Plan for Pitt 2025
Focus Group Notes
Date: February 13, 2020
Theme: Sustainability

Thematic Focus Groups
Each group addressed this set of questions for their assigned topic:

- How do you see this theme play out at Pitt?
- What does Pitt do well in this area?
- What could Pitt do better?
- How do you see this topic relating to each of the six Plan for Pitt goals?
- Now that we have more information about this theme, is it important to Pitt’s success? Why or why not?

THEME: Sustainability

- How do you see this theme play out at Pitt?
  - Piecemeal, not wholeistic
  - Decentralized
  - Lack of standards
  - Poor staff, faculty, students
- What does Pitt do well in this area?
  - We do have a plan/office of sustain
  - Continual improvement, adding resources
  - Hydroelec plant, textile recycling
  - Campus/community, cluster for a cause
- What could Pitt do better?
  - Institutional mandates
  - Incorporate these mandates into our contracts, purchasing, etc.
  - “Zero-waste” campus pledge
  - Mandatory training/orientation (studnets at arrival)
  - Green guiding practices(master plan)
  - Divest from fossil fuels (socially responsible investments)
  - Invest in students(basic needs)
  - Support sustainability curriculum
  - Recognize impact on community
  - Create a “Green Network” with stakeholders
  - Pay students a liveable wage
- How do you see this topic relating to each of the six Plan for Pitt goals?
  - Sustainability should be “backed into” the other goals (or a higher priority)
  - Create metrics measure results(make them public)
- Now that we have more information about this theme, is it important to Pitt's success? Why or why not?
  - Yes!
Plan for Pitt 2025
Focus Group Notes
Date: February 13, 2020
Theme: Sustainability

- Reflects our aspirations
- Failure to do so would detract students, research dollars, etc.
- It’s our responsibility
- We identify as would call, steward innovator. Be a leader and be the standard!

- How do you see this theme play out at Pitt?
  - Sustainability plan + Office of Sustainability great step
    - Work in progress
    - Disjointed
    - A lot of activity
  - Water collaboratory, MCSI, Center for Bus., Honors College scholars, sustainability positions in Auxillaries, Housing, Dining, Student Affairs, Transportation
  - SOOS – student groups
  - Faculty Task Force, Department/Fac. Research, University-wide Sustainability Committee

- What does Pitt do well in this area?
  - Active student leaders / passionate (student input valued)
  - Green events / office
  - Benefits and Health
  - Support for faculty, students – research funding
  - Community Engagement
  - Sustainability Pittsburgh Greenwork Place – winner multiple years
  - Undergrad certificate / courses / a lot of sustainability course content
  - National representation on Boards, events related to sustainability
  - Active, representative across city and region

- What could Pitt do better?
  - De-silo
  - Volunteerism (staff)
  - Systematic success
  - Operations and faculty working together and interacting each others’ work
  - Increase funds to becoming more sustainable
  - Living lab
  - Expand CECs
  - Cluster classes cross – disciplinaries
  - Green infrastructure (indoor and outdoor)
  - Engaging broader groups of faculty and students
  - Communicate what we are doing better
  - Increase transparency
Plan for Pitt 2025
Focus Group Notes
Date: February 13, 2020
Theme: Sustainability

- 100% renewables
- Divestment
  - More and better incentives for faculty

How do you see this topic relating to each of the six Plan for Pitt goals?

- Advance educational excellence
  - Global importance (UN Sus Dev Goals)
  - Certificate – cross disciplinary
  - Honors scholars (food, water)
  - By nature topic is inter-disc
  - A topic of interest, importance to attract quality students
  - Access and equity core to sus

- Research of impact
  - Research that addresses real-world challenges
  - Impact to communities
  - Sust research helps with large cross disc collab b/c real input from eng, science, policy, economic, sociology, etc.
  - Global leadership

- Communities
  - Faculty, students and staff working in the community
  - Translation of research to help communication
  - Applied research for public benefit, industry resource / partner
  - CECs
  - Resource / source of knowledge
  - Advocate for communities at every scale

- Diversity and inclusion
  - Naturally provides global perspective
  - Topic attracts diverse groups of individuals thought leaders
  - Sust. Naturally exposes issues with diversity and inclusion

- Embrace the world
  - UN Sust. Development goals

- Foundational strength
  - Sust. Big topic locally and nationally
    - Companies, NGOs, government
  - Bridges department and units that normally don’t talk

Now that we have more information about this theme, is it important to Pitt’s success? Why or why not?

- 21st century global topic – must be institutional strength
- Preparing students to be successful in a changing world
- Economically smart operationally!
Plan for Pitt 2025
Focus Group Notes
Date: February 13, 2020
Theme: Sustainability

- Supporting local community – purchasing, locally sourced

Current
- Never far from recycling (single stream)
- Specialty stream recycling around campus
- Free public transportation
- New buildings not necessarily replacing all but tough on some
- Staff and student green guide
- Green events
- Pitt dining BYO Mug
- Divestment
- Electric trucks

Well
- Maintain green space
- Reduction of lawn
- Lots of commitments
- Collaborations off campus
- Work from home possibilities
- Reuse of older buildings
- New construction sustainability commitments and performance
- Pitt Pantry – but communicate more

Better
- Consider and honor historic buildings
- Leverage OBID relationships to encourage restaurant responsibility, more green space, etc.
- Enhance green space along Fifth and Forbes
- Promote alternate transportation options – more transit, walk, bike
  - Could link to PTO earnings
- Align incentives for better decision-making
- Collaborate to create maximum positive impact (academic and operationally)
- Broad the commune as contributing to overall Pitt vision
- Making historic and older buildings more comfortable
- Make sustainability more than a buzz word and more of part of everything
- Own our expertise
- Develop on-campus sust. Endorsed campus
- Bring reuse and values from students to faculty and staff
- More plant forward dining options

Plan for Pitt Goals Relation
Focus Group Notes
Date: February 13, 2020
Theme: Sustainability

- Embrace the world – sustainability borderless
- Foundational strength – make sustainability part of culture vs. X people’s tasks
- Educational excellence – encourage sust. To be part of all year if SEED grants, etc.
  - Industries of future are sust. Related – focus education and research here
  - Academic sust. Major?
- Strengthening communities – leverage CECs for sustainability, partner with city on citywide sust. Issues and implementation

Is Sustainability important to Pitt?
- Pitt would be fine if we didn’t do this but it would be better if we did
- Short-term does not matter, BUT
  - Gen Z very interested in sust
  - Sust keys and makes Pitt competitive
  - Career opportunities of future linked to sust
- Moving from Pitt’s risk averse pasts
  - New willingness to engage in innovative and revolutionary conversation is good
- Moving in more expenditures fashion to more generative ideas and progressive
- Link to health will be key
- Sust should be part of core, not add on benefit
- Need to tell Pitt fall sust. Story – are we better than CMU, etc.
- Pitt as central aspect of SWPA Forge the Future
  - No longer in transition but make a difference now
  - Good citizen in Pgh, higher education, region, global
- Be greater than we are individually by working together
- Pgh’s environmental legacy is still an issue
- If you can decrease sust here, how can we transfer to other places and scales
- Faculty and student attraction and retention requires true and transparent sust = people can choose. We must help them choose us
- Truly transformational opportunities exist – we can be the ones that do that research, education, etc.
- We must not fail to develop new ideas that transform our world positively
- Need to get the uncommitted, non-choir to answer these questions
- Fiscally responsible
- What’s the debate
- Own Pitt alumni in sust. Space
  - Link, claim, build relationships
  - Long-term success on where a Pitt education will take you in terms of sust.
- Link to educating women
Plan for Pitt 2025
Focus Group Notes
Date: February 13, 2020
Theme: Sustainability

• Prepare to change the world (GSPH)
• So much to do, not enough money to do it
• More from roundtable to action
• Must dream to do and dream big to do more
• We plant seeds of sust with students
• How can Pitt truly lead in the sust. Space
  o Scale jump vs. incremental progress

1. The Office of Sustainability; two university wide committees – the Sust task force and the University Sust. Committee, the compost initiative, the Foodshare community on Facebook, the textile bias, SOOS, Electric Box Trucks, aim for reusable containers, Green Speakeasy
  a. Some initiatives are separate efforts – some university-wide, but mostly separate – would be good to be more collaborative – we continued behaviors but better instead of alternating behaviors – how Pitt sees sust is only one part of the sust spectrum

2. Some things that don’t like also have benefits – it’s alaboratory of efforts, allows for organic starts
  a. Center allows for you to start things with that you would not be able to with more structure

3. More sustained funding to help efforts to bring about sustainable efforts
  a. Communicate what we are doing better, transparency, and education about composting, recycling education
  b. Promote personal responsibility
  c. Many undergraduates want to see change, but not as much change from their efforts – championing their ideas to see real, big measurable change – lifting them up and recognition
  d. Build it into our contracts with companies
  e. Encourage more research on our campus – sustainability-focused research

4. Diversity and inclusion
  a. Digital accessibility – anything that is digital and with a screen-reader so anyone can read – universal design – equity – more than just yes it goes with ADA, has to be more than that – also needs enforced, cannot just be a policy – enforcement needs to be a part as well
  b. Methods to account for issues individuals may encounter when applying to college – visually-impaired person may have a harder time with exams
  c. Strengthen the communities and engage in Research of Impact
Plan for Pitt 2025  
Focus Group Notes  
Date: February 13, 2020  
Theme: Sustainability

i. Pitt has such a large impact—where build, who talk to—has so many ties to sustainable choices—is the growth of the university a sustainable thing for the university and the community

d. Advance Educational Excellence
   i. Writing—connecting what you do with teaching and what you do with service
   ii. Living lab on campus

e. Embrace the world
   i. Climate change—global effort—we don’t have a choice we have to start making better choices—better responsibility—communication—build foundational strength
   ii. We have a definition of sustainability but what it means to us is different than coastal communities—we have to think how we address this so they are helped and included as well
   iii. Pay support staff better—paying administrators and faculty a living wage as well
   iv. Fair wages = access to city of Pittsburgh housing = the opportunity to use sustainable transit options

5. Yes. Sustainability should be Pitt’s #1 effort if we want to be here in the coming years. It’s not just a good thing because it’s a good thing to do—it’s a viability point for Pitt.

1. Suppliers—part of negotiations for sustainable practices
   a. Increase in items recycled—Ex: Batteries—compost
   b. Reusable containers
   c. Electronic files instead of paper
   d. Beyond capacity enrollment in sustainability classes
   e. Activism on campus—Fossil free Pitt

2. See #1
   a. Pitt’s constantly adding new programs and opportunity to move forward
   b. Goal of 25% plant-based food

3. We have strong sustainability goals but need better roadmaps
   a. More reusable energy—solar, wind

4. It relates but should be its own goal
   a. Consider sustainability along with other goals
   b. Increase education opportunities for students, faculty, and staff

5. Catalyze transdisciplinary sustainability research across the university
   a. Incorporate environmental social governance investing
   b. Invest in a sustainability institute across the university
6. Our definition of sustainability should include diversity
   a. Develop fellowship and scholarships for underrepresented students who are interested in sustainability
   b. Last bullet point for goals could be an idea/pragmati solutions on how to accomplish goal

7. Yes, important.
   a. We need to remain competitive in leading industries
   b. Strategy to address declining enrollment
   c. We do not want to further negatively impact environment of our city
   d. Students interested in innovation and contributing to a healthy environment