



University Sustainability Coalition Meeting
Virtual Meeting
January 25, 2023
10am – 11am

The University Sustainability Coalition was formed in 2021 with one goal: To increase higher education sustainability efforts in Louisiana.

The idea of forming the university sustainability coalition was born from a steering committee of university representatives developing the university affiliate program as part of an EPA Trash Free Waters Grant with UL Lafayette and Keep Louisiana Beautiful. There are no fees associated with being a part of the coalition, just a seat at the table with your peers to communicate and is open to anyone in higher ed sustainability. By sharing challenges and solutions, members of this coalition can influence others in moving toward a more sustainable future.

Current sustainability coalition members represent the following universities and colleges: Dillard University, Grambling State University, Louisiana State University, Loyola University, Nicholls State University, Northwestern State University, Tulane University, River Parishes Community College, Xavier University, UL Monroe, UL Lafayette, University of New Orleans, Louisiana Tech, and Fletcher Technical Community College.

Attending: 17 Individuals, 10 Universities

Keep Louisiana Beautiful: Cabell Mouton (Facilitator), Patty Ferrell

LSU: Jerrod Penn (Chair)

Tulane University: Jordan Stewart (Co-Chair)

Nicholls State: Allyse Ferrara, Mitzi Jackson, Jenny Schexnayder

Northwestern: Steve Gruesbeck, Jennifer Kelly

Loyola University: Aimee Thomas

UL Lafayette: Blair Begnaud, Jonathan Brown

UNO: Carol Lunn, Sam West

UL Monroe: Therese Filhiol

Xavier University: Helena Robinson

River Parishes Community College: Esperanza Zenon

Meeting Opened: 10:00 am

Introductions were made.

Report:

The University Sustainability Coalition was formed to provide a platform to discuss sustainability challenges and solutions that are common across higher ed institutions. There are too many topics of interest to cover them all in the next two scheduled meetings. The Tree Campus discussion has been deferred to a later date. Cabell will be attending a webinar on sustainability food choices and if of value, will discuss this with Jerrod and Jordan about a possible extra meeting to cover this topic. Also of interest for a future meeting is the adoption of student green fees that go directly to a sustainability fund to support projects on campus.

The meeting was then turned over to the guest speakers, Phyllis Griffard with the Acadiana Native Plant Project and Tammy Baumgarten with the Native Plant Initiative of NOLA and LNPS. The topic of their presentation was LA Native Plantings Connecting Habitats, One Garden at a Time. There are 2,500 native plants in Louisiana. It is important to engage a professional knowledgeable in native plants as well as work with your on-campus staff your landscaping project. Selecting the right location with the right design is a key factor in determining what to plant. Adoption of standard operating procedures such as reducing mowing, minimizing chemicals, composting green waste, and following a maintenance plan should also be considered. Native plants are already adapted to local climate, soil and pathogens and also convey the natural heritage of the local community. The horticulture industry gravitates toward what can be easily mass produced and is not concerned with ecological functions. Native landscapes are impactful providing both pollinator support and soil conservation while at the same time being a model of environmental responsibility. It will take patience and diligence to change the traditional mindset about landscaping so take steps to engage community members and provide learning and service opportunities to the students on campus. A good first step is to identify an area on campus that needs attention anyway and try something different.

For your reference, the presentation may be accessed with the below link:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1OX6yRko6gBiDIR2WkE2mCNCNoMGbo47g/edit?usp=drivesdk&oid=109515765379754147895&rtpof=true&sd=true>

The meeting was then turned over to Carol Lunn, Assistant Vice President for Research and Economic Development at UNO for a presentation on University Sustainability Rankings. There are multiple Sustainability Agreements and Declarations regarding environmental sustainability in higher education that have been developed and that many universities are signing on to. There are sustainability assessment tools available to provide standard terminology, questionnaires to assess goals and how to track and report your activities. The most comprehensive and widely used system is the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS). This program does require a membership fee which is based on the size of the university. There are other free programs that can be utilized. Sustainability should be incorporated into the University's curriculum as well as its mission and planning. Three universities that are members of the Coalition have been recognized as Green Ribbon Schools. Green rankings may play a role in the decision making process for potential students that value sustainability. Each university will have different levels of support from their administration which may place limitations on what can be done. There are many choices of what universities can participate in such as Bee Campus, Tree Campus, Native Plants and Recycling/Waste Reduction. Most schools start in areas that will reduce operating costs like reducing water and electricity usage. Due to time constraints, Carol's presentation was limited so it may be worthwhile to have her come back.

For your reference, the presentation is included with the minutes.

Cabell concluded the meeting by telling the Coalition that KLB was in the process of developing a dedicated page on the KLB website to be used for sharing information and resources. More to come on this at the next meeting.

Below please find the schedule for our upcoming meetings:

March 29, 10am -11am

University Adopt-a-Meeting: UL Lafayette, Blair Begnaud and Tulane, Jordan Stewart

Meeting Topic and Presenter: How to Engage Faculty and Students

May 10, 10am-11am

University Adopt-a-Meeting: ALL

Meeting Topic and Presenter: Spring Green Activities: Successes and Challenges

Meeting adjourned at 11:15am.