

TO: Dylan Rodriguez, Chair
Riverside Division

FR: Kurt Schwabe, Chair 
Executive Committee, School of Public Policy

RE: Report from Sustainability Ad Hoc

Date: January 5, 2018

The SPP Executive Committee is unanimous in its support for increased efforts to address sustainability on campus, efforts that include shared governance across the three “pillars” referenced in the document, and increased energies and structure to more clearly and fully include faculty and students. We thank the Sustainability Ad Hoc Committee on its labor in generating an excellent and comprehensive report that addresses past events (some of which we feel still need some explanation), current challenges, and presents a framework for the future. The SPP Executive Committee has five points for additional consideration.

First, we feel it is imperative that the Sustainability vision and mission clearly stipulate the importance of interactions with faculty and staff and that such interactions are written into the mission. The previous Director, Dr. John Cook, seemed to understand this and, from all accounts, was extremely successful in engaging faculty and students in the campus sustainability efforts. From what we can gather from the Ad Hoc committee’s report, this element of UCR’s sustainability efforts has received short shrift since the departure of Dr. Cook and the restructuring of the Sustainability Office under the direction of the Office of Planning and Budget. Consequently, we support the committee’s recommendation that one of the three “pillars” of sustainability on campus relates to the academic community.

Second, we feel the importance of staff to UCR sustainability efforts cannot be overemphasized. We would hope that Facilities Services continues to further develop sustainability programs that are inclusive and incentivize staff participation.

Third, we are appreciative of the efforts to more formally document the Office of Sustainability’s restructuring in 2016 and the efforts of Dr. John Cook during his tenure at UCR. Given the importance of sustainability to UCR, along with the role faculty and students play in this mission, such documentation clearly illustrate a significant failure on

the administration to include faculty/academic senate and student counsel on this issue prior to making such a significant decision.

Fourth, with respect to the newly suggested definition for “sustainability,” we recognize the difficulty with developing such a definition and commend the Ad Hoc committee on their efforts and success in providing a new and more contemporary definition. With this said, we would make one suggestion for item #2 to include the phrase, “potential trade-offs”, so that it reads:

“...2) academic and policy investments that support ecological health and investigate interconnections and potential trade-offs among the economy, social wellbeing, and the environment, with attention to legacies of the past, constraints of the present, and well-being of the future;...”

Fifth, and as a potential alternative (“second-best”?) structure relative to what’s being offered by the Ad Hoc committee, perhaps all that is needed is to add some additional safeguards and input surrounding decisions pertaining to the management and efforts of the Office of Sustainability. The reason we raise this is that what was evident in both the report as well as from many of our own experiences, the Office of Sustainability under Dr. Cook’s direction was extremely successful in its sustainability efforts on campus, in the community, and through its interactions with faculty, students, and staff. As an example of the sort of adjustments that might be added to the previous structure, perhaps a more formal relationship with faculty and staff be included (e.g., through the development of an academic senate committee on sustainability), and safeguards added that require consultation with the academic senate prior to any major decisions pertaining to the office of sustainability management and policies.

