

SUSTAINABLE CORNELL COUNCIL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

2019

OVERVIEW

The **Sustainable Cornell Council** (SCC) is Cornell University's sustainability governance committee for the Ithaca campus.

The Council is responsible for directing and coordinating Cornell's role as an international leader in addressing climate change and sustainability, advancing meaningful progress in our operations, and advancing active engagement from the campus community. The Council oversees implementation of the *Sustainability Plan* and *Climate Action Plan*, integration of climate and sustainability as part of university priorities, and reporting on progress towards our goals.

Key strategies for achieving these goals include harnessing academic excellence, creating a campus living laboratory for discovery and demonstration of solutions, and championing partnerships which advance our knowledge and impact locally and globally.

Additional Background: [Current Goals](#) | [Key Sustainability Reporting & Fast Facts](#)

Background

Advancing sustainability aligns with Cornell's academic and land grant missions, research expertise, and operational excellence.

First formed in 2010 as the President's Sustainable Campus Committee (PSCC), Cornell's governance structure has evolved in the last decade as a national model for managing strategic change. The role of the PSCC was to manage sustainability priorities, partnerships and reporting and ensure broad campus engagement in creating a culture of sustainability. In 2016, in addition to the PSCC, Cornell formed a climate-specific committee called the Senior Leaders Climate Action Group (SLCAG) which focused specifically on Climate Action Plan priorities requiring administrative attention to achieve.

The two groups worked in parallel on complementary priorities until 2018 when they were charged by the Provost to restructure as a single entity.

The new SCC structure capitalizes on broad expertise and interest from the Cornell community in advancing established goals, and strategically focuses University resources for targeted implementation on the highest institutional priorities with the greatest impact.

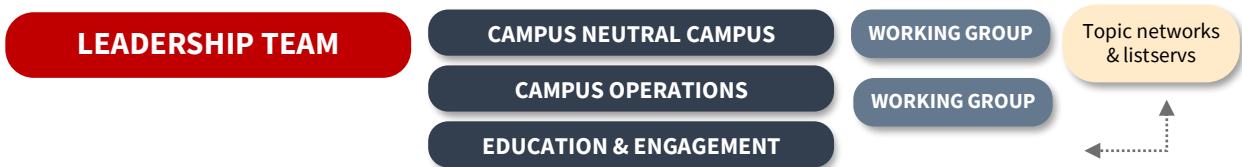
Additional Background: [Previous Governance Structures](#) | [Provost Charge](#)

STRUCTURE

Committees

The Council comprises a **Leadership Team** and three **Steering Committees** with specific areas of work.

SUSTAINABLE CORNELL COUNCIL



See Page 6 for full diagram of structure

The Steering Committees will also have the authority to charge working groups to carry out specific priority projects and initiatives. They may also leverage topical networks (e.g. a listserv for campus food waste) or other campus groups for involvement in shared goals and initiatives.

Membership

The Leadership Team comprises senior leaders and the co-chairs of the Steering Committees.

Steering Committees co-chairs will nominate members for their committee. Membership is expected to include faculty and staff subject matter experts and integrate shared governance and student representation. Co-chairs and members are confirmed by the Provost.

Members are expected to serve for a minimum of 2 years. Members' deputies may attend and participate in meetings but should not replace appointees permanently.

Reporting

The Council has bi-directional reporting. The Council reports to the Provost and is also responsible for providing annual updates to the Cornell community based on progress updates from the Steering Committees, AASHE STARS, Carbon Commitment progress reports and greenhouse gas inventory updates.

Additional Background: [AASHE STARS Report](#) | [Carbon Commitment Progress Reports](#) | [GHG Inventory](#)

LEADERSHIP TEAM OVERVIEW

Charge

Direct the University's role as a leader in addressing climate change and sustainability by overseeing the creation and implementation of the campus sustainability plan, coordinating priorities across the three steering committees, mobilize institutional resources when necessary, and ensure progress towards goals.

Responsibilities

1. Develop a campus sustainability plan for approval by the Provost aligned with Cornell's institutional priorities, land grant and academic mission, capital plan and performance, and commitment to operational excellence
2. Mobilize institutional support and identify appropriate resource strategies for the prioritized recommendations of the Steering Committees to advance the sustainability plan
3. Ensure transparency in reporting our progress and achievements by providing annual reports to the Provost and regular updates to the campus community
4. Curate a powerful living laboratory framework for sustainable solutions, harnessing people, partnerships, and campus systems for research, innovation, learning, and demonstration
5. Organize Cornell's role in convening partnerships with external stakeholders, including government, private industry, and foundations, to collaborate on high-priority initiatives
6. Identify opportunities to inform policy makers, not-for-profit and for-profit organizations through the dissemination of leading sustainability and climate science examples of success

Membership

2019 Chairs: Lance Collins & Rick Burgess

- Vice President of University Budget & Planning, Paul Streeter
- Vice President of University Relations, Joel Malina
- Director, Campus Sustainability Office, Sarah Zemanick
- Director, Cornell Atkinson Center, David Lodge
- Co-Chairs, Carbon Neutral Campus Steering Committees
 - Carbon Neutral Campus: Dean, College of Engineering, Lance Collins
 - Carbon Neutral Campus: AVP, Energy & Sustainability, Facilities & Campus Services, Bert Bland
 - Campus Operations: Vice President, Facilities & Campus Services, Rick Burgess
 - Campus Operations: AVP, Student & Campus Life, Pat Wynn
 - Engagement & Education: Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education, Lisa Nishii
 - Engagement & Education: Vice Provost for Engagement and Land-Grant Affairs, Katherine McComas

STEERING COMMITTEES

Shared Charge & Responsibilities

Oversee planning, execution, and progress reporting on campus sustainability plan and Climate Action Plan goals, as well as maintaining regular updates to these plans. Committees may charge working groups with specific projects or initiatives. Additional specific responsibilities are outlined below.

1. Identify, prioritize, and implement projects within their topic area to advance goals, and report annually on progress
2. Facilitate sharing of knowledge and solutions with other Cornell campuses and the public
3. Ensure campus aspirations and goals are consistent with leading scientific knowledge

Membership

Steering Committee co-chairs will nominate members for their committee for confirmation and appointment by the Provost. Membership is expected to include faculty, staff subject matter experts, and student representation. A liaison selected from the University Assembly will serve on each committee. The Campus Sustainability Office will also staff each committee.

CARBON NEUTRAL CAMPUS STEERING COMMITTEE

Lance Collins, Dean, College of Engineering (Co-Chair)
Bert Bland, AVP, Energy & Sustainability, Facilities & Campus Services (Co-Chair)
Sarah Zemanick, Director, Campus Sustainability Office (CSO Liaison)

CHARGE: Advance campus carbon neutrality through implementation of the Climate Action Plan

- ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**
1. Advance the Climate Action Plan
 2. Track progress towards neutrality & interim targets via the greenhouse gas inventory

CAMPUS OPERATIONS STEERING COMMITTEE

Rick Burgess, Vice President, FCS (Co-Chair)
Pat Wynn, AVP, Student & Campus Life (Co-Chair)
Sarah Brylinsky, Communications & Business Integration Manager (CSO Liaison)

CHARGE: Advance initiatives for a model sustainable campus that support climate resilience and human and planetary health

- ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**
1. Advance campus sustainability plan goals in the areas of buildings & energy, food, land & water, materials management, human wellbeing, and transportation
 2. Integrate sustainability and resiliency as guiding principles in the stewardship of campus facilities and resources

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT STEERING COMMITTEE

Lisa Nishii, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education (Co-Chair)
Katherine McComas, Vice Provost for Engagement and Land-Grant Affairs (Co-Chair)
Sarah Brylinsky, Communications & Business Integration Manager & Kim Anderson, Sustainability Engagement Manager (CSO Liaisons)

CHARGE: Cultivate literacy and a culture of sustainability responsibility that catalyzes participation across the campus community.

- ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**
1. Advance campus sustainability plan goals to integrate sustainability and climate change awareness and behaviors into the campus culture
 2. Assist on-campus initiatives (e.g. Engaged Cornell, Atkinson Center) with the promotion and placement of students into prioritized co-curricular and extra-curricular living lab opportunities

SUSTAINABLE CORNELL COUNCIL

STRUCTURE

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Direct and coordinate Cornell's role as an international leader in addressing climate change and sustainability, using our campus as a living laboratory

STEERING COMMITTEES

Identify topical priorities and develop work plans to advance progress

Working Groups
Temporary, charged as needed to carry out tasks, research, and projects

CARBON NEUTRAL CAMPUS

Advance campus carbon neutrality through strategic implementation of the Climate Action Plan

WORKING GROUP

CAMPUS OPERATIONS

Advance initiatives for a model sustainable campus that support climate resilience and human and planetary health

WORKING GROUP

EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

Cultivate literacy and a culture of sustainability leadership that enables participation across the campus community

WORKING GROUP

TOPICAL NETWORK LISTSERVES

Facilitate communication across interested campus community members in key topic areas, and connect interested constituencies