



MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

2022-2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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Website: <https://www.mnsu.edu/about-the-university/fast-facts/mavericks-for-sustainability>



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OUR MISSION

History

The Environmental Committee was first organized during the 2008 Fall Semester by directive of University President Richard Davenport. This committee is comprised of voting members representing the full complement of union members as well as student representatives in student government. Some of these union affiliates are over-represented, whereas some have been consistently un-represented. In addition, members of the administration and facilities have engaged with the committee. The mission of the committee is formerly: “to advise the University President and the University Community on environmental [sic] friendly practices and sustainable facilities and practices. Working [sic] toward an environmentally progressive campus where a community consciousness is promoted dealing with energy use and savings, recycling, and reducing items that might otherwise end up in a Landfill.”

Motivation

In the 2022, with a near universal uniform return to campus and the installation of a new President – and while humanity still has some ability to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change if quick, deliberate action is taken by those who have the ability to do so – the committee has uniformly agreed to present a formal annual report to the campus community. The intention of this report is to:

- 1) advise policy makers on campus on discussions and actions taken by the Committee over the previous year
- 2) Outlining a working agenda for the near term of priorities for the Committee

MEMBERSHIP

Voting Members

IFO: Michael Rutkowski (Chair) // Bryce Hoppie

MMA: Jason McCue

MSUAASF: Rachel Maccabee

MAPE: Gary Urban

AFSCME Local 638: *Unfilled*

Student Government: Madison Vandersee // Jordan Meuller // Emma Zellmer

Emeritus: Louis Schwartzkopf

Affiliated Staff (non-voting)

IFO: Paul Prew // Unfilled

Facilities: Paul Corcoran // David Cowan // Amber Carson

Administration: Richard Straka

MMA: *Unfilled*

MSUAASF: *Unfilled*

MAPE: *Unfilled*

AFSCME Local 638: *Unfilled*

Student Government: *Unfilled // Unfilled // Unfilled*

Attendees (non-voting):

IFO: Thomas Allen, Russell Fricano, Kyle Nash

MAPE: Anne Ludvik

Maverick Adventures & Campus Recreation: Sam Steiger

Water Resource Center: Kimberly Musser

2022-2023 IN REVIEW

Minnesota State Mankato Earth Week

- The Committee in conjunction with the Astronomy and American Indigenous Studies program and Maverick Adventures, sponsored an off campus event at the Jeffer's Petroglyphs that was attended by more than 200 students and members of the public. Committee fees enabled international students in astronomy to visit this unique site by offsetting cost of fleet service rentals.
- Supported Minnesota State Mankato Earth Week activities on and off campus. This flagship event that was coordinated by Maverick Adventures attracted in excess of 1000 students to more than 10 activities on and off campus. [Earth Week 2023 event description](#).
- Campus Styrofoam collection was completed and disposed of at Mankato Zero Waste collection event

See the following page for an array of the opportunities provided for students during Earth Week

Transportation Survey

- Completed annual survey of transportation use and needs of the campus community. The full report is developed and maintained online by G. Urban on our official website, Mavericks for Sustainability accessible [here](#):

Pollinator Spaces

- Re-engaged Facilities on the development of pollinator gardens on campus. Investigation was made of the possibility of assuming the Ford garden space, though ultimately the Committee decided to pursue the original location near to Stadium Road. Conversations with grounds management about re-opening the Stadium Road space as the Pollinator Garden will restart in Fall 2023.



Single Use Plastics

- Initiated discussions with campus dining services to reduce single-use plastic in public dining facilities and in association with CSU events

Committee Actions

- Members supported multiple sub-committee group sessions to address ad hoc issues encountered throughout the year including:
 - a. Onboarding documentation formulation was initialized. This documentation will ensure continuity across new chair installation and new members with definition of relevant bureaucratic structures
 - b. Campus solar power infrastructure. Regular discussion with facilities on the development of campus-scale power infrastructure.
 - c. Emeritus member Schwartzkopf solved software issues for calculating carbon output and completed annual carbon survey

Public Outreach

- Initiated and maintained a public Instagram account @MNSU_sustainability
- Initiated new collaboration with Mankato-based Living Earth Center
 - 2022 Annual Earth Conference hosted on campus for first time, committee member-provided scholarship support for students to attend.
 - Secured CSU space to host Living Earth Center Annual Earth Conference in November 2023
 - Committee members have taken on conference leadership board responsibilities to assist future conferences on campus

Memberships

Minnesota State Mankato official membership status was renewed for the following organizations

- *Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education*
- *Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS)*
- *Minnesota Composting Council*
- *SIMAP*
- *The League of American Bicyclists Bronze Bicycle Friendly Campus 2021-2025*

Carbon Footprint

- Initial investment (anonymized survey) in pre-NextGen infrastructure for MNSU-only campus reporting of carbon footprints associated with official travel
- Confirmed non-priority of investment in tracking in NextGen infrastructure

Minnesota State University, Mankato Community Representation

- Coordinate with UMACS president to develop Minnesota State Mankato -led programs at September 2023 conference.
- One member will attend in person at South Dakota 2023 meeting on behalf of University

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Students, Faculty and Staff need a campus wide coordinator for sustainability.

The MinnState System policy on sustainability requires a staff member to coordinate sustainability issues with faculty and staff across divisions and report various metrics to the head office. Currently, Minnesota State University Mankato does not meet the required standards outlined for this position; a number of individuals are assigned to meet components of this requirement. Beyond the requirements of St. Paul Head Office, the catastrophic threat of climate change touch every aspect of the local, state, and global economy.

We request administration work with the Sustainability Committee to discuss re-purposing existing resources and identify new ways to support the development of a campus-wide sustainability coordinator. We include an addendum to this request at the conclusion of this document to clarify this request.

We have a once in a generation opportunity to lead Minnesota in Solar Investment

We must invest in green technologies campus. Particularly, solar panels that would be exceptional in their design and production capacity within the MinnState system. Sister campuses in MinnState have already made meaningful, visible first steps in such investment. We must identify ways in which federal and state support beyond the GESp program can support the construction of a meaningful >3MW (>10M\$) solar array on campus.

The Committee will continue working with faculty, students, and staff to do whatever it can to ensure complete buy-in for this monumental investment; a full-throated endorsement by Administration is essential to get a large solar project across the finish line.

Improving student experience will also serve environmental & community development efforts

Two substantial area green spaces will soon become, or already are, available for partnership: native prairie at Kasota Prairie and the Rasmussen Woods. At present, Kasota Prairie maintenance support from owner Covia is in question. Mining operations have ceased and thus funding provided to preserve the Prairie while the surrounding area is degraded by mining is uncertain. Rasmussen Woods is managed by the City of Mankato, but as the City's operations plans state there are opportunities to engage in the management. ***Minnesota State Mankato should explore possibilities of supporting these sites for as campus resources, preserving them for future generations but making them classrooms for active learning, in-situ laboratories, sites in which service projects can be carried out, and sites for engaging the broader Mankato and regional population.***

Educating the campus on sustainability by elevating what Minnesota State Mankato can accomplish

Minnesota State Mankato facilities, students, faculty, and staff have all made significant advances in reducing the environmental impact of the University. These efforts should be publicized and advertised throughout campus in order to inspire continual improvement.

The Committee would support financially the publicization of these efforts. Administration should encourage through its various channels the University, across all of its divisions, to support this effort.

We have a long way to go as a campus before achieving meaningful reductions to stave off the catastrophic effects of human-caused climate change, but we can find cost-effective, meaningful ways of reducing our environmental footprint.

The Committee would financially support the development of campus projects that would promote the meaningful reduction of waste and use of energy through seed project funding. Administration should encourage divisions of the University to communicate what needs they have for assistance to the Committee.

Engaging Students

Minnesota State Mankato exists for its students. These students are concerned with environmental issues generally and academic offerings of the University should include education on this topic, broadly.

Minnesota State Mankato should support course redesigns to enable concentrations or certifications for traditional and/or continuing education student populations to engage in these studies. Members of the committee have developed concentrations to assist the campus community to better define what is already possible within the University's existing structure. The Committee has also produced surveys of existing concentrations in environmental certificates at other institutions in the US and identifies a unique space for a midwest-focused program which could be hosted here on campus.

The Committee will continue to focus on joining interdisciplinary interests together to support such programs.

Further, we recognize that student engagement in the development of environmental action is a priority, but few students have historically volunteered to fill the seat allocations defined in the Committee Charter.

The Committee will continue to seek new candidates to fill all open positions on this committee, focusing specifically on the Student Government.

Measuring full carbon footprint of Minnesota State Mankato footprint

At present, Minnesota State Mankato has no method for determining the full carbon footprint of staff and faculty. This can be the largest component of annual emissions (see., eg., <https://ethz.ch/en/the-eth-zurich/sustainability/eth-sustainability/air-travel/project-background.html>). The most sensible place for this reporting or calculation would be made in the NextGen software when individuals request permission for travel from Departmental and University officials. Though the Environmental Committee has insisted that the NextGen software should be developed with this in mind, it is not a priority.

Minnesota State Mankato should advocate for either internal development of these tools to be released as a service to all MinnState users of NextGen software. If no accommodation within that system can be made, Minnesota State Mankato's carbon footprint associated with travel should be collected as a component of the trip pre-approval process.

Dining Contracts should be renewed with requirements on single-use implements

Minnesota State dining services, whether in the dormitories or in the CSU or at events should make every effort to reduce the use of single use materials. These are rarely recycled, if recycling is even possible. Plastic-free is ideal, but this will take time as this cheap method of transporting goods is so embedded in processes. Currently, a variety of single use plastics are available for free for use including containers, bottles, cups and utensils. Each of these can be removed in a cost-effective way if individuals are educated on the alternatives and the choice between their use or reusable implements is made easier. Measures could include using replacements or charging for their use.

Minnesota State Mankato should advocate contract renewal with food service contingent on measures to reduce single use materials. Many other universities do this already, and it can be done cheaply and effectively.

Accepted by Unanimous vote by the Full Committee on XXXX October 2023

APPENDIX

A.1: As stated in Minnesota State System Board Policy Chapter 5, Administration, Section 5.17

Commitment to Environmental Sustainability, part 3 Accountability:

Colleges, universities, and the system office shall appoint a staff member for sustainability issues and facilitate development and implementation of campus-based initiatives. The staff member shall maintain records regarding recycling, energy and water consumption and conservation, and pollution prevention efforts and shall monitor and communicate programs, initiatives and curriculum addressing sustainability. The system office and each college and university shall report progress and accomplishments periodically to the Board.

Currently the designated individuals assigned to meet this charge include Dave White, Jason McCue, and Paul Corcoran in varying capacities. In effect, MNSU only partially meets this Policy.

Facilities is best situated to provide records regarding sustainable use of physical and energy resources, there are other aspects of the board policy that could benefit from more collaborative support. While the Environmental Committee has regularly collected and updated information on courses and faculty (see below), it has not been able to assess the depth and breadth of sustainability-related curriculum on campus. Further, committee member's participation on the *General Education Assessment Committee* suggests that even Category 10: People and the Environment is inadequate to address 21st century sustainability needs. While our campus has a promising number of sustainability related programs and initiatives, there is no central physical or administrative location to develop, promote, coordinate, and publicize these efforts.

Sustainability, and similar initiatives like regenerative agriculture, touches a part of nearly every degree program or concentration across campus (quite literally Aviation to Zoology). Coordination across disciplinary boundaries now preoccupied with mergers, student enrollments, rapidly changing job markets, etc. will necessarily need support to update their curriculum. While certain financial and curricular barriers obstruct collaboration, the ubiquitous nature of sustainability and ecological concerns provides a fertile ground to establish relationships across these barriers.

The Environmental Committee does not take the addition of an administrative position lightly. However, the potential cost-savings and positive public image resulting from the University's commitment to add a Sustainability Director makes this position uniquely attractive. The lack of a Sustainability Director on a campus of this size and visibility in Minnesota is difficult to comprehend.

A sustainability coordinator, in particular one that is student-facing, could meet these demands. In addition to coordinating all campus efforts ongoing in support of MinnState policy, duties of this individual could include:

- Developing full, singular accounting on reporting energy and GHG footprints;
- Identifying and implementing systemic methods for offsetting and/or reducing these;
- Conducting and assisting research into new methods,
- Educating the campus community of staff, faculty and students on methods and means to ameliorating the environmental impact of campus activities;
- Developing and supporting certificate, short course, and degrees across campus.

Every 2-3 years since 2008, AASHE has conducted a survey of sustainability professionals employed in higher education. We would encourage the cabinet to review, in conjunction with the Committee, the most recent report (<https://www.aashe.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-staffing-survey-report-1.pdf>) to better understand the scope of duties that would be assigned to such a coordinator.

A.2: Results of a survey of existing Sustainability courses offered recently on campus

AIS 380 – The Sacred Landscape (F 2015) Mead
 AIS 360 – Indigeneity & Environment (F22) Prew
 ANTH 331 – Environmental Anthropology
 ANTH 418 – Agricultural Systems and Environmental Change (New Course?)
 BIOL 215 - General Ecology (4 Credits) (F22)
 BIOL 403 – Conservation Biology (S22) Sorensen
 BIOL 410 – Global Change Biology (F22) Ruhland
 BIOL 412 - Soil Ecology (4 Credits) (F22)
 BIOL 432 - Lake Ecology (4 Credits) (F22)
 BIOL 461 Environmental Toxicology
 ECON 412 – Resource/Environmentl Econ (F22) Spencer
 CIVE 380 – Environmental Engineering (F22) [Druschel]
 ENVR 101 – Perspectives Env Science (F22) Proctor
 ENVR 440 - Environmental Regulations(3 Credits) (F22)
 ENVR 450 - Environment Pollution/Control(3 Credits) (F22)
 GEOG 410 – Climatic Environments (F 2016) Mitchell
 GEOG 417 – Quaternary Environments and Climatic Change (New Course?)
 GEOG 420 – Conservation of Natural Resources (S22) Friend
 GEOG 480 – Sem: GIS & Envr Hazards (F 2016) Miller
 HLTH 101 - Health & Environment (3 Credits) (F22)
 HLTH 450 – Environmental Health (F22) Kramer
 HIST 486 – Amer Environmental Hist (S22) Lahlum
 HUM 450W – Environmental Humanities (S15) Westerman [listed as Humanities Seminar]
 MRKT 494 – Belize Study Abroad (Scott, Kristin S17)
 PHIL 226W– Environmental Ethics (F22) Matarrese
 POL 461 – Environmental Politics (F22) Slocum

URBS 150 – Sustainable Communities (F22) Asomani-Boateng

A.3: Campus Faculty identified as contributing to coursework in Environmental and/or Sustainability

Issues

Monika Antonelli - Library Services
 Raymond Asomani-Boateng – Urban and Regional Studies
 Mark Bowen – Geography
 Matt Capra - Biology
 Stephen J. Druschel – Civil Engineering
 Beth Fisher – Geology
 Russell Fricano – Urban and Regional Studies
 Jonathan Hicks – Recreation, Parks and Leisure Services
 Bryce Hoppie – Geology
 Lori Ann Lahlum – History
 Phillip Larson – Geography
~~Lindsay Mason – English~~
 Chelsea Mead – Anthropology and American Indian Studies
 Cynthia Miller – Geography
 Martin Mitchell – Geography
 Rama Mohaptra – Geography
 Miriam Porter – Urban and Regional Studies
 Paul Prew – Urban and Regional Studies
 Beth Proctor – Environmental Sciences
 Christopher T. Ruhland – Biology
 Fred Slocum – Political Science
 Bob Sorensen – Biology
 Michael A. Spencer – Economics
 Gwen Westerman – English
 Chad Witkop – Geology
 Ryan Wersal - Biology

A.4: Staff on campus contributing to Environmental or Sustainability Issues

Angela Archer – Water Resources Center (Monitoring specialist)
 Andy Brown – Anthropology/ Earth Lab (GIS)
 Anne Ludvig– RASP (Composting expertise)
 Kimberly Musser – Water Resources Center (Watershed, Environmental planning)
 Kim Rademaker - Integrated Marketing
 Sam Steiger - Maverick Adventures, Campus Recreation
 Madison Vandersee - Maverick Adventures, Campus Recreation
Paul Corcoran - Facilities
Jason McCue - Facilities
Gary Urban - Finance

A.5: The definition of courses accepted as part of “Goal Area 10: People and the Environment”

AIS 360	(3)	Indigenous People & Environ Struggles 10 (removed for being upper division)
ANTH 102	(4)	Ancient Peoples 5, 10 (F 2015)
ANTH 210-L	(4)	Intro to Archaeology 3, 10 (F 2015)

ENVR 101	(4)	Persp. in Environmental Science 8, 10
GEOG 100	(3)	Elements of Geography 8, 10 (F 2015)
GEOG 101	(3)	Introductory Physical Geography 3, 10 (F 2015)
GEOG 210W	(3)	Landscapes and Places 10 (F 2015)
GEOL 100-L	(3-4)	Our Geologic Environment 3, 10 (F 2015)
GEOL 108	(3)	Oceans of the World 3, 10 (F 2015)
GEOL 121-L	(4)	Physical Geology 3, 10 (F 2015)
HIST 180	(4)	European History to 1648
HIST 260	(4)	Introduction to Traditional East Asian Civilization
HLTH 101	(3)	Health and the Environment 10 (F 2015)
PHIL 226W	(3)	Environmental Ethics 9, 10 (S 2015)
RPLS 282	(3)	Wildlife as a Recreational Resource 10 (F 2015)
URBS 150	(3)	Sustainable Communities 5, 10 (F 2015)