



February 7, 2022

Sustainability Committee
University of California Los Angeles
10889 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1400
Los Angeles, CA 90024-6971

Dear Sustainability Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft UCLA Sustainability Plan. As a UC union that represents teaching faculty and librarians, we have a strong interest in working to promote climate action and environmental sustainability at the campuses where we work. Through our work, we are heavily invested in the education and future of our students at the University of California. We believe there is no task more important than securing our students' futures by working to mitigate the climate crisis and environmental destruction.

It is with this sentiment that we fully embrace and support the efforts of the UCLA Sustainability Committee to create a sustainability plan that is based in science and addresses the key ecological issues we face. We support and will work to promote a plan at UCLA that is bold in action and promotes diverse collaborations, environmental justice, social justice, inclusivity, equity, and mitigation of environmental effects on historically oppressed and disadvantaged communities. We are very willing partners in this effort, and we offer our collaboration to work to improve and then implement the final UCLA Sustainability Plan.

We provide comments here that we believe will help improve the plan and enable UCLA to more quickly meet important environmental and climate targets. We support UCLA's stated target of "Zero Waste," and we urge UCLA to meet and exceed global emission reduction targets, as outlined in the UNEP's Emissions Gap Report 2021, which states that "to keep global warming below 1.5°C this century, ...the world needs to halve annual greenhouse gas emissions in the next eight years." We also hope to explicitly align this plan with the City of L.A.'s Biodiversity Initiative.

We believe that by implementing an extremely bold and forward-thinking sustainability plan, UCLA can be a leader in sustainability. We again thank you for this opportunity and direct you to our attached comments.

Sincerely,

Alison J. Lipman, Ph.D.
UC-AFT Green New Deal Committee Chair
Continuing Lecturer, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, UCLA
alipman@ucla.edu



02 EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION + JUSTICE

- Use UCLA branding and city-wide connections to address environmental justice issues in Los Angeles, including to mitigate environmental and climate effects on colonized and historically disadvantaged communities (including but not limited to BIPOC, people of color, low income) as well as populations most affected by air pollution, oil drilling, toxin exposure, water pollution, and other environmental effects.
- Any workers hired to implement green upgrades on campus will be hired into unionized jobs and employed directly by the university administration.

02-5 Continue to develop land-based pedagogical opportunities with the Gabrielino Tongva and Fernandño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians.

- Increase communication and enhance relationships with these groups so that campus spaces and resources can be shared and open to their use.
- Solicit and incorporate direct input on the UCLA Draft Sustainability Plan from local indigenous nations/tribes.

03 CURRICULA + RESEARCH

- Require for General Education credit a course that explicitly teaches and focuses on environmental issues (e.g., sustainability, environmental studies, environmental science, environmental justice, ecology). This course could simultaneously fulfill another existing requirement (e.g., Life Sciences), but a course that does not explicitly focus on environmental issues would not fulfill this requirement.

04 CLIMATE + ENERGY

04-1 Reduce energy use intensity.

- Add more detail as to how these goals will be advanced.
- Decrease energy demand through retrofits (e.g., increase building insulation, energy saving appliances).
- Decrease energy demand through reduction of unnecessary use (e.g., unnecessary lights and video screens, thermostat adjustment to decrease heating/cooling usage).
- Install geothermal (ground-source) heat pumps for heating/cooling.
- Install solar thermal heat systems to heat water and for building heating.

04-2 Achieve climate neutrality from Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions.

- Avoid goals like “climate neutrality.” Climate neutrality has been widely discounted as a false notion. Instead, we need to focus on lowering the university’s actual carbon and environmental footprints. We need real reduction, not misleading accounting.
- Focus on green buildings, passive solar, geothermal and solar thermal solutions as the best ways to decrease both natural gas and electrical demands.

04-3 Use biogas in lieu of natural gas for on-site combustion.

- Create target to stop combustion based electrical and general energy sources, because any carbon based combustion (including biogas) produces greenhouse gases (GHG).
- Biogas has additional negative environmental effects including habitat destruction, high fossil fuel consumption, displacement of agricultural spaces, and pollution. Even if biogases are sourced

UC-AFT Comments on Draft UCLA Sustainability Plan

from waste streams, combustion still causes release of GHG, and these wastes could be processed in more sustainable ways e.g., composting.

- Combustion of natural gas is NOT sustainable, and we recommend UCLA not continue this practice. We need to move away from combustion, and we need to set a date for 100% non-combustion based energy sources.

04-4 Obtain clean electricity

- Make clean electricity a 100% target for campus electricity needs.
- We recommend offsetting the need for imported energy & electricity by reducing demand through on-site passive systems as described above (geothermal, solar thermal, passive solar).
- Focus on on-site "renewable" electricity production through solar, geothermal (heat pumps), and wind technologies.
- For off-site procurement, work with LADWP for 100% renewable. However, be aware of inherent sustainability issues with off-site procurement (e.g., habitat effects of large solar & wind projects), and work with LADWP to avoid and if necessary, mitigate ecological damages caused by renewable energy projects.

04-5 Achieve climate neutrality from specific Scope 3 emissions

- We need to stress here that the idea of climate neutrality is a false one and has not been demonstrated to lower global GHG emissions. We recommend setting a date (e.g., 2030) by which carbon offsets will not be used and to focus on real emissions decline. In the meantime, if carbon offsets are used, we recommend the purchase of credits that directly benefit biodiversity conservation (e.g., REDD) and/or environmental justice.

04-7 Reduce GHG emissions of food through globally-inspired, culturally-acceptable, plant-forward menus.

- Instead of "plant forward" move to a program like DefaultVeg (<https://defaultveg.org>). This is also a UCLA group, and they would be happy to work with UCLA on implementing this. This would make the default for meal options be plant based foods, with the goal that plant based foods would make up the majority of food options.
- Focus on locally grown and sourced foods, which include foods appropriate to the region and season.
- Focus on organic certified, low carbon, low water requirement foods.
- Avoid beef on campus, as beef is the food with the highest carbon, land, and water footprints. Beef production is the number one driver of terrestrial biodiversity loss.
- Focus on low trophic level species, and avoid depleted wild stocks. E.g., avoid tuna, swordfish.
- Sell only sustainable certified seafood.
- Implement weekly meatless days in the resident dining halls and other campus dining locations.
- Provide education on sustainable food sources to admin, food managers, restaurants, employees, and students/staff/faculty.

Food Delivery

- Transition away from food delivery robots, which have high carbon footprints (e.g., energy costs of navigation) and electronic waste issues. We should be promoting the healthy activity of people leaving their offices and going outside and walking to on campus dining areas. If delivery is needed, then move to human based delivery (bike, walking). Human based delivery, when offered as a fair wage job, is pro-labor and environment.

Green Building

- Create higher targets for outperforming CA energy-efficiency requirements (50%+ based on UNEP emission reduction goals).
- Create goal to retrofit and certify higher number of buildings at highest LEED ratings (50%+).

Landscape + BioD

04-18 Support biodiversity and integrate the campus landscape into regional ecological systems.

- In the vision of the UCLA Landscape Plan, directly state biodiversity and habitat enhancement as goals. Link these goals with the LA Biodiversity Initiative, and incorporate the LA Biodiversity Index as an assessment tool to monitor goals of biodiversity enhancement on campus.
- Enhancement of ecosystem services should be explicitly stated. This could include for example, water capture, increased water permeability, nutrient recycling, and carbon capture (e.g., leaving leaves on the ground, permeable concrete, soil remediation, mulching).
- Build urban food systems on campus. This is becoming ever more important in the urban environment, with our knowledge of the negative effects of industrial agriculture, as well as equal access to healthy, locally grown foods. Student hunger on campus is also an important issue. We recommend a fruit tree orchard, more space made for student groups doing community gardening, etc. If UCLA could model urban food systems, then we could become leaders in the movement. Urban farming is very popular among students; it is becoming a popular career path, and there is general interest as a personal lifestyle choice. As for maintenance, it would be easy to forge student groups who could maintain these areas and make the produce available to students who need it. It would also be great to have areas for open harvest. Natives combined with food would be the best option.
- Move toward more natural, functional, ecosystem informed landscapes. We need to move towards landscapes of CA locally native and locally sourced plants that are biodiverse and function as mini wildlife habitats. We need to move away from traditional single species hedges to a looser, more natural format.
- Remove concrete and hard space. Focus on soil remediation with natural mulch left on the soil...this will improve C sequestration and water permeability.
- Installation of water capture elements on campus- rain gardens, swales, and cisterns that have downspouts directed into them, that fill up during the rain! Current swales don't have this feature.
- Include educational signage on these elements.
- More conversion of lawn to sustainable landscapes. E.g, walkway from Charles Young to the Court of Sciences, entire Court of Sciences area, area between Royce and Powell.
- Stone Canyon Creek – assess possibility for daylighting longer stretches of the stream on campus.
- Work with upstream stakeholders to restore natural flow of water back into Stone Canyon Creek.

Transportation

- Work with surrounding cities and neighborhoods to improve public transit, to improve the commutes of the campus community (e.g., more rapid buses, dedicated bus lanes in Westwood and the surrounding communities).
- Work with the city government to mitigate local housing issues (especially high costs) through better housing legislation so workers aren't pushed further away from campus.
- Incentivize non/low carbon transportation (free/subsidized transit).

UC-AFT Comments on Draft UCLA Sustainability Plan

- Work with surrounding cities and neighborhoods to improve bike infrastructure, including dedicated and protected bike lanes on campus, in Westwood, and in surrounding communities. Create more bike resources on campus (e.g., fixit stations, bike rentals).
- Facilitate and incentivize non-carbon transportation like walking and biking.

04-23 Reduce waste generation.

- Focus on eliminating not only single use plastics, but ALL single use materials. Transition from disposable compostable materials to durable and reusable. Even if disposable materials are compostable paper, this is a huge amount of waste. Production of these materials has large environmental and energy costs, and disposal (including offsite composting) has large environmental and energy costs.
- Implement campus reusable to-go containers and return to washable, reusable cutlery and plates/cups.
- Provide reusable cups, plates, cutlery, straws, water bottles, etc. during freshman orientation and for affordable purchase on campus. Incentivize the use of these items.
- Install water filters campus-wide to reduce purchase of single use water bottles.
- Set a near target for stopping the sale of water in single use containers.
- Create a program that promotes a campus culture that decreases consumption and purchase of new material items and promotes re-use and sharing of products. For example, see <https://buynothingproject.org/>.

04-24 Divert 90% municipal solid waste from landfill.

- Create a target to divert 100% of organic waste from exported waste streams.
- Research possibility of, and set targets for, composting, mulching, and applying organic waste on-site at the UCLA campus.

04-25 Reduce potable water consumption

- Install campus-wide greywater systems for use in landscaping.
- On-campus wastewater treatment plant: we fully support this idea, but would like to hear more detail. This should include recycling of water on campus:
 - Reclaimed level to be used for non-potable purposes on campus (e.g., landscaping, toilet flushing).
 - Research (and possibly implement) treatment to potable level for on campus use (as a case study for the larger LA area).
- Focus on rainwater capture for landscaping use. This should include capture from all hard surfaces on campus, including rooftops and parking lots (aboveground and underground cisterns).
- NO to super absorbing polymer technology- this is basically adding micro plastic trash to the environment and soil, which we need to avoid. Organic materials like mulch do the same thing, without the harm, while remediating soil and storing carbon long term.
- No more artificial/plastic turf on campus because they add micro plastic pollution into the environment, displace living biomass that captures carbon with high carbon footprint plastics.

12 TO TRY - Comments and items to add

1. Reduce your waste: This could go into single use #10. Add reduce overall material purchases and consumption.
2. Do at home composting (e.g., inside worm bins).
7. Remove lawns, replace with CA native drought tolerant landscapes. Use recycled water.
9. Engage in community/urban gardening- on campus or at home.
10. Add reusable to-go containers, water bottles/mugs.
11. Choose energy-free pastimes/hobbies like reading books, hiking, in-person conversations/activities.
12. Working digitally doesn't always save energy. For example, meeting in person on campus, if we are already there, saves the energy of a Zoom call.