

**SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
SUGGESTED DEFINITION AND PERFORMANCE GOALS**

Geography 446
Topics in Geography: Social Sustainability

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The concept of Social Sustainability is complex and multi-faceted, encompassing many elements of individual and community life. In designing a definition of Social Sustainability, and identifying the ways in which it can be applied practically, it is important to understand the interactions between a community's functional aspects and the perspectives and ideals held by those who inhabit the space or place in question.

In order to define this concept in a university context, it is necessary, then, to understand the nuances of a university environment, and then apply principles that focus on creating a Socially Sustainable campus tailored to its unique milieu. Universities are diverse, mobile and highly politicized spaces, where flows of information, people and goods are transnational, frequent and driven by myriad objectives. All of the characteristics that comprise the space of the university (ie, the actors and stakeholders, the operations, the physical environment, the outside and internal influences, the governance structures, the institution's position in juridical and jurisdictional space, the political, social, cultural and economic contexts, as well as the interactions between all of these things) must be considered in outlining the key goals for Social Sustainability for an institution such as the University of British Columbia (UBC).

In an effort to envision what Social Sustainability would look like for UBC, a comprehensive review was undertaken of numerous institutions, academic and theoretical articles, and policy or other informational reports. The documented findings of this research are presented in a subsequent section of this report, entitled, "Social Sustainability in Universities and Related Organizations: Summary of Research Findings." The documents and sources studied were taken from a variety of public and private arenas, (though keeping in mind the overall goal of defining Social Sustainability *within an academic context*), in order to discern the most common or important issues and ideas found relating to the definition and implementation of Social Sustainability at institutions of higher education. A table of relevant and significant terms appearing within the research materials was compiled in order to identify and select foci for the creation of a definition and goals for the following proposed vision for Social Sustainability at UBC (Appendix 1).

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

The University of British Columbia strives to empower students, faculty, staff and the surrounding community to collectively create and maintain a socially sustainable university. Achieving this will mean:



Promoting effective participation and collaboration of all members of the three interrelated communities at UBC (the academy, operations and administration, and residents)



Maximizing the possibilities for, and the quality of, education offered at the university, and working to foster academic pursuits both within and beyond the campus



Ensuring responsible and accessible services and operations at the University of British Columbia which promote high standards for the provision of health and security services and basic human needs



Guiding the overall mandates of the university in upholding principles of social and community equity and in continual

**efforts to raise the level of wellbeing experienced by all
people through their interactions with UBC**

Community Engagement and Participation

Promoting effective participation and collaboration of all members of the three interrelated communities at UBC (the academy, operations and administration, and residents

- The University setting encompasses many realms and communities, which must interact and work together to create a livable, effectual whole.
- UBC has a responsibility to address the needs and desires of all community stakeholders through appropriate consultation, participation and collaboration in key decision-making processes

Education and Awareness

Maximizing the possibilities for, and the quality of, education offered at the university, and working to foster academic pursuits both within and beyond the campus

- Universities are unique and opportune spaces of academic freedom, based in international social networks and consisting of and driven by a critical mass of human capital. This makes them vital players in efforts to share knowledge and information across boundaries and borders of all kinds.
- UBC will work to raise awareness of significant information relevant to sustainability and create a stable and just world.

Responsibility and Accessibility in Service and Resource Provision and Operations

Ensuring responsible and accessible services and operations at the University of British Columbia which promote high standards for the provision of health and security services and basic human needs

- The University of British Columbia has a responsibility to provide services that fulfill the basic human needs of its daytime and permanent populations, and ensure access to the resources necessary to enjoy a safe, secure and healthy lifestyle.
- These services and resources must be considered in terms of affordability, cultural sensitivity and appropriateness, social inclusion, and ethical practices.

Social Equity and Cultural Wellbeing

Guiding the overall mandates of the university in upholding principles of social and community equity and in continual efforts to raise the level of wellbeing experienced by all people through their interactions with UBC

- Universities operate within diverse and complex societies, and need to embrace the important role they have in creating culturally accepting and adaptable spaces to serve the needs of all people in the University context.
- UBC has a responsibility to provide a social environment in which people, individually and collectively, across all backgrounds and identities, are able to live, work, and interact freely and authentically in ways that are mutually beneficial and free of prejudice and systemic barriers.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN UNIVERSITIES AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

INSTITUTIONAL WEBSITES AND POLICY REPORTS

City of Vancouver: Definition of Social Sustainability

In May of 2005, a report to the Vancouver City Council outlined a definition of social sustainability for the Vancouver context:

“For a community to function and be sustainable, the **basic needs*** of its residents must be met. A socially sustainable community must have the **ability to maintain and build on its own resources** and have the **resiliency** to **prevent** and/or address problems in the future.”

The report emphasized the distinction between human or **individual capacity** and social or **community capacity** to build social sustainability. Human capacity includes those skills and attributes that an individual contributes to the **well-being** of individuals and the community. Social capacity refers to the “relationships, **networks** and **norms** that facilitate **collective** action taken to improve upon the **quality of life**” in a community, and ensure that such improvements are sustainable. The report outlines four guiding principles for the implementation of social and human capacity: **equity**, social **inclusion** and **interaction**, **security**, and **adaptability**.

* Note: certain words in this report have been deliberately coloured **blue** for emphasis. Coloured words indicate terms that I have found to be associated with and important for the definitions social sustainability found in each document reviewed. The emphasis was added to provide a method of efficient summarization of the terms, which have been compiled and used to inform the creation of a definition of social sustainability based on this research

In 2006, a research report was contracted out by the City of Vancouver to a private firm (Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.; www.cprn.org), which elaborated on previous meanings of social sustainability in Vancouver to outline the reality of social sustainability in the city. The report indicated factors within three broad categories: 1) Basic needs (income [security](#), [housing](#) and homelessness, [safety](#) and security); 2) Individual Capacity ([education](#), [health](#), social [services](#), civic [engagement](#)); 3) Community Capacity (neighbourhoods and social sustainability, City of Vancouver neighbourhoods and social sustainability). The report noted that the “social sustainability to which Vancouver aspires will require renewed investment in initiatives to ensure that residents’ basic needs are met, that residents can develop their personal capacity, and that communities foster the social [inclusion](#) and positive development of all residents.” These aspirations are notably aligned with those outlined in the policy report described above.

The principles outlined by these two documents, though not formed within a university context, potentially influence the way that the University of British Columbia is developed and shaped because of the human and social capacity brought to the University by people living in Vancouver who are encompassed within the city’s definition and actions. It is for this reason that the definition created by the City of Vancouver is included in this research.

Gates, Rick and Mario Lee, “City of Vancouver, Policy Report: Social Development: Definition of Social Sustainability.” 10 May 2005. City of Vancouver Director of Social Planning, in consultation with the Manager of the Sustainability Group. 30 January 2009 <<http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20050524/documents/p1.pdf>>

Cooper, Merrill, “Social Sustainability in Vancouver Report.” September 2006. Canadian Policy Research Networks, Family Network. 30 January 2009 <http://www.cprn.com/documents/45488_en.pdf>

Environment Canada: Definition of Social Sustainability

Social sustainability, as defined by Environment Canada, reflects the “relationship between development and current [social norms](#).” The organization deems that “an activity is socially sustainable if it conforms with social norms or does not stretch them beyond the community’s [tolerance for change](#).” The ministry states that “social norms are based on [religion](#), [tradition](#), and [custom](#); they are rooted in [values](#) attached to human

health and well-being.” Some of these norms are “intangible,” for instance, **beliefs** or values that are important for different aspects of life and the environment. Environment Canada has established that “social norms and social constraints on development must be taken into account in planning for sustainable development,” and stresses the importance of exploring the issues in **collaboration** with the groups or **communities** concerned in order to define social limits to sustainability.

“Social Sustainability.” 26 January 2009. Environment Canada Report: *The State of Canada’s Environment – 1996*. 26 January 2009 <<http://www.ec.gc.ca/soer-ree/English/SOER/1996report/Doc/1-5-2-6-4-1.cfm>>

Mount Saint Vincent University & Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network

Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, is part of a Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network, which was created in response to the increasing importance of the “**social economy**” in the Atlantic context. The organization explains the notion of a social economy as a collection of businesses and organizations that “are **democratic** and/or **participatory**, pull together many types of resources in a **socially owned** entity, and prioritize social objectives and social values.” While they may intend to make a profit, they do this in “a context that sees **profit as a means to meet social goals**,” rather than as a way to create individual wealth. They may rely on **volunteer** labour as well as, or instead of, paid employees.” The Social Economy is characterized by initiatives that “meet the needs of disadvantaged members of society.” Where these organizations often overlap is in putting “**people before profit**,” and exercising democratic principles in their governance. They emphasize “participation, **empowerment**, and **individual and collective responsibility**.”

The values associated with the research and development of this social economic structure could be applicable to the university context, especially in the creation of socially sustainable campus operations, which interact with many of the same types of institutions and activities encompassed in this type of social economy.

“Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network: Introduction” 31 January 2009.
Mount Saint Vincent University. 31 January 2009
<<http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic/English/home%20en.asp>>

Royal Roads University: Sustainability Plan

Royal Roads University (RRU), located in Victoria, British Columbia, is exceptional in its situation on a significant national historic site. This location has been an instrumental factor in the university’s impetus to formulate a Sustainability Plan for its future growth. The Plan incorporates university-wide operational principles which address social and cultural issues, including: the use of existing infrastructure and buildings wherever possible in order to [preserve the unique cultural heritage](#) of the campus; mixed-use building plans to facilitate a pedestrian and [interactive campus community](#); maximization of facilities use through [sharing](#) between the academic and general communities; focus on [local](#) and sustainable resources, methods and materials on campus (which promotes community [cohesion](#) through increased local labour opportunities etc.); active contribution and [participation of employees at all levels](#).

Equally important in RRU’s strategic mandate is the promotion of education and research in sustainability for its learners, its employees, and its surrounding community. The University is shaping its learning environment to [foster the sharing of knowledge](#) and the expansion of [skills](#) through leading-edge environmental programs, as well as “creating, exploring and confirming emerging knowledge through innovative applied research; and [reaching out to students, employees, partners](#), advocates, and government leaders through [community leadership and participation](#).” Royal Roads University enacts its founding motto (Living our Learning) and the accompanying [philosophy of a living-learning laboratory](#) dedicated to sustainability in these myriad ways.

“Royal Roads University Sustainability Plan.” December 2008. Royal Roads University. 29 January 2009 <<http://www.royalroads.ca/NR/rdonlyres/E50DE048-206F-433A-AD1D-9EAEF6B4F4A7/0/SUSTAINABILITYPLAN4.pdf>>

Sierra Club Youth Coalition Sustainable Campuses Initiative

Sierra Club Youth Coalition (<http://sys-cjs.org/>) has operated a Sustainable Campuses Initiative since 1998. This initiative focuses on creating a network of college

and university campus communities working for the continued development of sustainability in their own contexts. It also provides access to resources and links to other related organizations, thereby extending the campus network beyond education and academia into other sectors of society. They also host an annual sustainability conference for youth.

The Sustainable Campus Initiative uses a definition of sustainability which encompasses “Social Equity” principles. Their definition of Social Equity is as follows:

“Social **equity** requires a fair and equitable distribution of wealth that meets **basic needs** for all, which is **respectful** of **human rights**, and which includes broad and meaningful **participation** by individuals in decision-making in order to nurture **community vitality**.”

“What is Sustainability?” 29 October 2008. Sierra Youth Coalition. 31 January 2009
<<http://syc-cjs.org/sustainable/tiki-index.php?page=What+is+Sustainability%3F>>

Simon Fraser University: Sustainability Advisory Committee

Simon Fraser University (SFU) is working to institutionalize sustainability on its campus in a variety of ways, including through various social vehicles like academics and human resources. Many of the strategies outlined encompass aspects of what could be identified as social sustainability, and though the university has no specific definition for the term itself, the principles outlined in the governance structures show a consideration for the importance of social factors and multi-disciplinary engagement across the university. Some of the goals and priorities identified for the Sustainability Advisory Committee include: “embedding sustainability **education** into every class”; **engaging** individual departments in a **dialogue** about sustainability; ongoing public **communication** about sustainability projects being done; **awareness** campaigns for sustainability related issues; natural and cultural **engagement** with the local area (ie, tours of Burnaby Mountain).

In addition to integrating ideas of social sustainability within the operational structures of SFU, this university has also engaged with the surrounding community on issues of social sustainability by hosting a Sustainability Fair, at which a workshop on Envisioning Social Sustainability in the City of Surrey, took place. The workshop results

identified the following as important issues for social sustainability: safety, [diversity](#), community spirit, [youth services](#), [recreation](#), housing, pride, health [services](#), transportation, [accessibility](#), engagement, child care, [equity](#), job opportunities, [participation](#), [inclusion](#), [affordability](#), care, compassion, accountability, elimination of poverty, responsiveness to the needs of all ages, [responsiveness](#) of government, a [sense of place](#). Though this visioning exercise did not take place within a campus context, most of these issues could be applicable to the workings of universities.

The evidence of a multi-faceted understanding of the social aspects of sustainability in educational contexts like this one from SFU is encouraging. It seems that the role that universities have in creating connections and linkages to other parts of society should be an integral part of an understanding of social sustainability in a university context.

“Making Connections: Sustainability, SFU & You: Participant Identified Priorities for Sustainability Advisory Committee and Sustainability Research at SFU.” 9 May 2006. Simon Fraser University. 27 January 2009 <http://www.sfu.ca/~sustain/pdf/2006_05_09_making_connections_table_discussions.pdf>

“Social Sustainability Workshop - Visioning Exercise” 9 June 2007. City of Surrey. 27 January 2009 <<http://www.surrey.ca/NR/rdonlyres/893DBBCC-060B-4F9A-BC6A-91B442603A5A/0/workshopresults.pdf>>

Talloires Declaration, 10 Point Action Plan

In 1990, the presidents of 22 institutions of higher learning from around the world created a document declaring that institutions of higher learning will be world leaders in developing, creating, supporting and maintaining sustainability. Though the Declaration is grounded in a focus on environmental sustainability, it addresses social sustainability in particular in the following points of the 10 outlined in the Action Plan:

Point # 2) Create an [Institutional Culture of Sustainability](#) – Encourage all universities to engage in education, research, policy formation, and information exchange on population, environment, and development to move toward global sustainability.

Point # 3) Educate for Environmentally Responsible Citizenship – Establish [programs to produce expertise](#) in environmental management, sustainable economic development, population, and related fields to ensure that all university graduates are

environmentally literate and have the **awareness** and **understanding** to be ecologically responsible citizens.

Point # 6) Involve All Stakeholders – Encourage **involvement** of government, foundations, and industry in supporting interdisciplinary research, education, policy formation, and information exchange in environmentally sustainable development. Expand **work with community and nongovernmental organizations** to assist in finding solutions to environmental problems.

Point # 8) Enhance **Capacity** of Primary and Secondary Schools – Establish partnerships with primary and secondary schools to help develop the capacity for **interdisciplinary teaching** about population, environment, and sustainable development.

Point # 9) Broaden **Service and Outreach** Nationally and Internationally – Work with national and international organizations to promote a worldwide university effort toward a sustainable future.

Point #10) Maintain the Movement – Establish a Secretariat and a **steering committee** to continue this momentum, and to inform and support each other's efforts in carrying out this declaration.

In 2005, leaders again gathered to collaborate and revisit the original Talloires Declaration and create a new document focused specifically on Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility. The new document includes the “pledge to promote shared and **universal human values**, and the engagement by our institutions within our communities and with our global neighbors.” The declaration proposes the need to create **social capital**, contribute to the **public good**, **participate** in the democratic process and **empower** those who are less privileged, build a **culture of reflection** and use the university community as a vehicle for serving and strengthening global citizenship. The main points from the declaration are:

- 1) Embed **public responsibility** through personal example and the policies and practices of our higher education institutions.
- 2) Create institutional frameworks for the encouragement, reward and recognition of **good practice** in **social service** by students, faculty, staff and their community partners.

- 3) Ensure that the **standards** of excellence, critical debate, scholarly research, and peer judgment are applied as rigorously to community engagement as they are to other forms of university endeavor.
- 4) Foster **partnerships** between universities and communities to enhance economic opportunity, **empower** individuals and groups, increase mutual **understanding** and strengthen the relevance, reach and responsiveness of university education and research
- 5) Raise **awareness** within government, business, media, charitable, not-for-profit and international organizations about contributions of higher education to social advancement and **wellbeing**. Specifically, establish **partnerships** with government to strengthen policies that support higher education's **civic and socially responsible efforts**. Collaborate with other sectors in order to magnify impacts and sustain social and economic gains for our communities.
- 6) Establish **partnerships** with primary and secondary schools, and other institutions of further and higher education, so that education for active citizenship becomes an integral part of learning at all levels of society and stages of life.
- 7) Document and disseminate examples of university work that benefit communities and the lives of their members.
- 8) Support and encourage international, regional and national academic associations in their efforts to strengthen university **civic engagement** efforts and create scholarly recognition of service and action in teaching and research.
- 9) **Speak out** on issues of civic importance in our communities.
- 10) Establish a steering committee and international networks of higher education institutions to inform and support all their efforts to carry out this Declaration.

The more recent of the two documents is certainly more focused on social sustainability in the university context, though both are useful for not only understanding

the pledges being made, but also for tracking the progress of the movement toward a comprehensively institutionalized notion social sustainability in universities worldwide.

“The Talloires Declaration, 10 Point Action Plan.” 1990. Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future. 14 January 2009 <<http://www.ulsf.org/pdf/TD.pdf>>

“The Talloires Declaration On the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education.” 17 September 2005. Talloires Network. 14 January 2009 <<http://www.tufts.edu/talloiresnetwork/downloads/TalloiresDeclaration2005.pdf>>

Thompson Rivers University: Environmental Advisory Committee & Students’

Union

Thompson Rivers University, (TRU) located in Kamloops, British Columbia, has a number of affiliated groups or campus organizations working there to further the discourses of sustainability taking place in that setting, including the Thompson Rivers University Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), the administrative body that works on sustainability at the campus. The EAC works to provide “evidence based advice with regard to environmentally sensitive policies and practices that foster a sustainable future and lead to health and economic benefits for the University community.” Under this mandate, the group focuses on promoting [dialogue](#) about issues related to sustainability and a [healthy workplace](#). Like many other higher education institutional bodies, this one is heavily focused on the ecological aspects of sustainability, and makes no mention of social sustainability directly.

Another organization working at TRU that focuses more specifically on social features of sustainability is the TRU Students’ Union. Their commitment to social sustainability is summarized in the following excerpt:

“Our organization has taken action to ensure that the world we live in and pass on is a [healthy](#) and [safe](#) one. From support for [public transit](#), to sponsoring the Sierra Youth Coalition’s Conference on Sustainable Campuses in 2007; from [sustainable material production](#) [including fairly traded products] to a national Students for Sustainability campaign, TRUSU is committed to a brighter, cleaner future.”

“Sustainability.” 28 August 2008. Thompson Rivers University Student Union. 31 January 2009 <http://trusu.ca/index.php?section_id=147>

“Thompson Rivers University Environmental Advisory Committee.” 19 August 2007. Campus Climate Network. 27 January 2009 <http://www.campusclimatenetwork.org/wiki/TRU_Environmental_Advisory_Committee>

University of California, Berkeley: Campus Sustainability Assessment & Charter of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability

The University of California, Berkeley, in 2005, produced a Campus Sustainability Assessment, a 122-page document that identifies many categories of goals and indicators for sustainability on the campus. Surprisingly, however, even those addressed which arguably should necessarily have encompassed social aspects (ie, housing, built environment, transportation, food and dining) were primarily focused on the environmental aspects of sustainability. A few sections of the report that are rooted in social understandings (ie, the education and academic or health and well-being sections) present objectives that are framed entirely in the context of environmental action.

In addition, the University produced a Charter of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability in November, 2006. Though this is undeniably an important step toward implementing sustainable practices on the campus, it, too, lacks a social sustainability focus. The absence of social sustainability in these documents is significant evidence that the field of social sustainability research is still in nascent stages of exploration.

“Charter of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee on Sustainability.” 30 November 2006. University of California, Berkeley. 29 January 2009 <http://sustainability.berkeley.edu/docs/CACS_UCB_Charter.pdf>

“UC Berkeley: Campus Sustainability Assessment.” April 2005. University of California, Berkeley. 29 January 2009 <http://sustainability.berkeley.edu/assessment/pdf/CACS_UCB_Assessment_Full.pdf>

University of Northern British Columbia

The University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), which proclaims itself as “Canada’s Green University” has recently completed a visioning process with the goal of

identifying inter-disciplinary thematic academic clusters that “best represent what the University should seek to address through its academic programs over the coming decade.” The clusters identified include: Natural Resources and Environment; Health and Human Development; Commerce and **Community Sustainability**; **Indigenous Peoples’ Knowledge**; **Global Processes and Perspectives**; and Artistic and Cultural **Expression**.

All of these academic clusters are bound tightly with socially sustainable initiatives encompassing a wide range of values such as “natural resources, goods, **culture, services**, knowledge, and information.” For instance, “Communities” are broadly defined, not only on the basis of geography, but also on ideas, history, culture and **traditions**, interest, **enterprise**, or other shared characteristics. The outcomes of the visioning process at UNBC show that the university is using a multi-faceted approach to sustainability and social sustainability, integrating many of the important spaces at a university into an overarching framework.

“Academic Visioning Initiative: Thematic Academic Clusters.” University of Northern British Columbia. 29 January 2009
<http://www.unbc.ca/academic_visioning/thematic_clusters.html#HealthandHumanDevelopment>

University of Victoria Sustainability Project

The University of Victoria Sustainability Project was developed by students and other campus players, using the Campus Climate Network (found online at <<http://www.campusclimatenetwork.org/wiki/Welcome>>). The initiative envisions the University of Victoria “contributing to the creation of a sustainable campus and **community**” through the employment of education, **exchange of ideas**, and locally based but globally inspired goals. The Project defines sustainability as: the implementation of “practices that **balance** the social, economic and environmental aspects of our lives in order to reduce our impact on the earth and live in a way that won’t deplete our resources for the future,” but has no specific definition for social sustainability in and of itself.

“The University of Victoria Sustainability Project.” 7 December 2007. Campus Climate Network. 27 January 2009
<http://www.campusclimatenetwork.org/wiki/The_University_of_Victoria_Sustainability_Project>

University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh: Campus Sustainability Team Charge, Goals, Roles and Responsibilities

In 2006, the Chancellor and Provost of the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh (UWO) produced a document outlining the Campus Sustainability Team Charge, Goals, Roles and Responsibilities. In this document, the authors expressed the following:

“Ecological integrity is interrelated with various aspects of human welfare: **peace**, social and economic **justice**, **gender**, **racial**, and **ethnic equality**, and true **democracy** and **political freedom**. Impairment to any of these negatively impacts the others. Human welfare depends on a healthy, sustainable environment, and **deterioration in social conditions leads to environmental degradation.**”

Additionally, the authors state that:

“The university is a member of the social and ecological **community**, and shares a responsibility to be a positive force in preserving and enhancing environmental and social well-being. More importantly, it has a unique role as an institution that develops expertise in the science, technology, and policies of sustainability as well as in the philosophical basis for sustainability. In addition, it is the principal site for teaching **future leaders** who will play pivotal roles in creating a sustainable society. All academic disciplines are relevant to sustainability, having distinctive resources for cultivating sustainability.”

These insights provide a useful way of approaching social sustainability in a university setting. UWO is also undergoing the planning process for a campus-wide sustainability plan. Given the integrated and shrewd understanding of social sustainability apparent in this document produced by the University’s high-level management, a plan of this type could develop into a successful embodiment of many important aspects of social sustainability in a university context.

Earns, Lane and Richard H. Wells, “UWO Campus Sustainability Team Charge.” 2 October, 2006. University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. 31 January 2009
<http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/barnhill/ES_490/Word%20documents/CST%20charge%20final%20abbr.doc>

World University Services Canada

World University Services Canada (WUSC; <http://www.wusc.ca/>) is a network of individuals and postsecondary institutions “who believe that all peoples are **entitled** to the **knowledge** and **skills** necessary to contribute to a more **equitable** world.” Their mission, “to foster human **development** and **global** understanding through **education** and training,” though not explicitly outlining goals for or a definition of social sustainability, includes elements of a socially focused platform for creating a more sustainable world through campus activities. Specifically, the organization focuses on linking educational institutions with development and maintenance of sustainable livelihoods outside the campus setting.

“WUSC On Campus – Overview.” World University Services Canada. 31 January 2009
<<http://www.wusc.ca/en/campus/campus>>

ACADEMIC READINGS

Calder, Wynn and Richard M. Clugston, “Critical Dimensions of Sustainability in Higher Education.” *Sustainability and University Life*, Walter Leal Filho ed., 1999. New York: Peter Lang.

The authors of this article argue that in designing a new agenda for defining goals for sustaining the global community, institutions of higher education should focus on social aspects of sustainability. The argument is based on the growing recognition of many scholars that poverty, unemployment, community disintegration, and ecological abuse have accelerated globally, despite massive increases in global GNP in the latter half of the 20th century, clearly demonstrating that economic incentives are not sufficient for providing an effective and just society. The authors argue that a major factor is that humans have increasingly “defined our goals in terms of growing economies to provide jobs—a means—rather than developing healthy sustainable human societies that provide people with secure and satisfying livelihoods—an end” (1). The new agenda would

“support the right of all people to a place in society and on the earth with **access** to the resources required to create a **secure** and fulfilling life for

themselves at **peace** with their neighbors and in **balance** with the earth's natural systems; to build—complementary to the money economy—strong **gender-balanced, non-monetized household** and **community economies** able to replenish the **social capital** that is essential to healthy societies; and create a global system of **localized economies** that root economic power and environmental responsibility in people and **communities** of place” (2)

The authors acknowledge that historically, the term "sustainable" arose among those with environmental concerns, and most definitions reflect this emphasis. They deem that it is critical, however, “to address social justice issues and to know that there can be no sustainable communities and institutions without **social justice**” (2).

Cortese, Anthony D., “The Critical Role of Higher Education in Creating a Sustainable Future.” *Planning for Higher Education*, March–May, 2003. p.p. 15-22.

Cortese argues in this paper that institutions of higher education “can serve as a model of sustainability by fully **integrating** all aspects of campus life” (1), and claims that there is a growing need for a new human perspective due to the fact that, for the first time in history, “humans are pervasive and dominant forces in the health and **well-being** of the earth and its inhabitants” (15). Central to the author's argument is the idea that, rather than labour and economic capital, the limiting factors for future economic growth are “natural capital (the size of the fish stock, not the number and size of the fishing boats) and **social capital** (the ability to make market corrections and to govern society to achieve **health, peace, security, social equity, and stability**)” (15).

This said, he argues that the role of higher education is to employ its unique “academic freedom and **critical mass** to develop new ideas, to comment on society and its challenges, and to engage in bold **experimentation** in sustainable living” (p17). The author is adamant that the global environmental challenges we face are crises “of **values, ideas, perspectives, and knowledge**,” which means that we are facing “a crisis of education, not one of ineducation.” (17) The article pleads the case that higher education institutions have a moral duty to enhance the **awareness**, knowledge, **skills**, and values needed to create a **just** and sustainable future.

Jickling, Bob and Arjen E. J. Wals, “‘Sustainability’ in higher education: from doublethink and newspeak to critical thinking and meaningful learning.” *Higher Education Policy*, Vol. 15, (2002) p.p. 121–131.

The authors of this article argue that issues of sustainability and the environment need to be understood as issues that encompass “cultural identities, social and environmental equity, respect, society – nature relationships and tensions between intrinsic and instrumental values.” They suggest that to address issues of sustainability we need to consider broader issues and questions, for instance, the ethical constraints regarding the injustices we face in things like sharing the use of the world's resources. The need to look at issues of “development, justice, peace and conflict, human rights and dignity, and intrinsic value of other species, and... whole ecosystems” is advocated in the piece. The article helps to demonstrate the need for a change in trajectory toward a more holistic vision of sustainability, as well as outlining some of the challenges inevitable in this process.

Sarkissian, Wendy, Nancy Hofer, Yollanda Shore, Steph Vajda and Cathy Wilkinson, 2009. *Kitchen Table Sustainability: Practical Recipes for Community Engagement with Sustainability*. London: Earthscan.

Kitchen Table Sustainability is a comprehensive overview of the relationship between community engagement and sustainability, and an examination of the myriad social factors and actors in creating a socially sustainable world. In defining Social Sustainability specifically, the authors suggest that “sustainability is related to the quality of life in a community – whether the economic, social and environmental systems that make up the community are providing a healthy, productive, meaningful life for all community residents, present and future” (26). In addition, the authors emphasize the importance of communities “actively working to implement social sustainability reflect new structural systems, including connectivity, networking and incentives for people to participate and act” (26). Many of these concepts can be translated into the university context, and the text provides an inspirational and informative resource for designing and implementing social sustainability in communities, academic or otherwise.

APPENDIX 1.

**KEY TERMS AND FREQUENCY* OF APPEARANCE WITHIN
 RESEARCH FINDINGS SUMMARY**

The following terms and categories were used to inform the decision upon specific goals outlined to describe the broader definition of Social Sustainability at UBC.

Responsibility and Accessibility of Service and Resource Provision and Operations	Community Engagement and Participation	Education and Awareness	Social Equity and Cultural Wellbeing
Social services (5) Skills (4) Empowerment (3) Capacity (4) Health (6) Individual Responsibility (1) Adaptability (1) Development (2) Enterprise (1) Good practice (1) Safety/security (6) Basic needs (2) Prevention (1) Resource maintenance (1) Sustainable production (2) People before profits (1) Standards (1) Affordability (1) Stability (1) Housing (1) Youth services (1) Transit (2) Access(ibility) (2) Opportunity (1) Public good (1)	Participation (8) Community (9) Collaboration (2) Engagement (4) Involvement (1) Interaction (2) Integration (1) Collective action (1) Collective/public responsibility (3) Dialogue (2) Communication (1) Leadership (1) Cohesion (2) Networks (1) Sharing (3) Social capital (3) Social economy (1) Interdisciplinary (1) Democracy (2) Social ownership (1) Sense of place (1) Balance (2) Partnership (4) Global (2) Local (2) Empowerment (3)	Education (4) Outreach (2) Speak out (1) Understanding (2) Literacy (1) Awareness (4) Responsiveness (1) Knowledge (2) Reflection (1) Living-learning lab (1) Empowerment (3) Critical mass (1)	Culture/heritage (6) Expression (1) Values (6) Customs (1) Tradition (2) Beliefs (2) Religion (1) Tolerance (1) Indigenous knowledge (1) Perspective (2) Identity (1) Respect (1) Equity (7) Quality of life (2) Wellbeing (4) Social norms (2) Gender (2) Peace (4) Social justice (5) Ethics (1) Dignity (1) Freedom (1) Resilience (1) Human rights (2) Empowerment (3) Diversity (1) Social inclusion (3)

*Total number of appearances in entirety of research findings summary indicated in round brackets.

APPENDIX 2.

OVERVIEW OF STARS SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS

Indicators of relevance to Social Sustainability (from STARS Summary Scorecard).

Note: though the STARS report outlines many more indicators of sustainability, only those of direct relevance to Social Sustainability appear in this list.

Category 1 – Education and research

- Co-curricular education
 - Student sustainability outreach program
- Curriculum
 - Sustainability Course Identification
 - Sustainability Graduation Requirement
 - Sustainability Literacy Assessment
 - Sustainability focused academic courses
- Faculty and Staff Development and Training
 - Incentives for Developing Sustainability Courses
 - Employee Sustainability Outreach Program
- Research
 - Faculty involved in sustainability research

Category 2 – Operations

- Dining services
 - Local food
 - Certified organic food
 - Fair trade coffee
- Purchasing
 - Vendor code of conduct
- Transportation
 - Commuter options
 - Air travel

Category 3 – Administration and Finance

- Sustainability committee
- Investment
 - Transparency
 - Committee on investor responsibility
 - Screening for negative investments
 - Positive sustainability investments
 - Stakeholder engagement
- Community relations and partnerships
 - Community service infrastructure
 - Student participation in community service
 - Public policy engagement
- Diversity, Access and Affordability
 - Diversity committee
 - Diversity officer
 - Non-discrimination policy
 - Diversity plan
 - Support program for underrepresented groups
 - Affordability and access programs
- Human Resources
 - Employee partner benefits
 - Faculty and staff benefits
 - Parental leave
 - Employee satisfaction survey

- Sustainable compensation for faculty and staff
- Trademark licensing
 - Independent monitoring of logo apparel
 - Designated suppliers program

APPENDIX 3.

**OVERVIEW OF GLOBAL REPORTING INITIATIVE
SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS**

Indicators of relevance to Social Sustainability (from GRI Indicator Search, Social Indicators). Note: though the GRI website outlines many more indicators of sustainability, only those of direct relevance to Social Sustainability at UBC or in a university context appear in this list.

Social Performance: Labour Practices and Decent Work

- Employment
 - Total workforce by employment type, employment contract and region
 - Total number and rate of employee turnover by age group, gender and religion
- Labour/management relations
 - Percentage of employees covered by collective bargaining agreements
 - Minimum notice periods regarding significant operational changes, including whether it is specified in collective agreements
- Occupational health and safety
 - Rates of injury, occupational diseases, lost days, and absenteeism, and number of work-related fatalities by region
 - Education, training, counseling, prevention, and risk-control programs in place to assist workforce members, their families, or community members regarding serious diseases
- Training and education
 - Average hours of training per year per employee by employee category
 - Percentage of employees receiving regular performance and career development reviews
- Diversity and Equal Opportunity
 - Composition of governance bodies and breakdown of employees per category according to gender, age group, minority group membership, and other indicators of diversity
 - Ratio of basic salary of men to women by employee category

Social Performance: Human Rights

- Investment and Procurement Practices
 - Percentage and total number of significant investment agreements that include human rights clauses or that have undergone human rights screening
 - Percentage of significant suppliers and contractors that have undergone screening on human rights and actions taken
- Non-discrimination

- Total number of incidents of discrimination and actions taken
- Freedom of association and collective bargaining
 - Operations identified in which the right to exercise freedom of association and collective bargaining may be at significant risk, and actions taken to support these rights.
- Child Labour
 - Operations identified as having significant risk for incidents of child labor, and measures taken to contribute to the elimination of child labor
- Forced and compulsory labour
 - Operations identified as having significant risk for incidents of forced or compulsory labor, and measures to contribute to the elimination of forced or compulsory labor
- Security Practices
 - Percentage of security personnel trained in the organization's policies or procedures concerning aspects of human rights that are relevant to operations
- Indigenous Rights
 - Total number of incidents of violations involving rights of indigenous people and actions taken

Social Performance: Society

- Community
 - Nature, scope, and effectiveness of any programs and practices that assess and manage the impacts of operations on communities, including entering, operating, and exiting
- Corruption
 - Percentage and total number of business units analyzed for risks related to corruption
 - Percentage of employees trained in organization's anti-corruption policies and procedures.
 - Actions taken in response to incidents of corruption
- Public Policy
 - Public policy positions and participation in public policy development and lobbying
- Anti-competitive behaviour
- Compliance
 - Monetary value of significant fines and total number of non-monetary sanctions for non-compliance with laws and regulations

Social Performance: Product Responsibility

- Consumer health and safety
- Products and service labeling
- Marketing communications
- Customer privacy
- Compliance

"Indicator Search." Global Reporting Initiative. 31 January 2009 <<http://www.globalreporting.org/>>