

LUTHER COLLEGE

Center for Sustainable Communities

Strategic Plan (2019-2021)

History and Context

[The Center for Sustainable Communities \(CSC\)](#) was founded in 2013 to unite existing sustainability efforts at Luther and provide a vehicle for new ideas and initiatives. The Center coordinates all of Luther's sustainability efforts and promotes sustainability throughout the region. Initially the work of the Center was organized around four program areas:

1. Food and Wellness
2. Energy and Climate Action
3. Land Stewardship
4. Education and Outreach

The Center's original strategic plan focused on six goals:

1. Integrate and embed sustainability into the mission and operations of the college
2. Develop an energy and climate program with emphasis on education and community energy systems
3. Enhance Luther's land stewardship program with increased emphasis on community education and collaboration
4. Sustain food and wellness programming with strategic growth in food production and education
5. Expand and deepen outreach initiatives to serve as a catalyst for sustainability in the region
6. Fully endow the Center and create a structure for long term fiscal and organizational sustainability

In Spring 2018, the CSC embarked on a year-long process to develop a new strategic plan to guide its sustainability work for the next three years. The Center hosted eight community input sessions with students, faculty, and staff at the college as well as engaged community partners that were organized around two goals:

1. Shape a shared vision for sustainability at Luther (10-year timeframe), including operations, student learning, and community outreach.

2. Determine goals and priorities for the next three years to guide the work of the Center for Sustainable Communities.

Participants were asked to reflect on the following questions:

- If you are on the Luther campus 10 years from now, what should be different? What will you see related to sustainability at Luther that is new?
- What is our shared vision for sustainability in Decorah and Northeast Iowa? What do we want to see in our community that would indicate that we are realizing this vision?

The core staff of the Center distilled themes from these input sessions and worked with a facilitator and a smaller group to set priorities and finalize the following strategic plan to guide our work over the next three years from 2019-2021.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement

Rooted in our call to be good stewards of the Earth and responsible citizens in the global community, the mission of the Center for Sustainable Communities at Luther College is to promote sustainability and be a catalyst for change on campus and in the region through education, outreach, and collaboration.

Shared Vision (10-year perspective)

Sustainability is embedded at Luther College with all students experiencing an inclusive community and a model of living and learning that challenges the dominant paradigm. Our carbon neutral, zero waste, and intentional campus culture connect people to place and campus to community through transformative experiential education. Luther is a partner and a leader in enhancing equity and community resilience on campus, in Decorah, and throughout the Driftless Region with a national reputation for academic excellence and sustainability innovation.

Core Values

Place	Equity
Stewardship	Integrity
Community	Resilience
Relationships	Hope

Definition of Sustainability

Luther defines sustainability broadly as integrated action to address environmental, economic, and social challenges to ensure a more just, equitable, and ecologically healthy world.

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Goals and Strategies

Operational Sustainability: *Implement initiatives to be a leader in campus operations.*

1. Achieve the 70% greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goal in Luther's Climate Action Plan and develop strategies to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
 - 1.1. Research and implement projects to increase the efficiency of campus operations
 - 1.2. Commission and implement a campus energy master plan that is consistent with our goal of carbon neutrality by 2030
 - 1.3. Develop an innovative financial partnership to install a solar plus energy storage system on campus
 - 1.4. Implement a web-based building dashboard tool to educate the community about real time energy consumption and renewable energy production
 - 1.5. Utilize campus networks to increase energy conservation through behavior change
 - 1.6. Research the feasibility of carbon sequestration offsets developed in partnership with state and regional land conservation groups
 - 1.7. Update Luther's Climate Action Plan per the terms required by [Second Nature](#)
 - 1.8. Enhance sustainability in transportation for students and employees as well as with college sponsored travel

2. Develop and implement a zero-waste plan.
 - 2.1. Expand waste and recycling infrastructure to achieve a 70% reduction in landfilled waste by 2021 from 2004 baseline
 - 2.2. Educate all campus constituencies about our waste reduction goal and related GHG emission reductions
 - 2.3. Explore elimination of single use, disposable containers on campus such as water bottles and packaging in the cafeteria's grab-n-go line
 - 2.4. Work with all departments on purchasing and source reduction
 - 2.5. Explore innovative partnerships such as community composting to leverage partnerships and economies of scale

3. Increase the consumption of sustainably-produced food and expand food education for students, faculty, and staff by working with the Sodexo and other partners.
 - 3.1. Develop and implement sustainability goals and metrics for Dining Services that are related to specific food and dining goals in [STARS](#) and the [Real Food Challenge](#)
 - 3.2. Set new numeric goals for local food procurement and meat purchases
 - 3.3. Improve the quality of food and student satisfaction with campus dining

- 3.4. Develop a long-term staffing model for the College Farm that increases student responsibility while developing a sustainable business model
4. Advocate for sustainability in all building projects (new or renovations).
 - 4.1. Work with Facilities Services and hired contractors to ensure implementation of Luther's [Green Building Policy](#).
 - 4.2. Collaborate with the committees working on renovation plans for Main and the Regents Center to incorporate ecological design features like daylighting, accessibility, commuter showers, and vehicle charging stations.
 - 4.3. Promote best practices in stormwater management (permeable paving), water reduction (waterless urinals), and waste management (material recycling) for all building projects
 - 4.4. Educate the campus community and the general public about the benefits of sustainable design and green building practices

Applied and Integrated Learning: *Make sustainability a part of every student's learning experience through place-based, experiential, and community-based learning opportunities that utilize high-impact pedagogical practices.*

1. Work with faculty to integrate sustainability into the curriculum.
 - 1.1. Advocate for inclusion of sustainability (including social justice) in revisions to the general education curriculum
 - 1.2. Utilize faculty development workshops and learning communities to create place-based, experiential, and community-based learning opportunities
 - 1.3. Increase the number of academic credit-earning internships and community-based learning opportunities by fostering and strengthening relationships with businesses and organizations
 - 1.4. Support student-faculty research on sustainability
2. Expand sustainability opportunities via co-curricular activities and organizations.
 - 2.1. Collaborate with other centers on campus and foster stronger connections with community groups
 - 2.2. Create transformative learning opportunities like Endeavor Together and explore expanding the latter for all incoming students
 - 2.3. Increase the number of non-academic credit-earning internships and community-based learning opportunities by fostering and strengthening relationships with businesses and organizations
 - 2.4. Nurture the creation and persistence of sustainability-oriented student groups such as the former Environmental Concerns Organization (ECO)

- 2.5. Work with the Center for Global Learning to incorporate appropriate aspects of sustainability into each Study Away experience, calculate the related carbon footprints, and find ways for students to mitigate them
3. Strengthen sustainability education for pre-K-12 students and attract more sustainability-focused students to attend Luther.
 - 3.1. Refine the Sustainability Scholars Program and secure funding to expand it
 - 3.2. Continue outreach and environmental education programming for various audiences including area teachers
 - 3.3. Develop programming for middle school youth and high school students interested in sustainability and utilize our network of teachers, counselors, and alums to recruit more youth to enroll at Luther
4. Leverage campus operations as an opportunity for learning, research, and innovation.
 - 4.1. Work with faculty and the new Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching to help faculty make curricular connections to the campus physical plant
 - 4.2. Utilize data from campus operations for teaching and research

Campus Culture: Foster an intentional campus culture where sustainability and inclusion are evident and embraced by students, faculty, and staff where they live, learn, eat, and play.

1. Design multi-dimensional sustainability education initiatives.
 - 1.1. Implement sustainability education in the residence halls utilizing students as peer educators or eco-representatives
 - 1.2. Work with Student Life to catalyze more intentional living arrangements like Luther's [Sustainability House](#)
 - 1.3. Utilize student educators to do more educational events and initiatives
 - 1.4. Pilot "Adulthood 101," an educational program for students that focuses on key skills like cooking healthy meals, energy management, and financial literacy
 - 1.5. Educate and engage the community about our goals for campus operations including zero waste, sustainability in dining, and Luther's Climate Action Plan
2. Collaborate with other centers and offices on campus.
 - 2.1. Develop joint programming including speakers, events, and workshops
 - 2.2. Focus on positive and inclusive messaging that reflects and promotes the Center's core values
 - 2.3. Explore award programs or other efforts to improve morale and create a stronger and more inclusive campus culture
 - 2.4. Revitalize orientations to Luther's sustainability initiatives for new staff and faculty

Community Resilience: Collaborate with partner organizations to help communities establish and implement community resilience plans.

1. Help communities engage in resilience planning and implementation
 - 1.1. Develop a timeline and process to sign and implement the [Second Nature Resilience Commitment](#)
 - 1.2. Assist the City of Decorah’s efforts to create a multidimensional Sustainability Plan and integrate Luther students in the process
 - 1.3. Collaborate with community stakeholders to market the quality of life in Decorah and northeast Iowa
2. Foster a regional approach to sustainability
 - 2.1. Deepen and expand collaborative work on community flood resilience within the watershed of the Upper Iowa River
 - 2.2. Collaborate with Winneshiek County on studying and protecting environmental assets
 - 2.3. Explore innovative models for a regional food system
 - 2.4. Continue to work with the [Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative](#) on regional approaches to education about healthy food and wellness
 - 2.5. Explore ways Luther can help promote economic development in the area

Leadership, Capacity, and Visibility: Strengthen the Center’s organizational capacity, financial foundation, and institutional reputation.

1. Create or renew structures to support the Center and sustainability on campus.
 - 1.1. Reorganize and expand the Center’s task groups
 - 1.2. Consider establishing an advisory committee for the work of the Center
2. Secure funding needed for the long-term health of the Center and implementation of this plan.
 - 2.1. Work with the Development Office to fully endow the Center for Sustainable Communities
 - 2.2. Seek grants to support particular initiatives
 - 2.3. Support the Development Office as they seek support for specific initiatives such as the renovation of Main and the Regents Center, [Endeavor Together](#), and the Sustainability Scholars Program
3. Develop and implement an expanded and improved communication plan with targeted messages and specific strategies for:
 - 3.1. Students
 - 3.2. Faculty and staff
 - 3.3. Prospective students, families, teachers, and influencers
 - 3.4. General public

4. Increase Luther's national and regional visibility.
 - 4.1. Achieve a GOLD rating by the Sustainability Tracking and Reporting System (STARS)
 - 4.2. Publish annual reports highlighting progress in achieving the goals in the Center's strategic plan

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