



Office of Sustainability

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Hello EVPP 490-008 and EVPP 692-004 Sustainability Planning for Communities,

In 2007, George Mason University's then-President Alan Merten signed the [American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment](#). This committed Mason to carbon neutrality by 2050 and resulted in the creation of the Office of Sustainability (OoS). Through collaborative efforts, we've achieved a lot since 2007: from consistent features in the [Princeton Review's Guide to Green Colleges](#) (every year since it began in 2009) to becoming the first university in the state of Virginia to earn a coveted "[Gold](#)" rating from the [Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's \(AASHE\) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System \(STARS\)](#) in 2014. At this point, you might wonder: how do we factor in?

Back in 2010, Mason released its first [Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP) designed in collaboration between students, faculty, and staff in a class similar to the one you're in. And it was led by the same faculty member, Dr. Dann Sklarew. A lot has changed since 2010 and we're sure that no reminder is needed to communicate the urgency of climate action now: from the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's \(IPCC\) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C](#) to the [Fourth National Climate Assessment](#) evidence abounds. We invite your help as we respond to these pressing challenges.

At the October 18th, 2019 [Fridays for Future Climate Rally](#) organized by numerous student organizations, Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration Carol Kissal, with the full support of Interim President Anne Holton, tasked Mason's Sustainability Council with the development of Mason's first-ever Strategic Plan for Sustainability (SPS) as well as updating the CAP completed in 2010. This is where you come in.

We're entering into a contract with you to complete four key deliverables (detailed on pg. 2) which will be used by Mason in the development and implementation of a final SPS as well as in the process of updating the CAP. Put another way, very real people will use what you create to address very real problems. As such, we're inviting you to present at a special meeting of the Sustainability Council (SC) in April of 2020 to celebrate your achievements in conjunction with the one-year anniversary of the SC.

Your engagement with the SPS and the CAP process doesn't stop when class ends. With your permission and continued interest, your future involvement with the SC's initiatives will be prioritized. What you do matters. And we assure you that the work you do will have long-term impacts at Mason and beyond.

With utmost gratitude,
The Office of Sustainability

Upon completion of this course, we expect the delivery of the following to the Office of Sustainability via your instructor, Dr. Dann Sklarew:

Peer Review and Assessment

A comprehensive review and assessment of sustainability strategic planning best practices at peer institutions (per the resource list provided). And, more broadly, a comprehensive review and assessment of sustainability best practices at said peer institutions. Furthermore, particular attention will be paid to the following categories: process (how was the SPS or similar document developed), structure (what is the overall structure of the SPS or similar document), content (what is and is not included), and impacts (who is and is not impacted). And we expect a separate, but related, list of innovative ideas, initiatives, and practices you discover in your research. Lastly, it should be noted that the list of peer institutions made available to you was developed in collaboration with your faculty instructor, Dr. Dann Sklarew.

Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis identifying internal and external stakeholders based upon their forecasted level of participation, interest, and influence in regard to the development, implementation, and ongoing execution of a SPS. Furthermore, special consideration should be given to identifying the stakeholders affected by an SPS as well as the extent to which said stakeholders are impacted. Lastly, tools such as a survey, town hall meeting agendas, community session agendas, focus groups agendas, etc. which are integral for a comprehensive stakeholder analysis should be created; these tools should be supported by research and best practices and included as part of this deliverable.

Development and Analysis of Essential Research Questions

A collection of research questions and answers (as reasonably as can be discovered) deemed to be integral to the successful development, implementation, and ongoing execution of a SPS. For example, if it is determined that a best practice is carbon negativity by "X" date and the relevant stakeholders have been identified in the Stakeholder Analysis, the Research Questions would seek to gather information necessary to the achievement of said best practice.

A Draft of the Strategic Plan for Sustainability (SPS)

A draft edition of Mason's SPS articulating an innovative vision of sustainability at Mason for the next decade. We foresee the SPS aligning with the United Nation's [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) while being grounded by research conducted by the IPCC (such as [AR5](#) and the forthcoming [AR6](#)). Furthermore, an excellent SPS will be representative of student, faculty, and staff desires while supporting Mason's current sustainability commitments and reporting requirements (e.g. [the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education](#)) as well as its commitment to open and transparent communication. Lastly, a comprehensive SPS will guide executive decision-making to ensure that Mason arrives at the sustainable future its stakeholders desire and that the world needs.

The Office of Sustainability (OoS) is committed to supporting this class. As such, Ben Auger, the Sustainability Program Manager for Education/Outreach and Adjunct Faculty with the School of Integrative Studies, will serve as the OoS' official liaison. Ben can be reached via email at bauger@gmu.edu and via phone at 703-993-5301.