

Plan for Pitt 2025

Focus Group Notes

Date: February 17, 2020

Audience: Sustainability

Thematic Focus Groups

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

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

THEME: Sustainability

1. How do you see this theme play out at Pitt?
 - Doesn't appear to be a focus of administration-student driven now
 - Need more university buy-in
 - Digitization of records, etc. – started but long way to go
 - Food services waste – lots of room for improvement – catering
 - Financial investments (fossil fuel and more) – no changes yet
 - Building / facilities efficiency – dorms, academic, lights, heat, A/C
 - Looking at programs, activities and services through sustainability lens (cap and gown reuse, t-shirts, Sodexo, etc.)
2. What does Pitt do well in this area?
 - Student initiatives becoming reality – reusable containers, fossil fuel (?), Thriftbag, community garden, water
 - More flex time options for staff
 - Carpool benefits
 - Compostable cutlery / food service
 - New buildings – “green”
 - Bus passes
3. What could Pitt do better?
 - More online classes and tele meeting
 - Improve IT capability
 - Air hand and dryers in bathroom
 - Reduce printing (including handouts)
 - Recycling education
 - Sustainable practices education
 - Expand recycling program on and off campus (bins, compost)
 - Reduce plastic bag usage, including in trashcans
4. How do you see this topic relating to each of the six Plan for Pitt goals?

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- Educational excellence: being a leader and attracting students, listening to incentivizing students, faculty and staff who have sustainability ideas, energy efficiency, reducing operating costs (more affordable) – integrate into all curriculum required courses
 - Research: see above comment about ideas
 - Communities: being a leader in the community and region – does Pitt want to push for change? Accessibility of sustainable results (health) – region’s water and air quality
 - Embrace the world: IT connecting Pitt students and faculty without traveling, greening infrastructure and utilities
 - Diversity and Inclusion: tele community, cost savings from sustainable changes being put towards diversity and inclusion
 - Foundational strength: efficiency of buildings of staff, farmer’s market and locally sourced food, electric vehicles
 - What are best practices? And what are our desired outcomes? What measurements?
 - Companies being partnered with
 - Certificate program? Sustainability ambassadors?
5. Now that we have more information about this theme, is it important to Pitt’s success? Why or why not?
- Yes – important to students, becoming important globally, tied to success of Pittsburgh region (as big employer), shows that Pitt cares (will attract students, faculty and staff)
1. What is the long-term goal for recycling?
2. What to do well?
- Composting – would like to see more bins
 - Reusable containers are great
 - Textile collection (repurposing)
 - Bee boxes
 - Goats upper campus
 - Keurig recycling at Bellfield
 - Dog “potty” area? (to cut down on plastic bags)
3. Make it easier to recycle/reuse/compost
- Should make the “choose to reuse” container program default instead of opt-in
 - Expand to staff and faculty
 - Compostable dishware? Vs. disposable plastic

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- Would like to know about groundskeeping per chemicals / dogs + native animals
- 4. Six plans
 1. Sustainability is holistic environment
 2. Mascaro Center has great student research currently
 - Partnering with industries utilizing knowledge
 - Faculty research
 3. Sustainability increases economic impact and fosters civic engagement, increases societal impact
 4. Includes faculty, staff, students and guests (hardest)
 5. Sustainability does embrace the world
 6. Foundational strength ties in with Pitt success
- 5. Pitt is big! We can make an impact.

1. Why is sustainability important at Pitt?
 - Saves money
 - Reputation as regional and national education leaders
 - More imperative
 - Wants to attract the best staff and faculty
 - Makes us more resilient
 - Our students expect in (intergenerational justice)
2. How does sustainability relate to the plan for Pitt?
 - Strengthening communities – transit (bikes, buses)
 - Energy leadership: investing (hydroelectric), divesting in f.f.
 - Research of impact
 - Habit changes, incentives
 - Normalizing sustainable choices
 - Better use of multimedia (screens)
 - Strengthening operational efficiency (stop complicating)
 - Better use of multimedia (screens)
 - Signage
 - Learning opportunities for new staff
 - Workshops related to job functions
 - Staff green guide – make more accessible
 - More certificates, build on green office (include reflection)
 - More sharing of solutions/success
3. How does the theme of sustainability play out at Pitt? What does Pitt do well?
 - Free bus passes
 - Already have some sustainability staff

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- Grassroots support / cooperation
 - Students understand and connect more with sustainability than staff
 - Especially equity and access (not being discussed at an institutional level)
 - Recycling opportunities
4. What could Pitt do better?
- Resources for reducing waste (i.e., food disposal) (food sharing policies, less plastic, smart purchasing)
 - Holistic approach to sustainability
 - Equity and access
 - Data on basic needs insecurities
 - Publicize resources like the Pantry
 - Recycling communication and education – encourage creativity, entrepreneurship (\$\$), mentorship and support (alumni engagement)
 - Hard to connect across departments