themselves. Many simple questions regarding procedures for recycling and how the university practices sustainability were revealed. Utilizing this brainstorming activity as a starting point for developing the training content, the committee recommends the following ideas/items in the following table be addressed in the module.

Proposed Content	
<b>Recycling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General guidelines: What can be recycled? Where to recycle?</li><li>• Where does the recycled material actually go?</li><li>• How custodial staff handles recycling.</li><li>• Procedures for special material recycling including Styrofoam, batteries, and toner.</li><li>• E-waste guidelines.</li></ul>
<b>Energy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visualization of energy users in our work environment.</li><li>• Point out hidden or ignored energy users in common areas.</li><li>• Answer common energy questions including “why is it so cold in my office?” and “can I turn off lights in common areas?”</li><li>• Promote the Longhorn Lights Out program.</li></ul>
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procedure for reporting indoor leaks.</li><li>• Convey irrigation system management information.</li><li>• Encourage the use of water bottle fillers and reusable cups/bottles.</li><li>• Inform how the university captures rainwater and re-uses water.</li><li>• Differentiate between indoor and outdoor water concerns.</li></ul>

## The Training Module: Approach

The Staff Council Sustainability Committee met and reviewed existing videos with similar training goals available on the internet and discussed strategies that these videos utilized, including the advantages and downfalls of each. We then developed a list of approaches that we believe will be most successful in engaging and in turn educating university staff as well as faculty and students.

We suggest a video length not exceeding 10 minutes. We do not want watching the video to seem like a burden or a daunting task. If kept under 10 minutes, it is thought staff will be able to find time to watch with minimal effort. We concluded the best tools for presenting the concepts in an effective way would be utilizing animations and demonstration with clear “yes” and “no” messaging. For recycling, an item would be shown on the screen with either a green check mark or red “X” depending on if the item can be recycled by the university system. In regards to energy conservation, a typical workstation would be shown alongside an energy gauge changing as items are turned on and off. Ultimately, staff should come away from viewing the video with straightforward and factual information regarding campus sustainability and how they play a role.

In order for the video to be readily available to all members of the campus community, it should be administered through TX Class. A major advantage to TX Class is that participation can be tracked. Tracking of viewers will allow for departments to run competitions and incentivize watching. Utilizing an existing infrastructure for housing will also allow for more modules to be added with ease.

### **Putting the Plan into Action**

Between the Office of Sustainability and Energy & Water Conservation group, sufficient funds to complete the pilot video & training module have been secured. The Energy and Water Conservation Program has researched and proposed a low-cost virtual venue for hosting the training component, Lectora. It is compatible with TX Class, as the Staff Council suggested. The Office of Sustainability has hired a student videographer to film the main portion of the video. When production of the video is completed, the Staff Council will be engaged as a review audience to offer feedback and suggestions.

### **Future Development**

National models indicate that a strong video and interactive program can be a long-lasting, flexible tool for staff development. The University of Texas at Austin campus is rich with potential for video content, and it would be easy to develop videos about our sustainable food program, purchasing, Green Labs, Green Office Certification, water conservation, and more! We would additionally like to feature classrooms, faculty, and research, because many staff and students are not aware of UT-Austin's full impact on sustainability in the academy, and many of our contributions have been extremely impressive.

While the costs of testing and using Lectora for the first year, and the student videographer, are easy to cover within the joint working group departments, seed funding in future years may be useful to focus faculty and staff attention on the program to make it truly world-class. We would also like to collaborate with Human Resources to understand whether sustainability literacy has a measurable impact on job satisfaction. And finally, we will continue to involve students as an innovative source of video and content ideas.

### **Conclusion**

Although the Staff Council Sustainability Committee initiated the conversation, the Office of Sustainability, the Energy and Water Conservation Program, and the Zero Waste (Facilities Service) Initiative have devoted themselves to ensuring the success of the sustainability training module for staff. We would like to thank them for their work and allowing Staff Council to provide direction and feedback on this initiative.