

**Campus Sustainability Subcommittee (CSS)
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, September 12, 2024, 11:10 am - 12:30 pm

Present: Madeline Bace, Beth Brucker-Kane, Megan Buchanan, Grace Coale, Celia Darling, Christine Page, Tarah Rowse (Chair), Carol Schnitzer, Kurt Smemo

Absent: Darren Drabek, Bruce Murray (guest), Dan Rodecker

Agenda

1. New Members and Introductions
2. Update on Institutional Initiatives
3. FY24 Assessment
4. Palmertown/Friendship Trail Update
5. Other Business

Agenda (with notes)

The meeting began at 11:12 am.

1. New Members and Introductions
 - a. Welcome to Celia, Madeline, and Kurt.
2. Update on Institutional Initiatives
 - a. It is important to ensure that information is filtering up and filtering down from the IPPC. This is a strategic planning year and Skidmore is working to obtain broad input from the community.
 - b. Building Policy Revisions – A reminder that the Tennis and Wellness Center was the first project to utilize the Sustainable Construction and Renovation Policy (SCRP). During the planning process it was determined that some revisions were warranted.
 - i. IPPC endorsed the SCRП revisions at the May 2025 meeting. Cabinet has not officially approved the updated policy and it is not certain if they will decide to take this formal step. The revisions appear to be accepted as is.
 - ii. The Center for Integrated Sciences has three separate LEED submissions. None of the projects are certified yet – all are in process.
 - iii. Major revisions to the SCRП include: process and responsibility changes (Facilities is now the Responsible Office), life-cycle cost analysis and life cycle assessment improvements and clarifications (lifetime costs and environmental impacts), required metering and signage.
 - iv. The updated SCRП will soon move to the Facilities webpage.
 - c. 2023-2024 Capital Projects

- i. The Sustainable Landscape Plan (\$60k) was completed in January 2024 and is now available on the Campus Master Plan page in pdf and ArcGIS StoryMap form. An updated Tree Inventory for campus is nearly complete. The two summer Sustainability Office North Woods Stewards worked on the inventory. Once final a public dashboard will be created and be posted on the Sustainable Landscape Plan page.
 - ii. The metering and power monitoring capital project (\$130k) is in progress. This project is important for establishing a strategic energy management approach. The metering will provide critical data, though increasing capacity long term (e.g., energy manager) is essential in order to effectively oversee and progress energy conservation and efficiency work. Currently no one within Facilities has direct energy management responsibilities. Upfront costs will result in energy and cost saving long-term. Once the metering is in place there will be an opportunity to develop and offer improved and expanded education and engagement activities.
- d. Solar Rooftop: Skidmore has been exploring the possibility of on-campus solar rooftop installations and is in the process of obtaining proposals and introductory financial numbers. Solar rooftop generation will not move the needle much on our renewable electricity goals, but will clearly communicate our values, while being visible and an excellent education tool. Rooftops currently being investigated for are CIS, Tennis and Wellness, and Case. Skidmore may want to investigate a new large-scale solar PPA (perhaps something in the 5MW range, as compared to our current 2MW installation on Daniels Rd). Could the old baseball field allow for an add-on? What about the old polo field that is currently on the market? White Hollow farm? Should we be looking for land to purchase/lease that would be suitable for solar?
- e. Compost: Skidmore continues to have an evolving composting system. The Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law has been a major driver in our push to increase our collection of food scraps on campus. Food Scraps 360 is our new food scraps hauler. They are a women-owned company and will be providing Skidmore with actual food scraps weight data, which we have never had before. The food scraps are taken to the Bethlehem Composting Facility. While this is an industrial composting facility, they will not accept compostable wares. More work needs to be done to promote reusables and low-waste events.
- 1. Skidmore has two compost systems: industrial/institutional (in Dining/Spa, departments/academic buildings, and res halls) and the backyard composting system for the apartments.
 - a. We could consider additional signage in places to highlight/clarify where the compost buckets are.
 - b. We might want to consider other fun and light-hearted signage. Examples could be found from other institutions.

- c. Work parties are a central feature of the backyard composting system.
 - f. The Gardenside sustainability living learning community is now in its second year with a cohort of 17 sophomore students. The class is campus sustainability focused on includes discussions, workdays, and tours.
 - g. The SGA green grant is a \$5,000 (\$10,000 the first year) student fund for projects that improve student life and support campus sustainability goals.
 - h. The exchange closet, focused on new and gently used gender-affirming clothes, has moved to the library.
 - i. There will be a short North Woods reroute by the Annex/Falstaff's lot to improve safety, wayfinding, and visibility. Signage will be developed and a new trail segment will be raked in.
 - j. October Sustainability Month is full of events related to the garden, compost, waste, the North Woods, and more.
- 3. FY 24 Assessment – postponed.
- 4. Palmerton/Friendship Trail Update
 - a. Kurt shared an overview of the Friendship trails work and progress, specifically clarifying Skidmore's involvement and interests. It was noted that Skidmore owns a lot of property north of Daniels Road (multiple parcels donated within the last decade).
 - b. Skidmore is now working on the spine trail connection that cuts through our land between Daniels Road State Forest and the Graphite Range Community Forest.
 - c. There is an outstanding parcel swap with an unknown status that would shift a landlocked parcel in to Skidmore's hands. This parcel runs right along the edge of the new trail.
 - d. Skidmore and other project members want to ensure that the trail is quality and available for all users. Continued communication with SMBA is important so it does not become a single. A professional trail builder is required for a portion of the trail and fundraising is likely going to be needed.
- 5. Other Business
 - a. Supporting IPPC in planning with climate action and sustainability.
 - b. Work on campus education.

The meeting ended at 12:32 pm.

Campus Sustainability Subcommittee (CSS)
MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 10, 2024, 11:10 am - 12:30 pm

Present: Madeline Bace, Beth Brucker-Kane, Megan Buchanan, Grace Coale, Celia Darling, Christine Page, Tarah Rowse (Chair), Carol Schnitzer, Kurt Smemo, Dan Rodecker

Absent: Darren Drabek, Bruce Murray (guest)

Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes – September 12
2. FY23 Visual Report / FY24 Assessment
3. Strategic Planning - Sustainability Recommendations Discussion
4. Other Business

Agenda (with notes)

The meeting began at 11:15 am.

1. Approval of Minutes – September 12
 - a. The minutes were approved.
2. FY23 Visual Report / FY24 Assessment
 - a. While there was an opportunity for IPPC to review the revisions to the Sustainable Construction and Renovation Policy (endorsed in May 2024), there was not an opportunity last year to present the annual assessment (FY23 Visual Report) to the IPPC.
 - b. In terms of the strategic plan, the Campus Sustainability Plan is one of the only thematic areas with measurable goals and metrics.
 - c. CSS reviewed the FY23 Campus Sustainability Plan assessment.
 - i. Steady on most goals with small amount of progress in a few areas.
 - ii. Energy: In the past, Skidmore had counted grid renewable energy in our renewable electricity metric. Using best practices for renewable energy accounting, Skidmore only counts renewables for which we own and retire the Renewable Energy Credits (RECs). We have bought unbundled RECs (separate from the electricity sale) in the past, though are no longer doing so. Ultimately, our renewable electricity (from the 2014 solar and 2014 hydro installations) has mostly remained steady throughout the duration of the plan. There has been an increase in electricity consumption per student, but a decrease in electricity consumption per square foot.
 - iii. Waste/Food: There has been increase in food scraps collection (67 tons in FY23 to 98 tons in FY24). This is in part because of the 2022 Food Donation

and Food Scraps Recycling Law in NYS which makes food donation and food scraps recycling mandatory for large generators. The increase in food scraps collection is the primary driver for the small increase in overall waste diversion.

- iv. Lands and Grounds: The Sustainable Landscape Plan was completed to advance the lands and grounds goal in the Campus Sustainability Plan and to advance the Campus Master Plan goals. The tree inventory will be added to the Sustainable Landscape Plan page when complete.
 - v. Engagement: The primary recent engagement activities include the Gardenside sustainability living learning community and class, the CDPHP bike share program, the expansion of composting to residence halls and academic departments, and the SGA Green Grant.
- d. Looking forward:
- i. Food: The sustainability office is completing a food audit which aligns with the sustainability requirements from STARS. This gathers data on local, sustainable, social impact suppliers (employee owned, B Corps, woman owned, etc.), and plant-based.
 - ii. STARS (3.0): This is the higher education sustainability certification we complete every 3 years. The rubric just changed for scoring which may make it difficult for Skidmore to maintain our Gold rating. Completing the STARS report is the primary assessment task for the Sustainability Office this year. The goal is to submit by May. Announcements were made at the staff and faculty meeting informing the community about STARS and requesting support for data sharing in all categories (academics, engagement, operations, and planning and administration).

3. Strategic Planning - Sustainability Recommendations Discussion

- a. Sustainability is the 4th goal of the last strategic plan. It had four subcategories (financial, human, natural, reputation resources). The natural resources category clarified the primary goal was to implement the campus sustainability plan, reevaluate, and update as needed.
- b. Upcoming strategic plan: This plan will lay out the next 5 years at Skidmore. There are 5 main themes (creativity and academic excellence, increasing the endowment for financial aid, residential student experience, DEI, Sustainability).
- c. White paper from CSS: There has been a call for white papers from across campus for proposals to include in the strategic planning process. Tarah suggested that CSS sends in a white paper. There was agreement that this was a good plan and content ideas were brainstormed.

- i. A focus on climate action - developing a climate action task force and advocating for the president to sign on to a formal climate commitment, potentially getting consultant support to develop a Climate Action Plan.
- ii. Making sustainability make economic sense – institutions that are doing this work are appealing to prospective students (institutional success) and there are long term cost savings in sustainability.
- iii. Fostering greater top-down support of sustainability – consideration of the top sustainability position being a cabinet role, ongoing conversation and buy-in for sustainable operations projects and programs, sustainability in job descriptions and all roles.
- iv. Social engineering to aid in sustainability literacy on campus - the community needs to understand the why and how of sustainability, consider adding sustainability to the student honor code and mandatory sustainability training.
- v. Make a distinction between environmental and economic sustainability.

4. Other Business

- a. None.

Meeting ended at 12:34 pm.

**Campus Sustainability Subcommittee (CSS)
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, November 7, 2024, 11:10 am - 12:30 pm

Present: Madeline Bace, Beth Brucker-Kane, Grace Coale, Celia Darling, Darren Drabek, Bruce Murray (guest), Tarah Rowse (Chair), Carol Schnitzer, Kurt Smemo, Dan Rodecker

Absent: Megan Buchanan, Christine Page

Agenda

1. IPPC Update
 - a. CSS on the IPPC Agenda
 - b. Strategic Planning
2. Community Input Approach for Sustainability
3. CSS Sustainability White Paper
4. Bottled Water (if time allows)
5. Other Business

Agenda (with notes)

The meeting began at 11:14 am.

1. IPPC Update
 - a. CSS on the IPPC Agenda - Tarah presented the FY24 snapshot at IPPC last week and Kurt was able to present some ideas from the draft white paper (this was similar to what was presented at the staff meeting). There was no time for questions. Sustainability will get some time at the November 22 IPPC meeting.
 - b. Strategic Planning
 - i. The strategic planning process will mostly happen in the next 3-4 weeks. Tarah and Kurt will be subject matter experts for the strategic planning process for environmental sustainability.
 - ii. President Conner is looking to have all input by the first week of December, so a draft can be written over the winter break. Some additional input in the spring with board approval in May.
 - iii. The faculty meeting focused on Academic and Creative Excellence
2. Community Input Approach for Sustainability
 - a. Sustainability is doing a similar model to DEI for community input which includes a feedback form, sustainability board, tabling, and a community survey.
 - b. Feedback Form: This will be open from Nov 11- 22. It is a future looking exercise to see what the Skidmore community values regarding sustainability. Tarah and Kurt will add a question about demographics.

- i. It is important to acknowledge the positive sustainability efforts Skidmore has accomplished in all this. There was discussion on removing the UN Sustainable Development Goals from the survey (ultimately removed), including context/ mission statement (link to Sustainability website added), the importance of having a question on sustainability in school choice (admissions), and the importance of having barriers in the survey. There was also discussion about including questions about sustainability education in the survey and giving individuals a way to help.
 - ii. The committee discussed the need for and framing of a climate commitment/climate action question. Opinions differed about the benefits and challenges as related to climate action planning in relation to a formal climate commitment (such as Second Nature's Climate Leadership Network). Some said that signing on creates an accountability structure, includes Skidmore in a network that would support planning, includes education and research goals, and is the gold standard for taking climate action in higher ed. Others think that it makes more sense to plan first in a more incremental way and expressed financial concerns related to climate action.
- c. Sustainability Board: This board (located in Case) will include a poster with a QR code for folks to take the feedback form and sticky notes to write answers to certain questions from the feedback form.
 - i. Poster: The poster will also be hung in CIS with a temporary station to take the feedback form. Everyone looked at the poster, which included general information on sustainability, where Skidmore is now, and prompted for feedback.
- d. Tabling: Next week CSS members will sit in Case to encourage folks to take the feedback form and talk about what they want to see regarding sustainability on campus. Everyone signed up during the meeting.
- e. Community forum: This will be on Monday, November 18 at Wyckoff Center.
- f. Environmental Action Club (EAC) update and Climate Action Discussion –
 - i. EAC met with president Conner yesterday to discuss climate action. They expressed how they want to have sustainability redefined in the strategic plan to include climate action and create a body including students, faculty, and other players to develop climate goals and a climate action plan. They discussed the value of using Second Nature's framework to sign on, create a climate task force, and update the plan as you move forward. There was some discussion in our meeting if CSS was the proper body for this. Some suggested it would not be the correct body because of limited capacity and leadership positions. President Conner seemed interested in the peer support program for presidents within Second Nature and reemphasized that he needs

to hear from the community to make a decision. Joshua Woodfork was also in attendance.

3. CSS Sustainability White Paper
 - a. Please get back to Tarah by Tuesday with any edits and suggestions.
4. Bottled Water (if time allows)
 - a. Postponed.
5. Other Business
 - a. None.

The meeting ended at 12:34 pm.

**Campus Sustainability Subcommittee (CSS)
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, December 5, 2024, 11:10 am - 12:30 pm

Present: Madeline Bace, Beth Brucker-Kane, Megan Buchanan, Grace Coale, Celia Darling, Christine Page, Tarah Rowse (Chair), Carol Schnitzer, Kurt Smemo, Darren Drabek, Bruce Murray (guest), Dan Rodecker

Absent: None.

Agenda

1. Environmental Sustainability in Strategic Planning
2. CSS in Spring 2025
3. Other Business

Agenda (with notes)

The meeting began at 11:13 am.

1. Environmental Sustainability in Strategic Planning
 - a. First, an overview of the comments made at the November 22 IPPC meeting was shared. The comments focused on key takeaways in terms of the current status of sustainability work at Skidmore and future-focused planning. Comments included the strengths of Skidmore's sustainability work and reflection on progress toward goals and highlighted the following key points: following the science, student expectations for sustainability, there is not a conflict between environmental and fiscal sustainability, and a need for communication regarding sustainability.
 - b. Summarizing Memo: Content experts have been asked to develop a memo with 3-7 recommendations for Skidmore priorities in their subject area and how they line up with national trends. Input from the community input process (feedback form, forum, tabling, etc.) and national trends will help identify key themes, such as:
 - i. Environmental sustainability in admissions – our survey found that 58% of students said sustainability was a factor in choosing Skidmore. Darren shared that environmental sustainability is something he sees as an important to incoming students
 - ii. Environmental sustainability literacy
 - iii. 70% of students think climate needs to be the top environmental priority
 - iv. There is a lot of grant money available for sustainability projects.
 - v. There is an opportunity for Skidmore to be a national sustainability leader. What about aiming for Skidmore to be one of the first campuses to be 100% geothermal?

- vi. There was conversation about initial/capital costs and questions about how institution endowment totals impact a college's ability to pursue carbon neutrality.
- c. Climate Leadership Network: Committee members were provided with a one-page overview document outlining Second Nature's Climate Commitment.
 - i. Key points: most of our peer aspirants have signed, we would be most interested in the carbon commitment (carbon neutrality only), need to identify a group for planning, complete annual GHG inventories, focus on Scope 1 and 2 emissions (primary operations) first (true decarbonization)
 - ii. Approximately \$2,500 per year
 - iii. What are things that make sense for us to do that have a payback in less than a decade
 - iv. 15 colleges and universities have claimed carbon neutrality (11 small, 4 large) through the Climate Leadership Network
 - v. Administration will want to know the ROI on these sustainability projects. It would be good for us to be able to show how much we have saved from our renewable energy projects.
- d. Content Expert Recommendations: The draft recommendations, focused on strategy (rather than implementation) were discussed.
 - i. A primary goal is to better position and elevate climate and environment by separating environmental sustainability from financial sustainability. Some members want to keep it together, while others think it will have more teeth and be less muddy if separated.
 - ii. Consideration of how to frame/name this theme. Committee members like environmental stewardship, climate action, and sustainable operations.
 - iii. Student sustainability literacy – focus on learning outcomes in order to develop informed citizens, consideration of a faculty development program, literacy assessment, and the new idea of a community-based sustainability intern program.
 - iv. Propose for Skidmore to make a formal commitment to climate action and to advance sustainability and climate action planning with specific focus areas in renewable electricity, geothermal, energy management, and lands.
 - v. How to incorporate learning, ROI, and data in to the planning and decision-making process
 - vi. Communications/visibility approach - show what's happening, get individuals engaged, signage for the community and visitors, use classes to help
 - vii. Look to make connections with sustainability and DEI where possible.

2. CSS in Spring 2025

- a. Scheduling will be done via email. Agenda setting will be done in the spring.

3. Other business.

- a. None.

The meeting ended at 12:31 pm.

Campus Sustainability Subcommittee (CSS)
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, January 29, 2025, 12:30 - 1:50 pm

Present: Madeline Bace, Beth Brucker-Kane, Megan Buchanan, Grace Coale, Celia Darling, Darren Drabek, Bruce Murray (guest), Christine Page, Tarah Rowse (Chair), Carol Schnitzer, Kurt Smemo, Dan Rodecker

Absent: None.

Agenda

1. Update on Institutional Initiatives
2. Reduction of Single-Use Plastics - Bottled Water
3. Visibility, Awareness, and Communication - Projects and Priorities
4. Other Business

Agenda (with notes)

The meeting began at 12:33 am. A brief overview of the spring meeting topics was shared for input. The focus of this January meeting will be on communications. The February meeting will focus on planning and the March meeting will prioritize a discussion of our STARS assessment and reporting (with participation from sustainability interns). The April meeting agenda is to be determined.

1. Update on Institutional Initiatives
 - a. Green Grant – The review committee met to review the two applications (laundry microplastics and a pollinator garden). Applicants have been asked to revise and resubmit their proposals and the application was reopened with a deadline of February 7. The committee is considering adjusting the deadline to be prior to Thanksgiving in the future
 - b. Sustainability Office updates – The Saratoga Sustainability Fair will be held on Saturday, April 5 from 10am – 2pm in CIS. The Big Green Scream halftime show will include the hungry hippo waste sorting activity and emphasize zero-waste. The office has hired a new Garden Manager for this growing season. And Skidmore has received another year (our 10th) of Tree Campus USA recertification.
 - c. LEED Buildings – All is coming together well for the Tennis and Wellness Center LEED submission. CIS is a little more challenging given the three separate submission and a transition in consulting staff.
 - d. Building metering capital project – The project scope has been adjusted to focus on whole-building metering (electric and gas), with prioritization of buildings currently in the pipeline for renovations or HVAC retrofits. TLC, JKB, and JoTo are currently priorities. Having before and after data for buildings will be very beneficial for

assessing outcomes and future decision-making. Meter installations will begin in March, with training of the Power Monitoring Expert system to occur in May. We may be able to add the residence halls as well, which is important for competitions, course inclusion, and campus as a living lab approaches.

- e. AASHE Decarbonization Academy - Dan and Tarah have signed up for this academy. This is a great opportunity for the campus to learn more about decarbonization. The program will focus on tech, financing, policy, case studies, and guidance from experts. The timing of this 6-month program is good as it will be a good jumping off point for sustainability and climate action planning that will come after the strategic plan is finalized. Participating is a good investment for the college.
- f. Food scraps recycling - Food Scraps 360 didn't have the capacity to support Skidmore and we now have a new hauler, Loving Earth Compost. They can take BPI and CMA compostable wares. They have their own composting facility and there may be opportunities for field trips.
 - i. The food waste weight data from the four months of Food Scraps 360 hauling (actual data) demonstrated that we have been diverting more food waste than we have previously estimated. This will increase our waste diversion rate.
 - ii. We need to report our diversion to the DEC for the Food NYS Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law (FeedMore donations, on-campus backyard composting managed by the Sustainability Office, and institutional hauled food scraps). The Sustainability Office will work with dining to submit.
- g. Tree Campus USA - We are certified for 2024.
- h. EPA's Green Power Partnership - We report our solar and hydro generation annually.
- i. Princeton Review Green Schools – Data is only be collected through STARS now. We will aim to complete the necessary credits by March 7, so that we can meet the Princeton review deadline for inclusion.
- j. AASHE STARS – We are aiming to submit by May 1, 2025. There are four main categories (operations, academics, engagement, planning and administration), plus innovation and leadership credits.

2. Reduction of Single-Use Plastics - Bottled Water

- a. The committee had a broad discussion of the possibilities, considerations, and challenges with reducing single use water bottles on campus.
 - i. It seems like work has been done with dining to have both metal and plastic options in vending machines. It would be great if the metal options were also in the SPA and Burgess. It would also be good to get soda in aluminum cans opposed to bottles in the machines. There is also the challenge that there are no reusable cups in the SPA.
 - ii. It would be helpful to know how many plastic bottles are purchased on campus. Mark Miller may have this data, at least for vending.

- iii. Catering: Single plastic water bottles are used by teams and at events. There was a policy years ago where teams banned plastic water bottles and it didn't work well. We could make progress in having real cups for any event in the dining hall.
- iv. Next steps: We should talk to SUPR (the plastics reduction org on campus) and get them involved. We could also focus on education around microplastics and safety of drinking the tap water on campus. Get clarity on the cost difference in shifting to aluminum.

3. Visibility, Awareness, and Communication - Projects and Priorities

- a. We are looking to share the Tree Inventory by the end of the spring semester.
- b. Need to find a way to make the geothermal projects more evident and visible. Still interested in the idea of a geothermal sculpture project (mini sculptures at each of the geothermal bore fields).
- c. The Sustainability Office had started to explore the idea of outdoor kiosks that highlight Skidmore's major sustainability projects and successes. Explore whether this is still of interest to the community and what kind of content we would want to include.
- d. Consider the idea of using communications drone to get more video/photos of solar, hydro, and solar thermal systems.
- e. How can we make better use of the sustainability dashboard in Case? Real-time data would be more appealing. Potential ideas include a scrolling screen here and on content screens across campus with variable messages (e.g., Did you know?), trivia/fun facts, etc.
- f. There is a need for more education materials tied to sustainability as related to admissions.
- g. We could look to recognize sustainability champions on campus to help acknowledge the community for the work they are doing and to increase engagement and excitement around sustainability.

4. Other Business

- a. None.

The meeting ended at 1:49 pm.

Campus Sustainability Subcommittee (CSS)
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, February 26, 2025, 12:30 - 1:50 pm

Present: Madeline Bace, Beth Brucker-Kane, Megan Buchanan, Grace Coale, Celia Darling, Tarah Rowse (Chair), Carol Schnitzer, Kurt Smemo, Darren Drabek, Bruce Murray (guest), Christine Page

Absent: Dan Rodecker

Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes – October 10, November 7, December 5, January 29
2. Environmental Sustainability in the [2025-2030 Strategic Plan draft](#)
3. Sustainability and Climate Action Planning
 - a. People, process, outcomes
4. Other Business

Agenda (with notes)

The meeting began at 12:34 pm. Tarah reminded the committee that the next meeting will be focused on our STARS assessment and reporting.

1. Approval of Minutes – October 10, November 7, December 5, January 29
 - a. The minutes were approved.
2. Environmental Sustainability in the [2025-2030 Strategic Plan draft](#)
 - a. Environmental sustainability was pulled out as a 6th foundation. There is a commitment to sustainability literacy and climate action. Sustainable operations should be included as well, though is not currently. Kurt and Tarah had the opportunity to share some specific feedback with President Conner and a few others.
 - b. Dan and Tarah will participate in AASHE's Decarbonization Academy. The academy is a 6-month long cohort-based virtual program designed to empower higher education leader to drive impactful decarbonization initiatives on their campus. The academy starts in March and our participation will support and inform the development of a climate action plan and decarbonization strategies.
 - c. There was not a Climate Leadership Network carbon commitment, though Kurt and Tarah did raise the idea of becoming an affiliate member.
3. Sustainability and Climate Action Planning
 - a. To inform the conversation, a few recent higher education sustainability plans (primarily from peer-aspirant schools) were provided. The plans shared were the [Bates Sustainability Roadmap \(2022\)](#), [Hamilton Sustainability Action Plan \(2023\)](#),

[Middlebury Energy2028 Fact Sheet, Connecticut College Campus Sustainability Plan \(2022 update\)](#), and the [UVM Comprehensive Sustainability Plan \(2023\)](#)

- b. The following questions were used to frame the discussion:
 - i. What do we want our next plan(s) to include and look like (framing and content)?
 - ii. Who should be included in the development?
 - iii. What planning process and timeline would be most effective?
 - iv. Should we consider consultants for all or a portion of the planning?
 - v. How do we assign responsibility, advance implementation, and ensure accountability?
 - vi. What lessons have we learned from the previous decade of campus sustainability work and our ongoing assessment that we can bring forward in to this new planning process?
- c. Key takeaways from the discussion:
 - i. Prioritize an actionable plan with key metrics, steps/tasks, and responsible parties.
 - ii. Have a similar timeline to the college's strategic plan.
 - iii. Focus on communication and education.
 - iv. Improve campus knowledge and understanding of decarbonization.
 - v. Focus on Scope 1 and 2 emissions before Scope 3.
 - vi. Understanding how to reach our goals financially and leverage grant opportunities.
 - vii. Need to include leadership and alumni in sustainability planning.
- d. Additional specific comments and points:
 - i. Having two plans probably makes sense – one sustainability and one climate action. Within a sustainability plan we may want to include the big picture broad goals first and then narrow in to the detailed action items and responsibility. Targets are good, but we need clear actions laid out.
 - ii. Makes sense for a sustainability plan timeline to match the college's strategic plan, though it will be more like a four-year plan by the time we finish (2026-2030). It would be good to do something like the Strategic Action Agendas and have an annual work plan for sustainability action that is based off the plan.
 - iii. Climate action plans tend to be external (done with consultant help), while sustainability plans tend to be internal.
 - iv. There is an opportunity to better examine what the community thinks decarbonization is. Generally, most would consider this to be about combustion-free systems. From a technical perspective, it should be based off of A GHG inventory and focus on reduction/elimination of Scope 1 (on-

campus stationary – heating, cooling, fleet) and 2 emissions (purchased power - electricity).

- v. How does divestment fit? This may be something to consider as it relates to our STARS report and past interest. Divestment does not contribute to emission reductions. Rather, it is a sign of positive ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) work.
- vi. Regarding financial sustainability, there needs to be more work done and discussions around payback and ROI, especially as related to geothermal which is a more complex system than gas boilers.
- vii. Power outages can be a concern. Backup systems will likely remain fossil-fuel based. Many places follow a 90% approach, which makes big difference, but ensures redundancy and stability. Some things are very challenging and costly to do and they can wait.
- viii. Need to look at diversified ways to fund this work like through endowments, having more of a clear bucket for fundraising, NYSERDA grants, still federal funds and tax credits available.
- ix. For Scope 2 emissions (purchased electricity), the most straightforward option would be to pursue a large off-site power purchase agreement. We also need something visible on-campus, probably a rooftop solar.
- x. Would it be possible to undertake the development and completion of a sustainability plan in the fall (2025)? How do we include finance, communications, leadership?
- xi. What about the board and alumni board? It would be beneficial and strategic to have a sustainability committee on the board and to have the sustainability plan be approved/endorsed by the board. What conversations are needed for this to be considered?
- xii. Skidmore is a business. Sustainability is an important selling point and recruitment and retention tool. Need emphasis placed on this value and time and space to have the conversations on what our goals and desired actions should be. And what processes and structures need to be in place so that we are effective.

4. Other business

- a. None.

The meeting ended at 1:53 pm.

Campus Sustainability Subcommittee
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 26, 2025, 12:30 - 1:50 pm

Present: Madeline Bace, Grace Coale, Celia Darling, Margot Kelly (guest), Bruce Murray (guest), Christine Page, Tarah Rowse (Chair), Dan Rodecker, Carol Schnitzer, Kurt Smemo, Colson Warren (guest)

Absent: Beth Brucker-Kane, Megan Buchanan, Darren Drabek

Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes – February 26, 2025
2. STARS Report Overview
3. Other Business

Agenda (with notes)

The meeting began at 12:32 pm.

1. Approval of Minutes – February 26, 2025
 - a. There was an error with the meeting start time. The “am” needs to be changed to “pm.” Minutes are approved with this correction.
 - b. Tarah shared that IPPC requested subcommittees to share whether they had any agenda items for discussion at IPPC. Tarah informed IPPC that we did not have any items this spring, but would like to present the STARS report early in the fall.
 - c. Regarding committee membership, staff and faculty membership will remain the same for 2025-2026. Grace Coale will be graduating and we will need a new student representative from the Environmental Action Club (EAC). Bruce Murray will continue to be invited as a guest.
2. STARS Report Overview
 - a. We are nearing completion of Skidmore’s third Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) report. This report was done under v3.0 and once submitted will be valid for three years.
 - b. Margot Kelly and Colson Warren, Sustainability Interns, were welcomed as meeting guests. They worked on and will be presenting the Engagement and Planning and Administration categories.
 - c. Overview: We are estimating that we will receive 111 out of 233 points, which corresponds to approximately 48% of the points. This puts us in the silver rating category. This is about a 20% drop in total received points, primarily due to the framework revisions requiring more performance-based metrics.

- d. The preliminary assessment results and key takeaways as related to specific credits were shared by category.
- e. Academics (Kurt): We are receiving 28 of 54 points (52%). This is a lower percentage than was received in our last report. Previous course inventories awarded points based on the percent of total courses that were sustainability related (focused or inclusive). In this version, points are awarded based on departments offering courses. This seems valid as more students are likely to be exposed based on a department framing. The change in overall points is both due to the changes in the new version as well as how we were reporting in the past. Sustainability courses have clear definitions provided by AASHE in the technical manual and these were provided to faculty during the evaluation process. For research, some departments dropped out because there may have only been one faculty member doing sustainability research and they may not be doing it anymore or may have left the institution.
- f. Engagement (Colson): We are receiving 21/50 points (42%). For campus engagement, we are stronger in outreach and communications and co-curricular activities and weaker in staff engagement and training. We do not conduct a sustainability culture assessment. For public engagement, we are stronger in community partnerships, shared facilities, and inter-campus collaboration and have more that we could do in civic engagement. Many of the items that we do not receive many points for are good opportunities for us as they are projects or programs that we could implement relatively easily.
- g. Operations (Tarah): We are receiving 32 of 86 points (37%). If the five impact areas, we are stronger in building and grounds and energy and climate, with more room for growth in food and dining, procurement and waste, and transportation. These credits are heavily performance-based, often utilizing peer group benchmarking to assign points. We are not pursuing the commute modal split credit in the transportation section as this would require a substantive community survey.
- h. Planning and Administration (Margot): We are receiving 26 of 43 points (60%). This is our highest scoring category by percent of points received. Our performance is strongest in wellbeing and work and social equity, with decent performance in coordination and planning, and weak performance in the investment impact area.
- i. Innovation and Learning (Tarah): We expect to receive 4.5 extra points for specific IL credits.
- j. Comments were made about encouraging the institution to look into the avoided spend for sustainability projects.
- k. This report is reflective of the good things we are doing.
- l. The goal is to use this report to help us prioritize sustainability work going forward and to help set achievable goals in our next round of planning.

- m. Committee members had some questions about how we use the STARS certification on campus. Who is the intended audience in terms of sharing? How can we use this for marketing and communications?

3. Other Business

- a. None.

The meeting ended at 1:50 pm.

Campus Sustainability Subcommittee
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, April 23, 2025, 12:30 – 12:55 pm

Present: Madeline Bace, Beth Brucker-Kane, Megan Buchanan, Celia Darling, Bruce Murray (guest), Dan Rodecker, Tarah Rowse (Chair), Carol Schnitzer, Kurt Smemo

Absent: Grace Coale, Darren Drabek, Christine Page

Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes – March 26, 2025
2. Office and Institutional Updates
3. 2025-2030 Sustainability Planning
4. Other Business

Agenda (with notes)

The meeting began at 12:32 pm and was shortened so members could attend the all-college staff meeting at 1:00 pm.

1. Approval of Minutes – March 26, 2025
 - a. Omitted (forgotten) due to shortened meeting.
2. Office and Institutional Updates
 - a. Skidmore’s STARS report will be submitted next week.
 - i. Internal review was completed by Karen Kellogg (Academics), Michelle Hubbs (Engagement), Dan Rodecker (Operations), and Amy Tweedy (Planning and Administration).
 - ii. We included/added a few innovation and learning credits.
 - b. Give+Go is nearly underway and will be running through May.
 - c. Green Grant funds have been distributed (all \$5,000) and the student recipients will be presenting their projects at the SGA Senate meeting next week.
 - d. The Skidmore College tree inventory is live and up on the website on the Sustainable Landscape Plan page.
 - e. Environmental sustainability is showing up in the strategic plan as expected as its own foundation, with literacy and climate action/sustainable operations as the focus areas.
3. 2025-2030 Sustainability Planning
 - a. CSS is the lead on sustainability planning. The idea is to take the vision of “Foundation 5: Environmental Sustainability” in the Strategic Plan and figure out how to operationalize it.

- b. We will be using the framework of “why-what-how” to think about and consider opportunities.
- c. Aim for the next sustainability plan to go beyond goals and be more of a roadmap (implementation plan).
- d. The plan should be science-based, data driven, and guided by best practices.
- e. We plan to create topical working groups to create goals/identify proposed actions. CSS members would be on at least one working group. We may invite a few key community members.
- f. We will develop a structure/plan for sustainability planning over the summer, so we are prepared for fall planning.
- g. Hoping to move quickly in developing a draft sustainability plan given that we have already completed all the assessment and received community input. Most of the working group meeting would take place in October and November and then the plan would need input/review from the Cabinet and IPPC, perhaps completing the process in one semester. Uncertain whether the plan would need to go to the board of trustees for endorsement.
- h. Comments and feedback included:
 - i. A one-semester planning process might be too quick.
 - ii. Uncertain how other institutional work and uncertainties will play into sustainability planning.
 - iii. Will we need to include financial implications in the plan?
 - iv. What are the boundaries for setting goals?
 - v. We will want to have actions as well as the metrics (or at least some key metrics).
 - vi. We should be identifying funding opportunities (e.g., incentives, donors, grants, etc.)

4. Other Business

- a. None.

The meeting ended at 12:55 pm.