SUSTAINABILITY REPRESENTATIVE NETWORK MEETING

Tuesday 13 May 2014 10.00am-1.00pm

Level 3, Campus Hub, Zofrea Room

MINUTES


1. Welcome

Cindy welcomed SRN members to the meeting and outlined the agenda of the meeting. Cindy informed members about an upcoming workshop on ‘Effective Communication Techniques’ that is being delivered on 28 May by Loren Hutton from Organisation and Development in HR for SRN members.

2. MOOP Troops’: May-July M-power Theme - Belinda Bean, Sustainability Officer and Cindy Cunningham, Sustainability Engagement Officer

Cindy introduced the May-July M-power theme on ‘MOOP Troops’ which is focused on litter prevention and behavior.

The M-power program seeks to facilitate staff awareness and engagement via an interactive engagement pack on the M-power website which focuses around a particular theme.

With the campus the size of a small town, Macquarie generates quite a lot of waste. Unfortunately, some of which doesn’t find its way into bins for proper disposal. Litter prevention is an area where what we do as individuals has a large impact on the collective behaviours. An acronym for Matter Out Of Place, MOOP applies to any litter, rubbish or artifacts left behind that are not native to the immediate environment.

Members were shown a video on the M-power themewhich ran through understanding litter behavior and the MOOP challenge which involves staff picking up 3 pieces of litter when out and about on campus. By successfully completing the month long challenge, staff will receive a seasonal fruit box.

3. Sustainability Strategy alignment with the ‘Our University: A Framing of Futures’ - Leanne Denby, Director of Sustainability
Cindy provided an introduction to the workshop sessions on the Sustainability Strategy. In 2009 Macquarie Sustainability produced its first Sustainability Strategy for the University. The Strategy was developed by Leanne Denby, the Director of Sustainability. This strategy has guided the sustainability direction of the University for the last five years, and is now up for review and completion this year.

Leanne discussed the background to the strategy in a little more detail and how the draft revised Sustainability Strategy has been aligned with the “Our University: A Framing of Futures”.

4. Review of Sustainability Vision and Principles

Leanne explained that the original Sustainability Vision and Principles were developed in consultation with senior executive and adopted in 2008. Leanne mentioned that an additional principle has been identified for incorporation in the new strategy, regarding inclusion.

SRN members were divided into two groups to discuss the vision and principles and provide feedback. The following comments are from the discussion.

**Strategic Planning – Vision**

"Macquarie University is ecologically sound, socially just and economically viable in all of its activities”.

**Discussion and Feedback**

Point 5. Reduce impact of climate change – very specific. Could it be expanded to include impact on environment, or impact on planet, (acknowledging that climate change is not the only impact)?

Change “the environment” to “our environment” to give greater ownership.

Point 3. “Working citizens” implies paid work. Suggest broadening - change wording to “active citizens”.

Point 4 – Is this backed by evidence? Or are we aiming to achieve this?

New aspiration: to be the number one university – leading in sustainability

**Comments:**

For inclusion in action plan: Induction process for students to increase awareness of sustainability policy and practices/activities -> more information online that is fun and engaging. Is any printed material mailed to students at first contact (ie welcome, letter of offer, preliminary reading) or is it all online?

PACE has developed an app called ‘reflection’ to assist students in reflecting on their learning part way through their PACE subjects. May be scope to see if this could be adapted for sustainability purposes.

It was suggested that definitions be added to strategy (or perhaps as links or appendix).

**Strategic Planning – Principles**

**Discussion and Feedback**

- All groups agreed on the 5 principles identified.
- There was a discussion on the need to clarify what we are trying to sustain as a university as this was felt unclear. Are we trying to sustain the learning culture of
the University, the physical campus environment, the economic viability of the University as a business etc?

• How do the principles identified allow us to ‘carry on/continue on’?
• Need to identify what we are trying to sustain.
• The importance of leadership was discussed and considered a critical factor for the success of the implementation of the Strategy. It was commented that this be included as a bullet point in relation to how the University aligns itself with the definition.
• Organisational sustainability was mentioned in relation to the workloads of staff, internal culture and department cohesion.

Environmental Protection Principle

Suggested that ‘education’ be referred to in the explanation of this principle, and the importance of equipping students through learning & teaching, research, soft skills etc.

Social Justice Principle

Comment that this principle should also mention well-being.

Economic Well-being Principle

It was questioned whether this principle focused on the well-being of the University or the individual. The definition starts with a focus on the university’s economic position then the individual. Both are important but not the former at the expense of the later. It was mentioned that the issue of the proposed fee deregulation is of significance to this principle.

NOTE re culture:
In relation to culture I was referring to the particular values, beliefs, customs, laws etc that shape the way that people interact in the world. In the global society there is a diversity of culture that impacts social, economical and environmental outcomes. Perhaps there is a need to define what those outcomes might be and I am not sure what comes after that?

5. Review of sustainability objectives and goals for the 4 key priority areas:

• Leadership and Governance
• Learning, Teaching and Research
• Partnerships and Engagement
• Facilities and Operations

Leadership and Governance

Objective: Build sustainability principles into established and developing processes and management systems to ensure long-term benefit for students, staff and the broader community.

Priority area

• Priority area definition needs work. 1st and 2nd sentence irrelevant to the strategic priority. Reframe to define leadership (eg. Top set strategy, tells the world. Bottom knows what the strategy is and actively works towards it) and governance (eg. Systems and processes that enable achievement of the strategy).

Links to vision
• Lots of discussion around the importance of leadership, and felt this objective doesn’t address that.
  o Leadership as role models/champions, not just giving their blessing. Ie. “getting their hands dirty and setting attitudes”.
  o Idea of an executive champion for internal PR
• Discussion around our current leadership seeing sustainability as nothing more than a good PR pitch and how to leverage that into good sustainability governance. Ideas of champions and management KPIs (eg. Around volunteering, championing a new process or management system etc).

Goals
• Goal 3: Embed sustainability principles into existing and future systems and processes – both staff and student focused. Make this not just about the ideas of the sustainability principles, but attitudes.
• Goal 4: Define development opportunities: is this small picture (ie. training of staff) or big picture (eg. Development of the uni through partnerships/research etc).
• Shouldn’t a goal be around identifying the opportunities within processes and management systems where we can make a difference
• Make a goal around leadership eg. Having key people as champions
• Look at most efficient form of management systems.

Activities
• Sustainability PR pitch story with management
• Identify, equip and promote an executive as champion
• Sustainability written into Enterprise Agreement (WHSE = Work Health Safety & Environment)
• Sustainability built into terms of reference (ToRs) of all Uni committees (either as focus/practice/delivery)
• Leadership KPIs for sustainability
• Grant apps have sustainability embedded as either part of research or methods used

Learning, Teaching and Research

Original objective:
“Ensure students are exposed to learning experiences that maximize their opportunities to graduate as sustainability-literate citizens, whilst ensuring research practice is conducted in line with best practice to lessen negative and increase positive impacts”

Suggest rewording to:
“Expose students to learning experiences that ensure they graduate as sustainability-literate citizens, whilst ensuring research practice is conducted inline with best practice to lessen negative and increase positive impacts”

Comments from attendees:
• PACE subjects to be included
• Goals to include postgrad units/programs
• External partnership development showcasing good sustainable practice
• Long-term planning for tools/facilities/technology to enhance overall L&T experience
• Students teaching students – case study Telle’s Angels (FoA – Linda)
• Making the Living Lab more explicit, ie gardens and museums (arboretum tours, iPad tour?)
• Provide/identify/educate best tools to academics/staff to undertake tasks in a sustainable fashion, demonstrating best practice (ie online marking tools)
• Sustainable practices built into delivery of course work, management of assessment feedback etc permeating all aspects of L&T activities
• Utilise potential t-shirt communications/education/advertising
• UniWise – utilising a tool to help students transit from high school to uni, and/or returning students who have not studied for a long time
• Improve L&T resources and space, ie through furniture
• Building sustainability into recruitment processes to ensure best staff are recruited (include awareness, practice, knowledge, experience etc)
• Developing LTR grants to learn better practices
• Develop and run best practice workshops for academics

Priority Area Cheat Sheet Comments:
Overall comment was the language used was not accessible to all, ie it was very ‘academic’.
Changing ‘eminently doable’ to ‘achievable’
Changing ‘major change effort’, but no alternative was given

Partnerships and Engagement

Definition
All groups felt that the explanatory paragraph for ‘Partnerships and Engagement’ (P&E) clearly covered what this priority area is about. The only comment was that the word ‘enormity’ was too negative and emotive. The suggestion was that ‘enormity’ be replaced with ‘complexity’.

Objective

Build on existing and develop new partnership and engagement opportunities for sharing ideas and approaches for balanced and positive social, environmental and economical outcomes.

Each group felt that the wording of the P&E objective linked directly back to the Macquarie’s Sustainability vision and adequately canvassed what was outlined in the explanatory paragraph. Two groups suggested that the word ‘economical’ be replaced with ‘economic’. One person suggested that the word ‘active’ be inserted in the objective as follows “…balanced, positive and active social, environmental…..”.
One person suggested that ‘cultural’ was missing from the objective as an important outcome (have requested further will clarification on this).

Goals

1. Provide opportunity for the community to engage with sustainability practice and thinking

It was questioned whether ‘community’ referred to the internal campus community only. If it encompasses both the internal and external community then this should be made clearer.

2. Create effective alliances with educational institutions, non-profits and businesses

It was suggested that the wording be modified for this goal and that the words ‘Create effective’ be replaced with ‘Foster collaborative’. These new words were felt to be more closely aligned to the wording used in the explanatory paragraph for P&E.
It was commented that ‘government’ should be included in this goal as well, alongside the other alliance groups mentioned in the goal.

3. Strive for continual improvement in sustainable procurement

This goal created a lot of discussion. Some reps were confused why this goal was included as a P&E goal and felt it should be under the ‘Leadership & Governance’ area. However, some reps saw the relationship with procurement and establishing partnerships with external organisations. In relation to wording it was felt that the word ‘strive’ should be replaced as it was felt that using this word makes the goal seem difficult to achieve.

4. Support and enhance internal staff structures that improve connectivity and community (such as the Sustainability Representative Network)

It was suggested that internal groups/committees be identified alongside the SRN as many Departments have their own groups set up to facilitate this goal.

One group felt that an additional goal could be included for this priority area, which addresses the representation of Macquarie Uni staff on external boards/committees. Suggested wording was: ‘Encourage and support staff to be involved on external committees and groups’.

Action Related Suggestions

The following action oriented suggestions were raised:

• Establish research project opportunities by partnering with organisations that support and promote sustainability.
• Develop links with organisations that are passionate about what Macquarie University is doing to address sustainability as an organisation via workshops/committees
• Invite external bodies to our internal committees and seek to have representatives from MQ university on external boards/committees
• Establish arrangements with suppliers to facilitate partnership and engagement.
• Undertake a strengths-based approach to build linkages with partnering organisations, in order to take stock of the existing relationships we have.

General Comments

One rep asked whether values have been identified for the Sustainability Strategy. They also raised whether social capital has been referred to in the Strategy.

Facilities and Operations

General Comment on session discussion
It was clear from discussion that although most SRN reps share a similar level of passion, there is huge variation in level of knowledge of sustainability concepts and knowledge about what university is doing or has done in the past – esp relating to transport, new building design and waste management.

Objective: Manage and enhance our physical infrastructure and campus grounds in ways that maximize efficiency and effectiveness while minimizing social environment and other risks.

Comments: Generally very supportive of wording and sentiment.
However, efficiency and effectiveness seem to focus on physical infrastructure, but be less applicable to campus grounds. “Campus grounds” seems disconnected from rest of objective. Need to enhance green space and acknowledge value and integrity of campus grounds as important. Suggest add words such as “enhance (or maximize) environmental values”.

Goals
General comment:
Goals should be more targeted and lead to some kind of measurement of achievement.

Specifically, the 2nd goal “strive towards” is a bit vague and could be reworded to include some measurement of achievement.

Other specific comments.
1. Goal 1. Do we have a stated carbon emissions reduction target? Can this be clearly stated in goal, or linked.
3. Goal 5. Need link to One Planet (context/defn).
4. Goal 6 needs a slight rewording. Change “single use vehicle” to “single-occupant vehicle”
5. Goal 7 – expand ICT to full text ‘Information and Communications Technology’?

No gaps in goal list identified.

Actions
A lot of actions and ideas were given.
Key recurring issues were transport options and food waste/general waste management.
Some actions tied back to issues of engagement and buy in. Eg a group started a bokashi for food waste, but only one person regularly taking food home. Ie no ownership by group.

Transport
More carpooling
More bus routes where needed – gap identification
More trains
Cheaper public transport for students
Car use is increasing with students and there is a need for flexible parking solutions (eg work and study combinations requiring reduced travel time between locations) – consider reasons and possible solutions
Need for consultation with bus operators – speed of buses through campus and new routes, eg express routes from disconnected centres.
Better publicity of improvements to public transport
Bike share scheme
Transport survey to identify express bus routes to campus
Compare UOW – they have a free student bus pick-up provided by university

Infrastructure
More green walls
5 star NABERS rating on new buildings (point made by Sally that this is happening – ties back to communication of what we are doing)
Improvements to existing buildings (eg outdated lighting/heating etc in older buildings) [I explained it depends on the refurbishment budget/planning cycle for each faculty/department]
On campus accommodation – Carlene raised a number of concerns – risks for social issues, health and wellbeing, vandalism, clash between work and home environments (I suggested she contact VC/Property directly)

Space
Enhance central courtyard – provide engaging, human environment – no specific suggestions on how this could be done due to lack of time.
Visual landscape – better integration with natural /regional landscape – softening of visual impact of ugly buildings

Waste
More compost, bokashi and worm farm solutions
Requested a central repository (and process) for capturing food waste

Biodiversity
What pesticides and herbicides are used on campus? Do we know? Do we monitor?
How are pest species being managed eg rabbits?

Carlene wishlist (end of meeting)
Efficient hand dryers (better sensors, quicker switch off)
No paper towels
Improve flush efficiency and reduce cistern capacity
Improve strategies for recycling/free-cycling equipment and furniture
- across campus
- with community
Improve room comfort in green ways – heating/cooling and air quality
Facilitate staff e-waste disposal, battery disposal, via promoting facilities on campus or in the community (including home e-waste)

6. Wrap Up

SRN members were reminded about the SRN grants and that information on applying, along with an application form is available on the SRN website along with information about past projects.

Cindy also reminded representatives that John Macris, the University Biodiversity Planner is offering 4 teams of staff the opportunity to do a bushcare session on campus as a corporate volunteering activity. He is seeking groups of between 7 and 15 volunteers for the half day session which will involve bush regeneration along Mars Creek. He will have a bush regenerator on site to assist staff also. The sessions would run between April and October over the cooler months.

10. Next Meeting – August 5, 2014