

Proposal for the Creation of a Sustainability Office at William and Mary

Sustainability is no longer an elective. David Skorton, Cornell University President, Time Magazine, 2007

Colleges and universities across the United States have been undertaking sustainability efforts for the past twenty years. Many have created specialized Offices of Sustainability to help integrate such initiatives throughout the university. Three components comprise the core functions of these offices:

1. *Academics*: Sustainability must first be studied and understood in order to ensure awareness and appreciation for the issue across units and constituencies.
2. *Facilities*: Projects and policies must address elements of building and fixture design, technologies, and ongoing maintenance.
3. *Leadership*: Sustainability must be continually promoted and demonstrated in order to ensure that it is integrated throughout the community as a way of life.

Research conducted over the summer of 2007 identified pros and cons of various institutional arrangements for leading and coordinating campus sustainability efforts, and guided the formulation of a proposal for William and Mary. The findings of this review are summarized below and in tabular form in Appendices A, B and C. This summary first examines the functions of the proposed *Sustainability Office*, including academics, facilities, and leadership. It then discusses best practices for institutional structure, and concludes by outlining the ranges of staffing and budgets at other leading universities.

I) Sustainability Office Functions (See also Appendix A)

Academics

1. *Curriculum*: Sustainability can be adopted into the academic curriculum in two ways. First, it can be taught as a primary subject through environmental studies classes and/or sustainability seminars. Second, it can be taught as a secondary subject by integrating the principles of sustainability throughout the curricula in all departments. This could be accomplished by establishing a sustainability proficiency requirement to be fulfilled by department-specific courses relating sustainability to the department's area of expertise (*See Sustainability Education Proposal*). The Sustainability Office Director would be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this function, in collaboration with the program in Environmental Science and Policy.
2. *Internships*: The Sustainability Office would engage and educate interested students by offering student internships and/or student employment opportunities. By working with the Sustainability Office, students would gain knowledge and experience and in turn benefit the Office by assisting with sustainability projects that may require more time and effort than the staff alone can commit.

Facilities

1. *Energy Consumption*: The Sustainability Office would initiate projects on campus to reduce energy consumption, increase energy efficiency, and explore renewable energy possibilities.
2. *Building Design*: The Sustainability Office would be involved in the planning and design processes for both new construction and renovation projects on campus in order to ensure the use of sustainable building practices that would lead to both cost savings and environmental sustainability.
3. *Waste Management*: The Sustainability Office would initiate projects to reduce waste, increase recycling, and increase food composting.
4. *Water Use*: The Sustainability Office would initiate projects on campus to reduce water use and explore new water conservation technologies.
5. *Data Collection*: The Sustainability Office would be responsible for collecting data regarding campus energy, emissions, waste, and water. The Office would track the progress of these areas to measure improvement and identify future projects.

Leadership

1. *Campus and Community Outreach and Education*: The Sustainability Office would initiate educational awareness campaigns to promote sustainable practices in the daily lives of students and

the community. This could include working with student and community environmental groups, hosting sustainability forums and conferences, and publicizing the work and progress of the Office.

2. *Sustainability Oversight*: The Sustainability Office would provide knowledge and expertise in order to advise policy makers and to assist those working to implement these policies, and provide input in assuring that projects further campus sustainability goals.

II) *Structure (See Appendix B)*:

Reviewing the experience of dozens of leading colleges and universities in the U.S. suggests that location within the institutional structure is crucial in determining the Sustainability Offices' capabilities and effectiveness. The Office must be representative of all three essential dimensions of sustainability, Academics, Facilities, and Leadership, and its position within the institutional structure must reflect this. Three options for the office's location in the college's organizational chart emerge:

Option 1: Office of the President; Option 2: Office of the Provost; Option 3: Independent Office

Drawing on a comparative analysis of dozens of other schools, we propose Option 3 for William and Mary because it would allow the office to control its own budget and decision-making.

III) *Budget (See Appendix C)*:

Sources of Funding

Since the Sustainability Office is designed as an interdisciplinary body with a wide range of functions, its source of funding should reflect this broad nature. Rather than being funded solely by the administration or by gifts and grants, the Office would be best served by acquiring its budget from multiple sources. Each source would provide needed funding for a separate purpose.

1. *Administration*: Depending on the location of the Office within the institutional structure of the College, funding from the administration could come from the President, the Provost, Academic Affairs, or the College's central funding. The budget provided by the administration would support the salary of the Office's staff; it should be an ongoing commitment from the College to ensure financial stability and attract an excellent candidate for Director.
2. *Student green fees*: Students at William and Mary are discussing imposing a fee on themselves earmarked for sustainability purposes. The budget provided by student green fees could support the ongoing core projects and programs conducted by the Sustainability Office.
3. *Gifts and grants*: Monetary gifts from alumni, foundations, and other donors can be used as seed money to start up major projects on campus. This budget can serve as a revolving loan fund as in other universities, fed by monetary savings resulting from the projects. Over time, the revolving loan fund will grow and when it shows results, the Sustainability Office will receive recognition and acclaim attracting more donors and expanding the work.

Annual Budget and Allocation of Funds

Following other successful offices, we propose that the budget for the office be organized in three lines, including salary and administration, programs, and major projects.

1. *Salaries and Administration Budget*:
 - Suggested starting salary for Sustainability Director: \$60,000 plus benefits
 - Student work-study staff and volunteers will provide substantial other labor for the Director to oversee: \$20,000
2. *Ongoing Programs* could be initially funded from student green fees. For example, with a \$10 annual green fee, \$75,000 could be raised for annual efficiency and educational projects.
3. *Major Projects* can be funded by alumni and donor gifts, grants from federal agencies and private foundations, and capital funds from the issuance of state bonds. Another possible source could be this year's senior class gift. A revolving loan fund would also be an important financing mechanism. Such an instrument has been extremely successful at institutions like Harvard, where investments are earning annual returns on the order of 30% and the revolving fund has grown to \$12 million.