GRADUATE SUSTAINABILITY GROUP

Memo: Emory Sustainability Leaders' Contributions to Sustainability Goals 2016-2026

Memo prepared for the Emory University Sustainability Visioning Committee

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September 2015

Special Thanks To:

Office of Sustainability Initiatives (OSI) for funding the research.

The SNA Project team for their countless hours of dedication.

Emory sustainability leadership community for taking part and
sharing their 2016-2026 vision for Emory.

Professor Peggy Barlett, Chair of the Sustainability Visioning Committee,
for guidance on the memo writing process.

INTRODUCTION

In October 2014, Emory University's Office of Sustainability Initiatives (OSI) selected Graduate Sustainability Group (GSG) to receive funding through the OSI Sustainability Incentives Fund for a project to map Emory's sustainability leadership community.

The mapping revealed a **network of over 700 individuals** who are striving to further sustainability at both Druid Hills and Oxford campuses[1]. The research team sent a social network analysis survey to these sustainability leaders to understand how they engage with sustainability, both individually and in collaboration with each other[2].

While the project's main objective was to understand the relationships within the leadership community, it also aimed to **contribute to the sustainability visioning process** underway at Emory. It did this by including the following question in the survey:

> *"If you were on the Emory 2016-2026[3] Sustainability Visioning Committee, what ONE bold and courageous sustainability goal or action would you put forward for inclusion in the final Visioning Document?"*

In all, 381 respondents answered the question. Of those, **333 responses** were useful for analysis[4]. 73% of the respondents were white and 60% female. Staff member represented 27% of the sample, faculty 25%, graduate students 26%, undergraduate students 21%, and postdocs 1%. Two raters coded the responses, resolving any discrepancies in coding. The three most frequently coded categories of responses were: Climate Change and Energy; Waste; and Culture and Behavior Change. The full report that includes respondent demographics, explanations of the applied codes, and full findings can be downloaded from http://tinyurl.com/EmorySNA.

This memo distills the most relevant recommendations from the analysis for the use of the Emory University Sustainability Visioning Committee as part of its Community Conversations process.

Questions about this memo and the full report should be directed to GSG president and study PI, Ioulia Fenton at ifenton@emory.edu. For more information on the original Social Network Analysis project, please visit http://tinyurl.com/EmorySNA.

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[1] The research did not include Emory Healthcare or the University's alumni network.

[2] Network mapping took place January-May 2015; survey data was collected May-June 2015.

[3] The original survey question specified 2015-2025 as that was the date range of the vision at the time; since then, the vision's range has changed to 2016-2026 and is thus referred to as such throughout this report.

[4] The analysis excluded 48 responses (13%): 8 that answered the question with "I don't know" and thus did not provide a useful response; 31 that answered with "I was not on the committee," indicating confusion over the meaning of the question; and 9 that answered with vague, less useful suggestions.

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SUMMARY OF FOUR STRATEGIC ARENAS

For reference, the four strategic arenas identified in the draft Emory 2016-2026 Sustainability Vision and Strategic Plan document are summarized below:

I. Support culture change among academic and operational units to carry forward courageous action on sustainability:
- **Incorporate sustainability into first impressions of Emory.**
- **Sustainability orientation for all incoming students, faculty, and staff.**
- **Sustainability commitments in every unit's strategic plan, including Healthcare.**
- **Full-cost accounting in all routine decision-making.**
- **Sustainability requirements in recruitment and performance evaluation.**

II. Expand network of sustainability champions to strengthen leadership at every level:
- **Organizational structures for champions:** *Faculty Fellows; Staff Reps and staff education, learning outcomes, and assessments; Student champion internships and mentoring; Student Government sustainability leadership positions; Sustainability Leadership Academy.*
- **Prepare Emory graduates for sustainability leadership:** *Sustainability in academic programs and degrees; Expand curriculum work; Link sustainability info needs to academic programs; Campus-based research/data hub; Support faculty sustainability interest groups and start-ups.*
- **Integrate sustainability into the life of the campus**: *Residential sustainability education; Sustainability literacy survey; Sustainability metrics for programs, residence halls, and Greek life; Community service for all students; Sustainability in summer programs and camps.*
- **Invest in Office of Sustainability Initiatives: financial, human, and support resources.**

III. Use Emory landscape, buildings, and operations to model sustainable choices:
- **Built environment:** *Carbon-neutral new construction; Best practices for building interiors; Reduce energy use (including Healthcare) 50% per sq.ft. and 25% total, and renovated buildings by 20%; Self-generate 10% energy; Reduce campus water use by 50% and eliminate drinking-water use for non-potable purposes; Make new Campus Life Center net zero and "living building;" Use iconic buildings for sustainability outreach; Revolving fund to incentivize operational units to conserve beyond goals; Make all roof renovations green or solar.*
- **Waste:** *All events zero-waste; All functions plastic bottle free, except Commencement; Divert 95% of non-construction waste, except medical and hazardous; Compost, re-use, recycle 95% of all food, non-hazardous, and construction waste; Divert 20% of non-hazardous medical waste; Achieve the 37% Healthcare waste reduction/re-use/recycling nation-leading targets.*
- **Transportation:** *Carbon-neutral Fleet; Targets and incentives to double alternative commuters; Bring bike share and Cliff Shuttle to neighborhoods and to Lindbergh MARTA station; Increase awareness of alternative transportation among Healthcare patients and University visitors.*
- **Campus ecosystem**: *Campus in a Forest vision; Net Positive Forest Policy; 200 trees by 200th birthday; Remove invasive species in 25% grounds and replace with native species; Reduce impervious surface by 15%; Reduce turf grass by 15% and replace with native species; Research herbicide and insecticide alternatives.*
- **Food:** *75% sustainable food purchases by 2030, Healthcare 25% by 2025; Oxford farm to produce 50% of Oxford needs and 5% Druid Hills needs by 2020; Second Emory organic farm.*
- **Climate action:** *Update Climate Action Plan (CAP); All CAPs to reduce GHGs 20% by 2020 and 50% by 2050; Create Carbon Neutral Degree.*

IV. Create strategic partnerships with local, national, and international institutions to build flourishing and resilient communities:
- **Partner with Atlanta government, NGOs, and corporations for expanding:** *MARTA to Clifton Corridor; Green energy through Georgia Power; Food security, resilience, and self-provision in metro Atlanta via Food Hub; Local food business incubator; Healthcare community outreach.*
- **Enhance sustainability decision-making in the national and Emory supply chain.**

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KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, there was broad agreement between the categories of goals put forward by Emory's sustainability leaders and those sketched out by the Visioning Committee in the draft 2016-2026 Sustainability Vision and Strategic Plan. However, the community also proposed additional goals and actions, and for some areas suggested more bold targets than currently envisioned in the draft. To include the sustainability leaders' voices in the final visioning document, the authors of this report recommend considering:

1. Additional **social concerns** such as raising hourly worker minimum wage, striving for economic sustainability for low-income students, and more clearly linking sustainability to social justice work on campus.

2. Bold action on **institutional divestment** from activities that contribute to climate change, such as fossil fuel production and industrial agriculture, or that otherwise misalign with Emory's sustainability goals.

3. Items for supporting collaborative and multi-disciplinary **research and intellectual work** on sustainability, such as including students (particularly low-income) and faculty from philosophy and other humanities and ecology and other natural sciences in defining what is meant by sustainability and in participating in the relevant campus decision-making processes.

4. A goal for **measurement, monitoring and evaluation** of sustainability work and progress, such as a system for easy reporting of problems on campus, sustainability annual reporting and performance measurement for all units, and technology to alert community on progress.

5. The community's suggested **bolder and more courageous goals**, particularly:

   i. for strategic partnerships in action arena iv to include work on the **policy level**, such as on regional living wage practices, removing subsidies for harmful practices such as industrial agriculture and removing obstacles for more sustainable practices like legal barriers to alternative energy production, and influencing corporate leaders towards more sustainable practices;

   ii. **all existing buildings** to meet a preset standard such as LEED or Living Building Challenge;

   iii. increase the 10% goal for campus **energy production**;

   iv. include a **renewable energy purchasing** goal;

   v. expand **transportation** goals and actions to:
   - eliminate idle vehicles practices and thus save fuel;
   - expand pedestrian areas;
   - bring light rail to Emory;
   - include Emory in a city-wide bike rental scheme;

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- support the Urban Health Initiative's transportation Ministry (both the Labor Limo and the Community Supplemental Transportation Initiative) so low-resourced community members can get to services.
  - vi. eliminating **bottled water** from campus.

6. **New items** of concern raised by respondents:
   - i. a **paper use** reduction goal actionable by evaluating existing norms and practices to assess which are obsolete and can thus a) be replaced by the increased use of available technologies such as online correspondence and enrolment processes, Blackboard, Emory Box, and GoToMeeting, and b) reduced through education and behavior change, such as eliminating unneeded copying and printing.
   - ii. elimination or reduction of **single-use plastics** and Styrofoam from campus by such action as banning or restricting plastic bags and plastic bottles.
   - iii. goal for reducing or offsetting **air travel**, such as via an in-house carbon-reduction fund that travelers can contribute to off-set each journey and thusly fund sustainability and climate change work and research on campus.
   - iv. **expanded food goals** that address:
     - food production on campus by **replacing landscaping with gardening**, utilizing roofs and other spaces for gardening and incorporating the harvest as ingredients in the food served on campus;
     - food consumption such as **reducing availability of hyper-processed junk foods** and bottled sweet drinks on campus;
     - social concerns in the food system, such as committing to sourcing from **vendors that pay workers fair wages** and provide good working conditions and giving a percentage of the food not used at the DUC and Cox to members of the Atlanta community who need it.

7. Encourage various units to review the July 2015 report and the sustainability leaders' myriad suggested **concrete actions** that it contains when making their plans for realizing the Vision.
   - i. For example, education-oriented suggestions for projects that can help the Vision's goal to prepare Emory graduates for sustainability leadership include: *mandate compulsory sustainability education (essay, class, or project), create community-engaged learning courses that address sustainability, establish a large-scale school-wide "sustainability day of service," build an agricultural sustainability certificate program, commit a quarter of faculty to integrating sustainability into their teaching, and establish a Sustainability Center under the office of the Provost to more fully incorporate sustainability into Emory's intellectual life, and more.*

8. Provide a short Sustainability Visioning Committee response to this memo and its recommendations with **explanations for rejection and acceptance decisions**.