Staff Association Area Reps Meeting
Minutes of Dec 8, 2022

Present:
Edward Chrzanowski  Gail Spencer  Carry Derome
Steve Bradley  Susanne Keppler  Brittany Reiche
Maris Weiss  Stephanie Forsyth  Robyn Landers
Shannon Taylor  Colin McLaren  Karry Kwan
Mathew Thijsse  Laura McDonald  Terry Labach
Colleen Phillips-Davis  Stephanie Boragina  Tim Ireland
Kathy Becker  Scarlett van Berkel  Yessenia Guerrero
Victoria Lehmann  Angela Rooke

1. Land acknowledgement – Colleen Phillips-Davis, Associate Director, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism

2. Mathew Thijsse, Director of Sustainability speaking on Sustainability at Waterloo: Progress and Next Steps

- Mat shared a PowerPoint presentation in Sustainability at Waterloo (see slides)
- For a long time, we frame things as environmental issues, but it’s about health, equity, access to services an economic development all depends on a thriving natural environment.
- There are ecological ceilings – how do we equitably share that? How do we build a society that provides needs and resources to 8 billion people in a way that doesn’t breach our ecological limits?
- Populations most harmed by these ecological changes and climate risk are from the countries that are not contributing most to climate change.
- This is impacting us here and now – food prices, drought, forest fires, pine beetles, property insurance rates.
- Changes to us as an academic institution. There is no non-radical future left. Half of jobs will be redefined by climate, but most will be impacted. But if we are smart, and do put in effort, how are we prepared to support our graduates and provide research and teaching opportunities connected to sustainable business and futures?
- Why should a university care? We run the risk of playing catch-up over the next 30 years. This will have significant long-term costs.
- Students and staff care about this, too.
- At organizational level, we have an environmental sustainability strategy on research, teaching, operations and community and engagement. We have a number of action plans, too, including a climate action plan. We report on progress every year – released our 2022 report a couple of weeks ago.
- Transparency is important because 88% of young people today do not believe companies’ claims when they say they are focused on sustainability. This is important for our credibility.
• We are the third-highest source of building emissions in the region.
• Waste is a topic people really care about, but we need to focus on buying less and creating less waste, rather than focusing on recycling at the end.
• What’s coming next (2023)
  o Integrating sustainability into the curriculum
  o Sustainable transportation plan
  o Sustainability playbook (e.g. accountability for institutional targets across campus)
  o Climate action plan
  o Program growth and continuous improvement
• How can you help? Think less like individuals and more like a community.

Q: Our department has broken furniture. Does campus help with repairing furniture and reward this choice (ex. charge less to repair compared to buying new)?
A: Depends what it is, but we also need to focus on buying higher-quality things that don’t break down. Also consider the fix-it workshop – which are run every term.

Q: How can remote offices be engaged in sustainability work?
A: We are looking at that – what does the green office program work for largely-remote workplaces?

Q: Mat, do you feel like the University is ready to begin incentivizing sustainable practices, such as cycling or walking to work instead of driving? Or are we still years away from that?
A: We are exploring that this year – what supports do we need in place? We want to encourage this, without penalizing too harshly those that don’t have those choices. A bit of a balancing act. Parking prices are part of that toolkit.

Q: Any word on resuming surplus stores?
A: We do try to repurpose or donate, but this is a conversation with central stores. This is more of a logistical problem than an a philosophical one. We donate tons of things or repurpose them.

Q: we have all these planners – how do we work collaboratively with other units and industry to fix car dependency?
A: we are developing those relationships – and it’s a hard problem. Inter-municipal partnership for sustainable, active transportation. Expand protected bike lanes.

Q: are we going to be doing a sustainability audit? And build out a budget?
A: Early days of covid, the university made policies to make those things happen. On the sustainability side, this is an ongoing conversation, if people are paying for their own printing? If we are outsourcing this work, how do we encourage people to set up green office spaces at home? But there has been a positive impact from the commuting change. 10k tonnes a year, versus under 2000 tons a year during 2020. But of course, there is more energy use at home.

Q: what are the region’s plans to improve transportation?
A: the region has a master plan that covers all of this, which includes active transportation plans. Municipalities are doing this too, particularly for active transportation, which is dealt with on the municipal level.

Q: are there sustainability reps in every office?
A: yes, the green office program does this – we encourage you to set up a green team in every department.
Q: How can we use technology – where do you see Waterloo playing a role to use technology to reduce tuition, and our carbon footprint? And how do we work across different programs to solve these complex problems?

A: Overall, technology has been detrimental, but there is huge potential, too: virtual conferences instead of travel. Absolutely, technology and support sustainability and wellbeing.

3. UWSA President’s Report – Agata Jagielska
President is away – we will catch up on this next month.

4. Approval of Nov 10, 2022 minutes
Approved.

Shannon Taylor approved
Angela Rooke seconded
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Next meeting: Thursday, January 12, 2023, 12 noon

Chair: Shannon Taylor
Minutes: Angela Rooke