

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Sustainability Task Force
Final Report and Recommendations
April 1, 2009

Executive Summary

Sustainability is not an end – it is a journey. We can try to do everything for everybody, and in the process get nothing done. Instead, we focus our efforts first on the immediate actions that will change the way people on the UAF campus think about sustainability. That shift has to happen before we can teach people new skills and enhance their knowledge about the importance of sustainability, including what their part is. With this shift come important changes in behavior, leading to a sustainable UAF. In the course of the journey, our university will need a resource of people and funding to change to a culture of sustainability on UAF and to establish the necessary infrastructure to provide enduring success.

The Community Need:

Everyone is talking about sustainability, focusing concerns on energy, recycling, reduction in waste and reusing items instead of throwing them away. We can play a large part, but if we don't act we will be left behind. Sustainability was one of the main focuses during the transition team reports and produced a report of possible efforts. The Chancellor saw this as an important issue, important enough that we as a campus have been given the direction to look at how we can implement actions to enhance our efforts.

The Charge

Chancellor Rogers established a Sustainability Task Force with a simple charge:

Look for ways that UAF can be supportive of sustainability efforts, giving our students staff and faculty direction and guidance. Look at other employers and campuses to see what they have done and are doing to bring success in their efforts. Include plans for implementation including individuals and offices responsible for implementation. Identify those actions with “the biggest bang for the buck”.

Social Return on Investment

Our society has heightened awareness of issues involving sustainability, but there is an overwhelming feeling of where do we begin. First we must define what sustainability is to us and to those around us. We need to include our campus and community to understand the effect of our work. Our Social Return will be reflected through our ability to improve our campus, community and world.

Where to begin

To look at where we begin, we must first find out where we are. Through contact with other campuses and the community we have discussed how to reach that first step. We reach that first step by analyzing and cataloging our efforts. By doing this, we have demonstrated that

- *the journey has already started*
- *the efforts do not have to be hard to attain or expensive*

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Sustainability Task Force
Final Report and Recommendations
April 1, 2009

- *in turn they provide positive results, that as they are incorporated lessen the resistance to sustainability and reaching the next levels.*

Make a list

In talking with other universities and trying to find information on current campus efforts, one thing became clear, make a list. We need to bring the efforts forward into one location, sharing current efforts, without duplicating efforts.

The Task force

Members of the Task Force began meeting in November and continue to meet. It became clear that the first thing to do was to decide how the group was going to think about sustainability. Developing a mission statement that ties to the universities mission and the core purpose and values assured the group remained focused on the charge.

Core Purpose and Mission

We came up with a core purpose and mission to guide UAF's sustainability efforts using a Foraker Group model. To do this, first we had to understand what UAF was doing, incorporate our work and what our vision looked like:

Chancellor's Sustainability Task Force

Mission Statement

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Campus Sustainability Task Force is dedicated to the creation of a framework for UAF's Plan for Sustainability in concert with the mission of UAF. The University defines sustainability as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs of the future.

Core Purpose

A Sustainable University of Alaska Fairbanks

UAF's efforts would be guided by a set of simple yet meaningful values, each of which is described below

Core Values

Strategic
Individual, Campus, Community
Ecologically Sound
Socially Responsible
Fiscally Feasible

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Sustainability Task Force
Final Report and Recommendations
April 1, 2009

Based on this core ideology the Task Force developed a long term goal to further focus the efforts of UAF. In other words, where are we headed? If we don't know where we are going, how can we get anywhere?

Long-Term Goal (2015)

The University of Alaska Fairbanks campus is nationally recognized for its sustainability.

The taskforce put a lot of thought into what this might mean.

Description for long-term goal:

- *Being a recognized leader means that UAF has done much of the heavy lifting to bring sustainability to its campuses, by first looking at what is being done, and backed by strategic, forward thinking ideas, building an inventory of what “must” be done, as opposed to what “can” be done. Low hanging fruit is a first step, but we need to look at the orchard.*
- *Building a national reputation is dependent on a “perfect storm” – the intersection of a publicly committed UAF administration, solidly supportive staff and faculty, committed students, and an engaged community.*
- *On a sustainable UAF campus, sustainability is not just a “way of doing business,” it is our business. Sustainability is fundamental in the in the review of existing programs, practices and infrastructure, and is a central component in decision making concerning the development of new programs and infrastructure.*
- *Simply stated, on a sustainable UAF campus, our programs, practices and infrastructure are known for being ecologically sound, socially responsible and fiscally feasible.*

We needed to figure out how to think about sustainability before we could recommend any particular actions. Using this line of thinking, the Task Force developed a logic model to more concretely guide UAF's efforts. This is based on a logic model utilizing an outcome based method of evaluation. These are outcomes we will hold ourselves to – it is our theory of change to becoming sustainable.

This is how we will act.

1. Change attitudes and perceptions so that
 - Our current efforts are visible, demonstrating that we are not just starting to embark on this journey, but already moving along the path.
 - Building sustainability curriculum into core, encouraging additional efforts with our students, staff and faculty.
 - We examine the low hanging fruit and take action, some of those items have been identified and efforts are in place to change our campus.
 - Talk about sustainability more; inform the campus of the efforts that have already taken place. Several efforts are being made, but if we operate in individual silos our efforts go unseen and we run the risk of duplication of efforts.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Sustainability Task Force
Final Report and Recommendations
April 1, 2009

2. We can improve skills and knowledge so that
 - We build sustainability into research areas, looking for and focusing on our unique advantages, climate, distance, isolation and our experience performing as a research institution.
 - Establish a UAF Office of Sustainability, through our charge we looked at other campuses and found a commonality in successful programs. When there is a central office, it is easier to coordinate and share efforts while developing a warehouse of information on the efforts that are taking place.
3. Change the way people behave – students, faculty, staff, visitors, so that
 - Everyone engaged in our campus understands that not only are we developing sustainable practices, but we encourage everyone involved with UAF to share in our mission.
4. We can change the condition of UAF, consistent with our long term goal of
 - UAF as a sustainable campus
 - Providing research and resources to our community and state to further sustainability research and efforts.
5. The University of Alaska Fairbanks is nationally recognized for its sustainability
 - By virtue of our efforts, people recognize our success

Our marching Order – A Two-Year Operating Plan

We broke this up into three categories,

Now – having minimal budget impact, and potential for significant cost saving

- Recycle, reduce, reuse and reprogram/retrain.
 - UAF students have developed recycling programs that include aluminum, ink and toner cartridges and now plastics
 - UAF Facilities has an active program of retrofitting lighting on campus to more energy efficient lighting options. Through their efforts, stickers are being placed throughout campus to remind people to shut off lights as they leave a room.
 - UAF Dining Services has eliminated trays in the dining hall, reducing plate waste by 50%, which has reduced dishwashing, food preparation, labor and a reduction in trash.
 - Dining Services has new reusable coffee cups available at the coffee stands, discounts on refills and new non-disposable cups for catered service. They are also experimenting with new reusable containers for the meals to go program, this container is better than providing compostable containers that require special handling and are designed to be reused, not disposed of.
 - Dining is also partnering with Denali Bio Diesel to recycle our waste vegetable oil.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Sustainability Task Force
Final Report and Recommendations
April 1, 2009

- UAF Bookstore has partnered with one of the Textbook companies to provide direct delivery service for textbooks and in coordination with them, to provide e-textbooks in the future. This has reduced the need for warehousing textbooks and shipping returns which amounted to \$500,000 last year. This reduction in freight and returns also reduces our carbon footprint.
- Through additional training, efforts can be expanded with the use of Blackboard Education software in delivering instructional materials reducing the need for providing printed material.
- To encourage reuse, provide simple updates, reminders or a web based im of items in surplus helping to encourage departments to save on needed items before they go out and purchase items that we as a university already own.
- One effort by Summer Sessions that will bring additional community involvement is to establish a summer program to bring your reuse items to a location on campus, where people can come and exchange items they no longer have a use for with people others.
- Focus on LEED building guidelines that work in our environment for renovations and new construction. Some of these options may cost more initially, but provide long term gains.
- Summer Session has developed summer programs that include sustainability as a theme.

12-18 months

-changing the culture

- Once we establish that our sustainability efforts already exist people can join in knowing that they do not have to be overwhelmed. Through our efforts to become sustainable our campus culture will change and provide change in our community.
 - Having shown success we can start looking at reinvestment of savings to build on the next levels.
 - Create an Office of Sustainability. This can exist in a current operation such as facilities, benefiting from the support network and infrastructure that already exists or can be housed separately. The importance of this office has been demonstrated on other campuses, focusing efforts and reducing duplication. Our current model is decentralized, our effort are silos of information held in individual department. This office can coordinate efforts throughout the campus and can work with committees and students to continue the universities efforts. Developing this office will provide a “one stop shop” approach, developing connections with students, staff, faculty and the community while providing a mechanism for distributing information about our campuses efforts.
 - Meter new construction and explore possible cost effective methods of metering existing structures. With the information gathered from the metering process, evaluate usage and methods that can be used to reduce consumption of/or balance our utility needs.
 - Explore grant funding and partnership opportunities for production and testing alternative energy sources and study their performance, cost and return. Use our finding to better assist the state and our communities as to the effectiveness of these alternatives in our environment.

The University of Alaska Fairbanks Sustainability Task Force
Final Report and Recommendations
April 1, 2009

- Develop on campus gardens in cooperation with Facilities Grounds department, Botanical Gardens, or other programs for use in the on campus in the Dining Program or Culinary Arts Program.

3-five years

-changing the university, making long-term structural changes aimed at sustainability – we don't know what those are yet, but we know we need them.

- Become the leading research facility on sustainable practices in cold climate, Sub Arctic and Arctic environments. For an example of what our future can bring, we can use our challenges to benefit the world by developing methods for recycling in isolated communities, reducing the dependency on importing and exporting recyclable products, developing processes for composting in cold climates and exploring and developing renewable energy alternative that can be utilized cost effectively in small isolated communities. We don't want to get bogged down in details of what the future can bring, we want to focus on getting the university moving toward sustainability, knowing that in five years our current knowledge will not equal what is available in the future.

Change the culture of sustainability on the UAF Campus

- UAF is leading sustainability efforts, but they are focused in pockets without the benefit of sharing throughout our campus and our community. Letting the information out will help people understand how easy portions of this can be. Understanding the efforts that have been successful and the ease with how it can occur provides the strength to change the culture.

Conclusion and Next Steps

- Short term costs will bring long term gains for the university, the community and the state. Changing out lights, investing in research, testing new technology and working with passionate groups will bring these efforts closer to our campus, but focusing this into one location will bring our efforts to light. Sharing those skills, talents and abilities with the community will make us the natural leader. We are a research institution and have an opportunity to use our skills and our environment to further efforts in our unique environment.