Campus Sustainability Indicators: Lessons from the Field

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Good Company
Eugene, OR
Overview

- A definition of sustainability in four minutes
- Assessments, Indicators, & the Pollyanecdote Effect
- Five tips for indicators and assessment
- A ready-to-use set of indicators for you
- Caveat: NO SILVER BULLET

Note: sign up to get access to these materials via the web.
Good Company

Mission - driven, for profit

Sustainability planning, strategy and assessment for complex organizations

National leader in streamlined campus sustainability assessment (big deal)

Greatly indebted to many collaborators
What Matters Most?

- Health, well being
- Children/family/friends/pets
- Job security and quality
- Learning/growing/knowledge/personal development
- Sense of purpose; doing a good job at work
- Sense of community/participation/belonging
- The well being of the planet/people/other species
- Beauty
- Faith
Creating The Sustainable Brain
A Look Inside The Typical Brain
A Look Inside The Sustainable Brain
So, sustainability is…

- Individual and collective health
- Economic vitality
- Current and intergenerational equity
Assessment: how and why

A snapshot of the path
Assessment & Indicators

- A snapshot of performance
- A collection of indicators, preferably with a theme

Indicators
- A measure of a particular aspect of performance, ideally:
  - Linked to things that matter
  - Measurable
  - Actionable!
Taking Stock of the Planet

For more, see the Living Planet Report of the World Wildlife Fund at www.panda.org/livingplanet
Fig. 2: WORLD ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT, 1961–97

Available biocapacity

Available biocapacity allowing 10% for nature reserves

close window
Systematic Assessment

- Comparable indicators
- Agreed-upon benchmarks
- Clear goals (sense of direction, targets)
- Capacity in place to make it going
- Inclusive efforts:
  - Different levels of participation
  - Cooperation and friendly competition
- Move beyond stories, support action
The Pollyanecdote Effect:
The Phenomenon

Examples:
“Gee, listen to Ms. X!”
“Wow, look at University Y!”
“Holy cow, look at Building Z!”
The Pollyanecdote Effect: The Dangers

- No baselines for comparison
- Successes without stories
- PR mentality diverts energy
- No rigorous link between priorities and self-knowledge

Systematic assessment can help to avoid all of these potential pitfalls.
## Snapshot of OUS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Degrees Awarded</th>
<th>Total Students</th>
<th>Total Staff &amp; Faculty</th>
<th>Revenues (millions)</th>
<th>Facilities (gross sq. ft.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OSU</td>
<td>3304</td>
<td>20,789</td>
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<td>UO</td>
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<td>376</td>
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# Sustainability Snapshot of OUS

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<th>Institution</th>
<th>Recycling Rate</th>
<th>Energy Use (MMBTU/user/year)</th>
<th>Water Use (g/user/day)</th>
<th>Proper Disposal of C&amp;E Waste</th>
<th>GHG Emissions (tons)</th>
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<td>UO</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>110.2 - 150.1</td>
<td>67.3 - 91.8</td>
<td>Yes (high diversion rate)</td>
<td>30,347</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five tips for campus indicators

1. Connect to what matters most
2. Balancing acts: breadth, depth, quant vs. qual, stakeholder involvement
3. Talk dollars and sense – and effectiveness
4. Psychology, martyrdom and truth
5. Integrate with and serve the mission

In all cases, the right answer is (in part) specific to the institution and its context.
Tips #3: dollars, sense, effectiveness

1.

- Talk dollars and sense and effectiveness
- Compare practices – include all costs
- Think about assessment process itself
- Explicitly discuss institutional vision (relate it to effectiveness)

Tips #3: dollars, sense, effectiveness
A set of indicators for you!

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<tr>
<th><strong>OPERATIONAL CATEGORY</strong></th>
<th><strong>GENERAL CONCERN</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy &amp; Water</td>
<td>Environment &amp; Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials &amp; Waste</td>
<td>Governance, Learning &amp; Policy</td>
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<td>Health &amp; Safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Purchasing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning &amp; Governance</td>
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A final note on pedagogy

- Students need to:
  - begin with the idea of a holistic view of the world (especially in order to envision an end point)
  - believe that solutions are possible (think bottleneck, not cliff)
  - have tools for making sense of a hopelessly complex world

Replace "students" with "people"
Thank You!

This is available on the web (sign up)

Feel free to contact me:

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