

**Sustainability Practices and Research Center
Program Review Response and Action Plan
June 2023**

Introduction

The 2022-23 Program Review Team recognized the wide array of accomplishments of the SPARC, noting the successful work within the realm of building sustainability in academics with the creation and growth of the Sustainability (SUS) course attribute and the annual faculty Sustainability Community of Practice which works in support of the expansion of sustainability education and use of the SUS attribute.

They also noted the Intermountain Sustainability Summit as “not only a strength of the Center, but a marquis event for the University.” The recommendations made by the Review Team were almost entirely (5 of the 6 bulleted items) focused on resourcing in terms of both staffing and financial needs, noting “First and foremost, the University need to locate additional resources for SPARC if it is to be sustainable going forward.” In the table below, we have identified what we see as particular recommendations from the Review Team’s Report and outlined our action plan in response and proposed timeline for implementation.

Dean’s Response:

Consistent with the review team’s assessment, SPARC has been incredibly successful in terms of building sustainability into the curriculum at WSU. The SUS course attribute and community of practice have been critical components of this success. I would like to see sustainability in the curriculum continue to grow given the global climate crisis. WSU students need to be equipped to navigate the changing realities in the marketplace and the local, national and global communities. Additionally, WSU’s strategic plan, Amplify, would be directly supported by increasing the number of faculty embedding sustainability into the curriculum. Lastly, through the Intermountain Sustainability Summit WSU serves as a thought leader in sustainability in the Intermountain West. It has been (and should remain) an important element in the SPARC’s strategy to serve as a convener and asset throughout the region over the last decade. Thought leadership in sustainability is necessary for helping WSU become known for sustainability both academically and in our operations.

I also concur with the review team’s recommendations for additional resources to support SPARC. The Provost’s Office has been working to secure additional resources based on the feedback of the review team. Please see table below for the dean’s response to each recommendation.

Recommendation	Plan of Action	Timeline
<p>1) Increase full-time staffing.</p> <p>The Review Team noted repeatedly the need for additional full-time staffing for the SPARC. Student employees have been leaned on too heavily. While student workers are a vital part of SPARC’s student engagement/workforce training, greater skills, consistency and capacity provided through full-time staff is needed to maintain existing work and expand to reach the University’s strategic plan goals related to sustainability.</p>	<p>1) Hire FT Sustainability Engagement Coordinator – This position is critical to maintaining the ISS and community program work.</p> <p>2) Hire FT Admin Assistant (Admin Level III was recommended to provide greater likelihood of longevity in the position) – to help manage the increasing SUS administration and logistics planning support for the ISS, among other duties.</p>	<p>1) Fall 2023 (if funding is secured) 2) Within 1 year (if funding is secured)</p> <p><i><u>Dean’s Response:</u></i> <i>Funding has been secured for the fulltime sustainability engagement coordinator position. SPARC is in the process of posting the position for hire as of January 2024. This position has been identified as the most important hire of the two recommended; therefore, the engagement coordinator position has been prioritized over the administrative assistant position. An additional funding source will need to be identified to support the administrative assistant position in the future.</i></p>
<p>2) Increase the released-teaching time of the Director from 6 hours to 9 hours each semester.</p> <p>The Review Team noted the challenge of insufficient time available for the director with a half-time release.</p>	<p>1) Explore the feasibility of this option with the Provost’s Office and the Director’s department and College. Since the Director comes from a small department, a 9-hour released time per semester may not be tenable without some other teaching capacity added to the department.</p>	<p>1) During AY 2024</p> <p><i><u>Dean’s Response:</u></i> <i>Given other faculty directors on reassigned time are not receiving 9 credit hours reassigned, the decision is to maintain parity among directors in the short-term and increase “people power” in SPARC in the other ways listed in this report.</i></p>

<p>3) Hire an Assistant Director for SPARC (3-semester hours of released teaching time/semester).</p> <p>The Review Team made this recommendation based in part on the need to increase capacity to build faculty engagement with SPARC, particularly the inclusion of sustainability in their teaching and use of the SUS attribute. They also noted an assistant director might help with student intern guidance and building awareness of SPARC across campus.</p>	<p>1) Establish a SUS Faculty Fellow in SPARC (1/4 release time per semester). Expanding the inclusion of sustainability in faculty teaching and the adoption of the SUS attribute is a priority for the SPARC and campus sustainability goals. Given this, a SUS Faculty Fellow is proposed at this time (rather than an assistant director) to help fill the need to build sustainability education across campus.</p>	<p>1) During AY 2024 (if approved and supported by Provost's office)</p> <p><i><u>Dean's Response:</u></i> <i>A one-course reassignment each semester for a faculty member to serve as the assistant director has been approved by the Provost and advertised by SPARC. This position should help take some of the burden off the director.</i></p>
<p>4) University needs to locate additional financial resources for SPARC</p> <p>As the Review Team noted. "The biggest challenge facing SPARC is an unsustainable level of resources, both human and monetary."</p>	<p>1) Work with OSP on identifying and applying for grant opportunities as staffing capacity permits.</p> <p>2) Work with Administration to develop a funding plan for SPARC.</p> <p>3) Work with Development to identify and support the courting of potential major donors.</p>	<p>1) Summer 2023 and onward 2) Beginning Fall 2023 and going forward 3) Spring 2024 and going forward</p> <p><i><u>Dean's Response:</u></i> <i>The priority is to secure grant funding to hire and build the SPARC team and programming. Ongoing university funding will be considered with successful grant outcomes. SPARC is currently working on securing several large scale grants with the help of the Office of Sponsored Projects. Additionally, developing a focus on sustainability where students have a sustainability experience in a living lab is one of WSU's capital campaign priorities. The development team is actively working with the Vice Provost to identify potential donors.</i></p>

<p>5) Amplify awareness of SPARC across campus with particular focus on student engagement.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increase student-focused tabling/outreach 2) Film series, with some link to Green Badge Program monthly themes 3) Increase student-focus in marketing materials/communication 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Starting fall 2023 and ongoing 2) Fall of 2023 and likely ongoing film/speaker series 3) 2023-24 <p><i><u>Dean's Response:</u> Supportive of all of these initiatives.</i></p>
<p>6) Address the Research "R" in SPARC</p> <p>SPARC's minimal attention to research thus far was noted by the Review Team as a challenge to be reckoned with. This was not made as a formal recommendation, because of the currently limited scope to adequately consider the "R." This is an area, however, that needs attention.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Consider, in consultation with the EIC, how to develop the research element (the R) in SPARC. 2) Work to establish sustainability seed-grant funds (Sustainability Teaching, Application, and Research "STAR" grants) to support faculty/student evidence-based research, perhaps through donor funding. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Spring 2024 2) 2024-2025 <p><i><u>Dean's Response:</u> The Provost dedicated \$20,000 for sustainability research/projects. SPARC is working on hiring a faculty assistant director to help develop and facilitate the process for distributing the funds.</i></p>
<p>5) Attend to building equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across all areas of sustainability engagement.</p> <p>While the Review Team did not make a specific recommendation regarding this point it did acknowledge SPARC's goal in this realm – that it has been challenging, and the importance of working on it in support of WSU's wider mission and commitment to EDI.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Intentionally weave an EDI component, including environmental justice, into the annual faculty SUS Community of Practice, likely including a guest speaker (Dr. Kathleen Cadman). 2) Offer one workshop with the larger group of existing SUS attribute faculty on EDI and the social/environmental justice aspects central to sustainability. 3) Explore ways to foster greater collaboration between the Student Diversity Engagement Coordinator 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Starting Fall 2023 and every year after 2) AY 2024, with repeated offerings in future years, if successful 3) AY 2024 <p><i><u>Dean's Response:</u> Supportive of all of these initiatives and see this work as central to the mission of SPARC.</i></p>

	position in SPARC (piloted in AY 23) with WSU's "Sustainable Clubs".	
<p>7) Continue to evaluate the specific focus of the Intermountain Sustainability Summit (ISS) going forward in the evolving sustainability/climate landscape within the state.</p> <p>While this was also not mentioned as a specific recommendation, the Review Team did note challenges to the Intermountain Sustainability Summit going forward. A large portion of this relates to the need for FT staffing dedicated to the event, as well as consistent year on year funding. But the observation was also made based on the recent establishment of new climate focused events (some of which are free to attend), including the Climate Summit from the Wilkes Center for Climate Science & Policy at the University of Utah. That Climate Summit has so far proved to be significantly different from the ISS, being much more academically and U of U focused.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Confer with fellow convening members of the Utah Climate Action Network (UCAN) and internally regarding the focus, role, need, and priorities for the ISS. 2) Work to build student internship/engagement opportunities through the ISS (if we expand with additional staffing through base/grant/donor funding) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Year 1 and going forward 2) When staffing capacity and budget allows (1-2 years?) <p><i><u>Dean's Response:</u></i> <i>As mentioned above in the opening comments, the Intermountain Sustainability Summit is an important part of SPARC's and WSU's reach as a leader in sustainability across the region. The administration would like to see this leadership role continue and scale over time. Additional funding through the grants currently being pursued and some of the additional positions currently posted in SPARC will help distribute among several staff the responsibility of facilitating the ISS annually.</i></p>