



GRADUATING GREEN

Steps Towards a Sustainability Graduation Requirement at
the University of Washington

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Do we *need* a sustainability graduation requirement?

What is the *purpose* of a graduation requirement?

Who do we want our graduates to *be*?







Sustainability

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

(Our Common Future, 1987)



“

What measures can **students** at the **University of Washington** take towards implementing a **undergraduate sustainability graduation requirement?** ”



A high-angle photograph of a person with dark hair, wearing a black t-shirt and dark pants, sitting on a dark brown leather bench. They are looking down at a white laptop on their lap, with their hands on the keyboard. A tablet is also open on the laptop, displaying a webpage with a blue and green graphic. A black bag is on the floor next to them. The floor is made of large, light-colored stone tiles. The text 'How do you implement a sustainability graduation requirement?' is overlaid on the right side of the image in a purple, serif font.

How do you implement a sustainability graduation requirement?

RESEARCH

Policy + Precedents

CONNECT

with the Community

BUILD

Partnerships

RESEARCH - UW POLICY



Mission Statement:

“ Addresses the most persistent and emerging challenges in **human health, environmental resilience, and social and economic equity**... we develop, implement, and disseminate transformative knowledge through the UW’s research, service, and teaching (p.3)

”

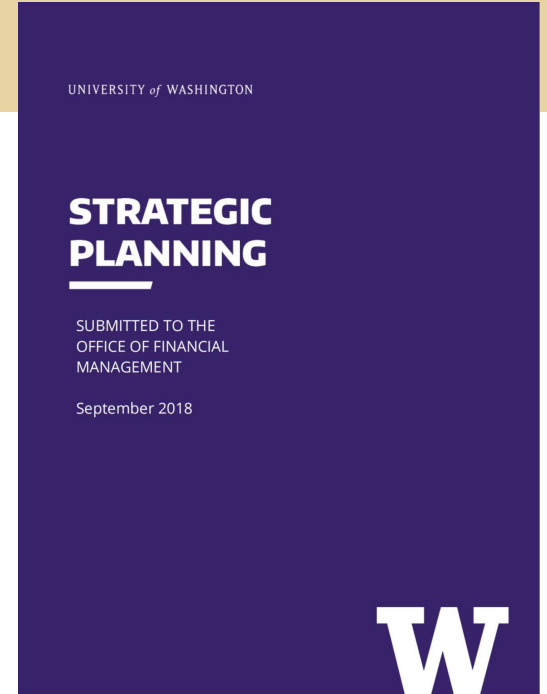
RESEARCH - UW POLICY

Vision Statement:

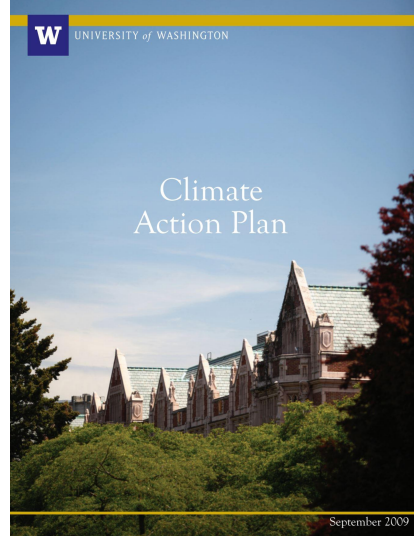
“

The University of Washington educates a diverse student body to become **responsible global citizens and future leaders**... We discover timely **solutions to the world's most complex problems** and enrich the lives of people throughout our community, the state of Washington, the nation and the world (p.4)

”



RESEARCH - UW POLICY



RESEARCH - PRECEDENTS



Sustainability Across the Curriculum Report, 2015

- Mentions “university-wide S requirement”
- Highlights student desire for sustainability courses, discusses concept of replacing NW and/or I&S with Sustainability

AASHE STARS Report, 2018

- UW has 961 “sustainability courses”, 2338 that “include sustainability”
- 62.3% of academic departments at UW have sustainability course offerings*

RESEARCH - PRECEDENTS

Sustainability Requirements at other Schools

- More common at small, private, liberal arts colleges
- Limited studies on SGRs
- Peer Schools: U of Minnesota, U of Vermont, U of Georgia, SF State*

UW Diversity Requirement

- Student-led initiative, passed in 2013 (implemented in 2014)
- Passed in ASUW then Faculty Senate - model for SGR



CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Faculty:

Christine Ingebritsen, SCAND/JSIS
Christopher Campbell, CEP/URBDP
Eli Wheat, ENVIR
Kristi Straus, ENVIR


Staff:

Ana Wieman, ENVIR advisor
Claudia Frere-Anderson, UW Sustainability
Darielle Horsey, UW Study Abroad
Sean Schmidt, UW Sustainability
Taylor Ahana-Jamile, UW Study Abroad



FACULTY & STAFF

Main Takeaways

- 
- Administration is more responsive to student support
 - Create a coalition
 - Concerns about the credit burden, especially for STEM majors



CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY



STUDENTS & RSOs

Student Recruitment:

Posters
Email Lists

RSO Contact:

EcoReps*
SEED*
UW NetImpact
Green Greeks

ASUW:

Resolution process
Solicitation of student opinion

ASUW Resolution

- Met with Emma Wilson
- Research + Write the resolution
- Propose resolution
- Discuss + edit resolution
- Passed April 23



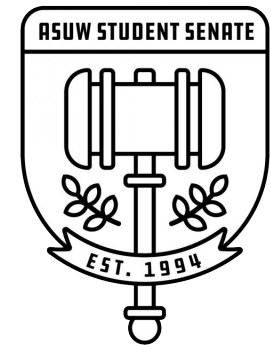
BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS: THE SUSTAINABILITY CREDIT COALITION

- Roughly 8 regular members
- Bi-weekly 2 hr. meetings
- Earth Day Tabling
- Contact with UW President, Ana Mari Cauce & other UW staff
- Research & Outreach



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS: RSOs & Other Allies

- **EcoReps** - credit partnership, recruitment
- **SEED** - considering official endorsement, residence hall outreach
- **ASUW Members** - post-resolution support





What did I *learn*?

Takeaways from the Project



Bureaucracy is slow

People have thought about this before—just needed a push

Students really care about sustainability on this campus

The credit burden is the biggest concern, greatest challenge

Other schools have done something similar, but more focused on environment





Personal Takeaways

How to negotiate, talk, appease when people want answers and you can't give it to them

Passion and sincerity can go a long way

Organizing people is hard, but rewarding





What's *next*?



LOOKING AHEAD

- Prepare Coalition for Transition of Leadership
- Gather greater student, faculty, & staff feedback + increase research depth
- Policy Recommendations
- Faculty Senate

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Darielle Horsey

Taylor Ahana-Jamile

Megan Herzog

Christopher Campbell

Sophia Militello

Coalition Members, especially Emma Wilson

All the UW faculty, staff, & students who have supported my project



References

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https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/uw-s3-cdn/wp-content/uploads/sites/35/2012/10/05212738/UW_Strategic_Plan_2018-final.pdf
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Earth Day Poll Results

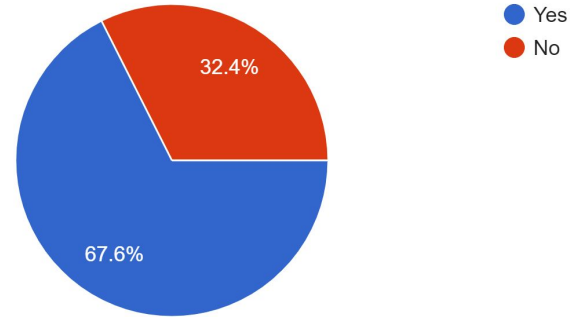
39 Responses

26 different majors represented

Multiple responses from ESRM, Public Health, Political Science, Biology, Business, Finance

Have you learned about sustainability in a class before?

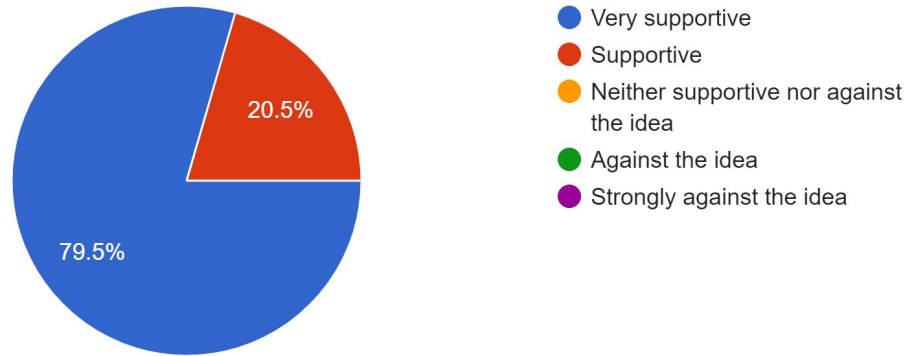
37 responses



Earth Day Poll Results

In relation to the general concept of a sustainability-focused undergraduate credit requirement, I am...

39 responses



Earth Day Poll Results

"I feel that **sustainability is more important and relevant than many of the other required prerequisites**. It should be a requirement. The reason I chose "supportive" and not "very supportive" is **there are already too many requirements, so a 5 credit sustainability credit would need to replace something else or work toward something like I&S"**

"I think **a seminar could also cover this**. Some classes I have taken discuss issues with pollution, but not how an individual can take measures to fix things. **If these classes changed a bit of their topic coverage, it could count for sustainability requirement and not add even more classes to the course load** (the issue always is the classes end up conflicting when there are lots of requirements). Also **if it counted for the NW credit it would be great for majors that don't include that. A linked Writing credit would be great."**

"I see sustainability as the big elephant in the room in terms of large-scale problems.... **As a generation faced with much environmental challenges, being required to learn about sustainability and how we can become more sustainable is just one way that we can ALL collectively begin to encounter and face this challenge** (crisis)."