

Job Description

Job Title:	Director, Sustainability
Department:	Sustainability Office
Reports To:	Vice-President, Administration and Finance; President
Jobs Reporting:	Communications and Engagement Manager; Projects Manager
Salary Grade:	14
Effective Date:	February 2026

Primary Purpose

The Director, Sustainability serves as the University of Waterloo's senior institutional authority on sustainability and climate strategy. As the University's leader of institutional sustainability and climate strategy, the role provides enterprise-wide leadership to advance the University's environmental sustainability commitments and to embed sustainability and climate considerations into institutional planning, governance, decision-making, risk management, and operations.

The Director stewards the University's sustainability vision as articulated in Waterloo at 100, Policy 53: Environmental Sustainability, the Environmental Sustainability Strategy, the Campus Plan, and additional implementation and action plans. Through strategic leadership, executive advisory, and cross-institutional collaboration, the role translates institutional commitments into measurable outcomes while strengthening the University's long-term resilience, regulatory readiness, and reputation.

Key Accountabilities

Enterprise Sustainability Strategy, Governance and Executive Advisory

- Set and steward the strategic direction for the University's sustainability and climate agenda, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities, academic mission, and long-term environmental, financial, and reputational considerations.
- Serve as a senior advisor to the President, Executive Council, and governing bodies, applying a sustainability and climate lens to institutional strategy, policy development, and major decisions.
- Lead and provide institutional expertise to the President's Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability (PACES), including shaping evidence-based recommendations and ensuring effective governance, accountability, and renewal.
- Establish and maintain institutional sustainability governance and accountability frameworks that embed responsibility across faculties, departments, and administrative units.
- Translate institutional sustainability commitments into clear objectives, milestones, and performance expectations across the University.

Institutional Integration, Climate Planning and Risk Leadership

- Lead institutional sustainability and climate strategy and planning, including the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and aligned topic-specific action plans (e.g., Shift:Zero, Shift:Neutral, Shift:Mobility).
- Embed sustainability considerations into institutional governance, planning, and decision-making, including campus planning, capital development, procurement, and operational processes, through development of processes, policies, guidelines, and standards.
- Monitor and advise on sustainability-related regulatory, policy, and sector developments, ensuring institutional preparedness, compliance, and strategic positioning.

- Identify, assess, and elevate sustainability- and climate-related risks and opportunities with material operational, financial, compliance, or reputational implications.
- Enable integration of sustainability into academic programs, research, and curriculum, in collaboration with academic leadership and support units.
- Provide expert guidance on climate-related targets, pathways, and strategic trade-offs to support evidence-based institutional decision-making.

Programs, Projects and Funding

- Provide strategic oversight, prioritization, and direction for sustainability programs, services, and initiatives delivered through the Sustainability Office.
- Enable and support academic and administrative units in the design and implementation of sustainability initiatives, including project planning, business case development, and procurement engagement where appropriate.
- Directly lead or implement priority sustainability projects where institutional capacity, expertise, or alignment is limited.
- Oversee institutional sustainability funding mechanisms, including the Sustainability Action Fund, Revolving Fund (directly over \$1M in funding distributions for project support), and other internal programs, ensuring alignment with institutional priorities and demonstrable outcomes.
- Integrate sustainability and climate action projects within the institutional capital planning and renewal process, supporting over \$5M in project development and allocation.
- Provide strategic direction on innovative partnerships and financing strategies that can support sustainability project implementation.
- Identify, communicate, and where appropriate support applications to external funding opportunities, including grants, incentives, and rebate programs that advance institutional sustainability objectives.

Measurement, Accountability and Reporting

- Establish and maintain institutional frameworks to measure, monitor, and evaluate progress against sustainability objectives and commitments.
- Oversee tracking and reporting on the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and associated action plans.
- Lead preparation of institutional sustainability reporting, including the annual sustainability report and integration of sustainability metrics into broader institutional planning and accountability processes.
- Oversee completion of mandatory and voluntary third-party sustainability disclosures, rankings, and ratings, ensuring data integrity and alignment with institutional strategy.
- Determine and oversee the University's participation in external surveys, benchmarks, and rankings, ensuring strategic alignment, credibility, and appropriate institutional representation.

Partnerships, Representation and Sector Leadership

- Act as the central institutional contact for sustainability-related partnerships and initiatives.
- Partner with University Relations and campus stakeholders to communicate sustainability priorities, progress, and achievements.
- Build and sustain strategic relationships with governments, municipalities, utilities, community organizations, and peer institutions.
- Represent the University at senior external tables, sector forums, and sustainability networks, contributing to policy dialogue, collaboration, and best-practice development.

Organizational Leadership and Capacity Building

- Provide strategic leadership for the Sustainability Office, setting direction, priorities, and standards of performance.
- Provide coaching, guidance, and coordination for sustainability-focused positions embedded in partner departments and organizational units.

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- Establish and oversee departmental strategy, workplans, performance targets, and budgets aligned with institutional objectives.
- Direct and oversee a portfolio of sustainability initiatives to ensure effective delivery, integration, and impact.
- Build institutional sustainability capacity by enabling faculty, staff, and students to integrate sustainability into academic, operational, and decision-making contexts.
- Ensure appropriate governance, risk management, and administrative oversight for Sustainability Office operations.

Required Qualifications

Education

- Master's degree required.
- Education or training in environmental science, sustainability, public policy, planning, or a related field, or equivalent combination of education and experience.

Experience

- Minimum of five years of progressive leadership experience in sustainability, climate strategy, or related roles within a complex institutional or corporate environment.
- Demonstrated experience advising senior leaders, executive committees, or governing bodies.
- Experience leading cross-functional initiatives, managing complex portfolios, and driving organizational change without direct authority.
- Experience developing organizational plans and strategies, including roadmaps, implementation plans, business cases, and scenario creation.
- Experience supervising staff and managing budgets.

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities

- Expertise in sustainability and climate strategy, including greenhouse gas measurement and accounting and sustainability reporting frameworks (e.g., AASHE STARS, GRI).
- Knowledge of sustainability-related legislation and regulatory requirements relevant to post-secondary institutions.
- Strong strategic thinking, judgment, and political acuity.
- Excellent public speaking skills and ability to communicate across a wide variety of audiences.
- Financial and analytical literacy sufficient to inform business cases and investment decisions.
- Excellent stakeholder engagement, negotiation, and partnership-building skills.
- Proven people leadership, project and portfolio management, and communication skills.

Nature and Scope

- **Contacts:** Internally, makes contact with personnel on campus to advance institutional objectives and evaluate progress (e.g. Food Services, Plant Operations, IAP, Housing, faculty in administrative roles, University Relations, etc.) Internally, presents, discusses information and problems with President's Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability co-chairs and members, Senate, Board of Governors and various committees, Executive Council, President's Advisory Committee on Design, and other relevant University committees, and Student Associations and clubs. Internally, collaborate, negotiate and advocate for approved projects with the Sustainability Advisory Committee, as well as other institutional strategic priorities. Externally, makes contacts with partner or potential partner organizations to obtain, clarify and discuss information, including community stakeholders (e.g. Sustainable Waterloo Region, Council of Ontario Universities), counterparts at other universities and local municipal staff (e.g. Region, City), and other business and government leaders. Externally, presents, discusses information and problems with the public at large.

- **Level of Responsibility:** Leads an institution-wide strategy/program that is specialized and multifaceted with several direct reports (in addition to supervising co-op/internship students). The job includes responsibility for coordinating volunteers who may be involved in various initiatives and coordinating pan-campus initiatives while building accountability for institution-wide goals and objectives. Overseeing departmental budget as well as distribution of flow-through budgets to other departments and institutional stakeholders. This position has a high element of leadership without authority – strengthening the imbedding of sustainability across many partner departments and units, empowering and supporting their efforts, and establishing appropriate accountability mechanisms.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** Makes decisions related to implementing overall departmental plans and various institutional sustainability commitments, within the confines of the University's strategic plan and budgetary constraints and providing recommendations as appropriate on university decisions consistent with stated objectives. Must be capable of making decisions independently and understanding when to escalate matters to the VPAF and other campus partners.
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** Minimal demands typical of an office environment. The position works collaboratively and independently, requiring good judgement and a robust work ethic with shifting priorities and under frequent time constraints
- **Working Environment:** Minimal exposure to disagreeable conditions typical of an office environment. Regular working hours, some evening/weekend work required. Occasional travel required and physical risks typical of those associated with occasional business travel.

**All employees of the University are expected to follow University and departmental health and safety policy, procedures and work practices at all times. Employees are also responsible for the completion of all health and safety training, as assigned. Employees with staff supervision and/or management responsibilities will ensure that assigned staff abide by the above, and actively identify, assess and correct health and safety hazards, as required.*