

# APPENDIX A

## FEEDBACK ON PUBLIC COMMENTS ON SUSTAINABILITY MASTER PLAN

\*Comments are presented as submitted

### MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE PLAN

#### ALTERNATIVE WORKING VENUE

- Plan to be rewritten to include relevant changes due to current pandemic including:
  - remote learning should be implemented as often as possible
  - continued social distancing
  - limit the number of people on campus at any one time
- Create culture of mobile work environment where staff can work from anywhere (to save money on purchasing new office furniture and equipment while conserving a valuable resource-space)
- Implement ongoing work-from-home policies and expectations for those employees who can feasibly work from home to reduce parking/transportation emission-related problems
- We need to continue to increase our resources in online teaching. I think this option is only going to become more valuable and necessary in the future, because it helps to reach more students, far and wide, nationally and internationally, is an emerging technology & trend, and, as we've seen recently, can be a tool for educating large audiences in the face of unexpected events like COVID-19.

#### BUILDINGS

- The development of net-zero energy design guidelines is important. The design guidelines should also be associated with LEED certification requirements for new buildings and major modifications. Can LEED certification be added to the plan?
- Is it possible to create a 'Green Standard' for new construction projects across UNL?  
I am particularly wondering if the new football complex and other new buildings currently being erected will adhere to sustainability goals. A 'green standard' could be fluid and changed every few years in order to comply with new sustainability goals.
- The College of Engineering is currently in the early planning stages for a new building at 17th & Vine. Designers are probably unaware of the UNL Environment, Sustainability, and Resilience Master Plan and its contents. If the designers were to be appraised of requirements within the Plan, the new COE building could become the model for future building on campus and across the State of Nebraska. A net-zero energy building which incorporated a variety of renewable energy systems would be inspirational and a first for the UNL campus. Installation of a real-time energy use monitoring system with virtual display in the lobby would increase awareness of energy management through online and visual communication tools.

#### COMMUNICATION

- Make what UNL already does and new initiatives visible to students, faculty, staff and the public.
- When implementing new projects making sure they are visible). There is evidence in the social science literature that campuses who focus on sustainability appeal to students and impact the way students report their sustainability behaviors (Cotton et al 2018).
- Community based social marketing strategies employed by student toward students and faculty toward faculty could help with occupant behavior leading to improved outcomes.
- UNL has not done very well in communicating its successes and making them salient.

# APPENDIX A

## EDUCATION

- Promote culture of sustainability among all students, faculty, and staff by marketing effectively and increasing visibility and communication on campus
  - Increasing education & research on climate change and sustainability practices
  - Other than using students as “ambassadors” or through ASUN involvement there was little talk of students involved in research or application
  - Increase education attainment and require environmental classes
  - The Plan can do more to advocate and foster student involvement.
- While it notes revitalizing the faculty/staff/student ambassador program, additional details might be disclosed to encourage student internships on sustainability projects.

## ENERGY

- Let Energy focus on building and infrastructure and GHG reductions.
- Labs & animal areas to use OCC switches to reduce un-needed air change rates when areas not in use and non-compliance sent program chairs on weekly basis.
- Plan sets an inadequate clean energy conversion deadline of 2050; should be 2025 or 2030.
- Decreasing UNL’s carbon footprint rapidly.
- Stop running screens in Memorial Stadium when no one is there.
- Find more ways to use renewable energy sources, esp. solar and wind.
- The timeline for carbon emission reduction are not aggressive enough. We might not have until 2050 as far as the reversible climate change timeline is concerned.
- Use Center for Energy Sciences Research as a resource.
- Net Zero Waste and Carbon emissions by 2030 - not 2050.
- Increase energy efficiency of campus buildings and switch to renewable energy sources.
- The plan notes that we have “a moral and ethical duty to provide a campus that is healthy and safe for our students, while simultaneously protecting the environment for future generations.” However, the proposed time frame set forth for an energy for a net-zero CO2 emissions and a net-zero energy campus, it is placed 30 years in the future and then only for establishing a policy, governance and administrative infrastructure. Thus, any commitment to do something only starts in 2050, without a date for actual implementation. Can we aim higher? The establishment of a policy, governance and administrative infrastructure should be much sooner, perhaps 2030. Then we should aim for an actual target by 2035.
- I believe with strong efforts, UNL can reach carbon neutrality earlier than 2050.

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Increasing healthy options on campus for students, faculty, and staff
- Create a self-sustaining food program between Ag. Dept. and Dining Services so that crops can be grown and harvested for campus consumption
- Employee health benefit program could include discount on premiums for those who complete a health assessment and reach health improvement goals
- Adding health support groups/networking to create culture of making healthy choices
- Health and wellness culture: Develop comprehensive, data-driven health and wellness program to improve health of students, staff, and faculty
- Establish the UNL Center for Mindfulness Education and Research (CMER)
- It is unclear how the mindfulness section of this report fits within sustainability efforts of UNL.

# APPENDIX A

## LAND & ECOSYSTEM

- Use Horticulture and Landscape design department as a resource
- Land and Ecosystem Resources: the goal of preserving and enhancing the “natural landscape” of University property is interesting, given that there is no natural landscape anywhere on campus that I have ever seen. The action item of planting 100 trees annually would not result in a “natural landscape” for the Great Plains – a natural “Nebraska Style” does not equate to trees.
- Create a more natural and less labor/water intensive landscape on each campus.
- I think that an overlooked aspect in the Land and Ecosystem Resources section is reducing stormwater runoff from parking lots. A substantial portion of each campus is dedicated to parking lots and the actions for that section seemed more concerned with from buildings.
- I would like to recommend that UNL’s East Campus be further developed for teaching purposes. This might include expansion of the Maxwell Arboretum with additional specimens not currently on campus and increased signage identifying the plants. There also might be public access to demonstration plots or projects to inform visitors of our research mission.

## RECYCLING

- Recommend updating Board of Regents policies to reflect sustainability efforts, including adding preference to purchase local products and product with recycled or recyclable content.
- Create furniture reuse program through the efforts of Procurement, Facilities, and Surplus team to better communicate what used furniture can be used on campus rather than buying new and selling or destroying almost-new furniture.
- Filtered water bottle fillers in every building, decreasing use of plastic bottles
- Currently we preach about the importance of recycling but the recycling (lack of) that actually takes places at UNL is downright embarrassing. I’ve been at countless events where box lunches, drinks, etc., are provided and no recycling containers are even in the room. In our department, this is also common and if people do recycle they have to hike across the department to find a bin. Even then it is only office paper, cans and bottles. We use many other recyclable materials that go in the trash. I also hear stories (from facilities workers) that the recycling bins at football games go into the same refuse trucks as the other trash. I have been at several Universities and have never found one so reluctant to implement and enforce strict recycling guidelines. Only by doing can we be effective in the principles that focus on educating and developing students in these areas. Teaching but not doing will not work.
- I see recycling referred to 7 times in this document. There should be a comprehensive plan for this topic as it is one way we can quickly and easily reduce our environmental impact.
- The plan is not very proactive with recycling. Other universities are much further along with campus recycling efforts. What can UNL do to help the university community recycle materials and to educate the public about recycling? Action is needed, not simply overall support.
- I believe UNL should overhaul its recycling system as well as use renewable energy for power.
- Composting program implemented between depts., creating more student worker jobs.

## REGENTS LEVEL

- Divest from Fossil Fuel Stocks
- Establish the policy, governance and administrative infrastructure that results in net-zero CO2 emissions and a net-zero energy campus by 2050.
- Divestment of fossil fuels is not mentioned, although it would be an instrumental step in having the

# APPENDIX A

university switch to renewable energy.

- The most important action is to divest in fossil fuels.
- There is no mention of an audit of financial investments made by the institution and whether or not those include fossil fuel companies. Divestment of investment funds (including both large and small institutional endowments) from fossil fuels is an essential sustainability goal that the university must contend with; no amount of individual action by students, faculty, or staff can compare to the impact of large corporations that engage in unsustainable practices, including the production of fossil fuels.

## TRANSPORTATION

- Reference to UNL fleet be moved from Energy to Transportation
- Transportation goal to include energy and GHG reductions
- Figure out how to reduce time and cost parking permits for those who work from home and/or use bikes or public transportation when possible so employees and students don't feel like they're being "punished" by paying for a parking permit that they only use half the time
  - Would also relate to reduced emissions
- Transportation section should include a short-term plan to create a bike path that connects city and east campus. The Mopac trail almost does, but that route still requires street riding and "bike friendly roads" aren't necessarily bike-friendly.
- The action item of adding charging stations on campus might be less attractive to employees and students than imagined, as most commuters to campus are easily within the range of most EVs for their round-trip (i.e., there would be no need for them to recharge to get home). Better incentives might include things such as reduced parking rates or preferred parking areas (closer to buildings or covered).
- Would like to see more work and collaboration with Global programing and lessening environmental impacts of faculty, staff and students traveling internationally
- Reduce the amount of single-occupant vehicles driven to campus.
- I think that there could be potential for the University to work with the city to establish infrastructure for better connectivity between each campus and the city's existing trail network. Additionally, I think that establishing a shuttle system to apartment complexes and neighborhoods with high student populations that are not serviced by the inter-campus bus route could be a way to potentially decrease the amount of single-occupant vehicles coming to campus. Based on the number of people who park by the bus stops on 23<sup>rd</sup> street then take the bus to campus, I think this could be something that many people could be interested in.

## WASTE MANAGEMENT

- Push toward net-zero CO<sub>2</sub> and zero waste across all sectors of the University
- While I agree that a net-zero CO<sub>2</sub> goal is important, the idea of getting to net-zero energy as a campus is costly and unnecessary. According to energy-use statistics on the Office of Sustainability webpage, much of UNL's electricity comes from renewable sources (mainly hydropower). Building on-campus generation to offset this just doesn't make sense.
- The most important action UNL should take are those that work towards carbon-neutrality. These actions set a precedent for graduating students, other universities, and the rest of Nebraska on how to be conscious of our carbon output and energy use. To be specific, this is focused on the following

# APPENDIX A

three areas: energy, transportation, research and innovation.

- One area that could be looked into is creating resources and resource guides for off-campus waste reduction to help faculty and off-campus students take the waste management goals home with them to their community. These guides and resources would ideally be helpful and available to the greater Lincoln community as well.

## WATER MANAGEMENT

- The Water Center is not mentioned as a resource
- Water Management: what is the baseline of use of recycled water in the aspirational objectives? Will a 50% increase be meaningful? As an outcome, better preparedness for drought and flood is laudable, but I don't see how anything mentioned here will better prepare UNL these scenarios.
- The action plan lists water management and notes a goal. Can it go further by identifying actions, such as rain gardens? Can the plan include actions to use grey water?
- I did not see any mention of partnership with Indigenous people and Tribal communities when considering land and water management. UNL, as a land grant institution, has directly benefitted from land transfer from Indigenous communities to settlers. Reckoning with our relationship with land and Indigenous people should be a key part of considering sustainability of land and water. Pursuing opportunities for Indigenous voices to influence land and water management decisions and other dimensions of how UNL interacts with land and surrounding communities should be a part of the final strategic plan.

## LEAST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE PLAN

- Husker mindfulness app seems like a waste of resources. There are a million similar things out there – would this one be much different?
- Health and Wellness Mindfulness – this center proposal doesn't belong in this plan, at least as a separate part of the action plan framework proposed. It could possibly be an eventual outcome of the Health and Wellness Culture theme, but it should not be included as a separate theme
- I think the physical health-related actions are not as important to overall sustainability.
- Establish the UNL Center for Mindfulness Education and Research (CMER)
- I think that teaching and learning is the least important action that UNL should take currently. This is due to the fact that while it should be taking place alongside the other actions, the other actions should be completed with a greater level of priority to lay the groundwork for the teaching and learning goals to be completed. I want to emphasize that while I think it is least important, I think that it is still important and that the short-term goals in this area are well thought out.
- What are the least important actions that UNL should take? Creating the CMER

# APPENDIX A

## GENERAL COMMENTS

- Do more, push the boundaries, push the limits, push the envelope on “possible.” No more pats on the back until leaps and bounds are made
- The University should act with a sense of urgency, otherwise this whole effort is a “greenwashing,” façade, a scam, and an insult to environmentalist campus wide
- Perhaps those in outstate are practicing sustainability at a higher efficiency than the campus and that is why Research Centers, Extension Offices, and other off-campus locations were not included in this document.
- Alignment with UN-SDG #13 Climate Action should be included; inclusion of #16 is a stretch.
- More outdoor study and dining areas for students, faculty, and staff.
- My reading of the draft suggests that quite a few actions can be taken with little cost. I would prioritize those.
- There is too much emphasis on profit, as a public university that is contrary to the mission. It is important the there is an emphasis on people and planet, but not on profit as those are mutually exclusive. There must be radical action taken to stop the climate crisis from occurring. Profit is mentioned too much, no divestment information, much of the plan is just posturing and offers no real solutions to the gravest crisis of human existence.
- Decreasing waste and energy use by facilities, increasing sustainable land practices, and mindfulness support.
- I wonder if there is a way for UNL to support a student group or political movement for sustainability more than working with the City of Lincoln. Maybe a grant for student groups who want to get involved in sustainability (not necessarily for a certain political agenda.
- I am concerned about the use of the STARS evaluation system, since it is self-reporting. Most areas of post-secondary education require independent, third-party verification that institutions have achieved stated standards. Having suffered through most of the corridor lights in Nebraska Hall being removed due to energy concerns, I think energy is important enough that UNL should require third-party verification that energy goals are being/have been met. Green Globes, ASHRAE or similar (pre and post-construction) energy standards, verified by third party professionals, should be required in the Energy Action Plan.
- The draft recommends developing a policy document identifying “short-term and long-range best management practices to ensure the stewardship and diversity of land resources, proper manage of storm-water runoff, and contribute to the aesthetics of the landscape.” This document would be completed in 2025. With five years to look at best management practices, can the policy document do more than just continue planning? By 2025 it should be possible to not only identify management practices, but to recommend how and where they might be implemented.
- The action plan lists themes and goals, but generally lacks any real actions. This makes it difficult to know whether the plan will achieve desired actions. Would it be possible to allude to some additional actions in the plan?

# APPENDIX A

## EDITING REMARKS

- It is the “UN Sustainable Development Goals”, not “... Sustainability ...”, this needs to be corrected throughout and the URL to the UN page describing these goals should be when they are first mentioned in the introduction and not buried in the appendix.
- As a public (i.e., not for profit) university, I think the components of the “triple bottom line” need to be tweaked, perhaps replacing “profit” with “productivity”, if the alliteration is an important goal.
- The entire document would benefit greatly from proofreading. Many grammatical errors (subject-verb agreement, verb tense) and wrong word choice (e.g., “council” where “counsel” is meant).
- Energy: the second bullet under aspirational objectives is repeated under short-term objectives (third from bottom). While I agree that this should be a forever objective, the two should be worded differently; perhaps “Initiate a policy to begin to install ...” for short term objectives and “Continue the policy to install ...” if there is a desire to emphasize this as a continuing policy.
- I recommend revising the intro so that it clearly ties the UNL strategic mission re sustainability to the institutional mission – how will this benefit Nebraska and Nebraskans (why do we have a moral/ethical responsibility to do this?)
- I recommend tying the Plan to UN sustainability goals early on –not just in the tables.
- I recommend adding a brief (!) phrase to each Guiding Principle that provides a rationale. As in: Guiding Principle #1...: We plan to do this xxx, because..... On a related note, I also recommend slightly rephrasing these 5 Guiding Principles, again to tie them to the institutional mission. For example, UNL need to educate students across the entire workforces, and we need to train students, because sustainability and resilience principles reverberate through all economic sectors, from Agriculture to Tech.
- Guiding principles #4 and #5 – provide a rationale – why should these be our guiding principles?