

SFU IN 2021

A Student Sustainability Vision





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**SFU WILL BRING VISION, INTELLECT
AND HIGH ETHICAL STANDARDS TO
ACHIEVING AND MAINTAINING
INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP IN
SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS,
RESEARCH, TEACHING,
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION AND
COMMUNITY OUTREACH.**

SFU Sustainability Policy (GP38)

In 2008, SFU adopted the Sustainability Policy and provided a foundation on which SFU may establish itself as a leading institution in the transition to a sustainable society.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that Simon Fraser University's campuses reside on unceded Coast Salish Territory, the traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. We respectfully express our gratitude to the Coast Salish Peoples, who have been the caretakers of the land we inhabit, and the water and air we depend on, since time immemorial.

We recognize that efforts on our campuses and in our region - in all areas of sustainability - have the responsibility and privilege of working in partnership with the traditional and present stewards of this land.



A WORD FROM EMBARK

ABOUT EMBARK

Embark Sustainability Society is an independent, student-led non-profit based out of Simon Fraser University that empowers its 30,000+ members to lead sustainable change.

Welcome to the first ever Student Sustainability Vision for Simon Fraser University (SFU). This Vision is the result of SFU's enthusiasm to engage the student body in university decisions, and the student body's overwhelming response to such an opportunity.

Hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students from all three campuses came together over the course of four months to create this Vision. The Vision reflects the ideas that emerged through in-person discussions, online surveys, and a Student Sustainability Summit.

The output of this process is something all students should be proud of. Students from diverse backgrounds with differing views came together to imagine what a future, sustainable SFU can and should look like. Through dedication and collaboration, they were also able to identify pathways that the university may use to get there.

This Vision is a reflection of an engaged student body. It was created by students, for students. We, at Embark, were honoured to lead this process.

All that is left to do is put this Vision to action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joshua Cairns', is positioned above the name and title of the signatory.

Joshua Cairns
Executive Director, Embark

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT DOES A SUSTAINABLE SFU LOOK LIKE?

The university set out to address this very question in the fall of 2015 when it launched SFU 2021: a university-wide engagement process, facilitated by the Sustainability Office, that set out to build SFU's next Sustainability Strategic Plan (2017-2021).

SFU 2021 provided a unique opportunity to engage the student body and reflect student views in SFU's sustainability priorities. We, at Embark, decided to seize this opportunity and create the first ever Student Sustainability Vision for SFU. The Vision presented here was created through a four-month engagement process led by Embark and a team of dedicated student volunteers.

The engagement process began in November 2015 with the creation of a high-level Vision Statement - a concise description of what students believe a sustainable SFU should look like. The Vision Statement was formed by synthesizing input from face-to-face conversations with more than 300 students across SFU's three campuses. From December to January, the draft Vision Statement was refined after obtaining feedback from more than 100 students via an online survey. The engagement process culminated in February 2016 with the half-day Student Sustainability Summit, which brought together dozens of student leaders from diverse backgrounds to hash out the backbone of a Student Sustainability Vision for SFU. With this input in hand, Embark and its team of student volunteers shaped the input into the final Student Sustainability Vision, which we present to you here.

Although SFU has made notable achievements in sustainability, further work still needs to be done. We hope the Student Sustainability Vision can aid these future efforts, helping SFU to further its sustainability leadership.

SIDENOTE

SFU's current Sustainability Strategic Plan (2013-2016) and other sustainability content can be found at sfu.ca/sustainability



WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

Sustainability is a complex concept. It has a range of definitions that emphasize different components of the environment, society, and the economy – and the interconnectedness among these areas.

In creating the Student Sustainability Vision, one priority was to build from a broad and inclusive definition of sustainability that considers environmental, social, and economic factors, and the ways in which these factors are intertwined. It was important that the definition recognizes the well-being of students, staff, and faculty, and also that of our surroundings (Burnaby Mountain, Surrey, Vancouver, and the territory of the Coast Salish peoples). Accordingly, we use a definition provided in Simon Fraser University's Sustainability Policy (GP 38):

"[Sustainability is] improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems."

In order to conceptualize the diversity of sustainability initiatives, SFU's Sustainability Office has identified and reports on six key topics. These six topics, which we use to frame the Student Sustainability Vision, are:

Energy & Emissions
Consumption & Waste
Mobility & Travel

Society & Equity
Learning & Discovery
Risk & Resilience

SIDENOTE

In 2016, SFU launched the *Sustainability Reporting Initiative* (SRI), which reports on the institution's progress in six topics of sustainability. The SRI can be viewed at sri.sust.sfu.ca

SIX TOPICS OF SUSTAINABILITY

1. ENERGY & EMISSIONS

The Energy and Emissions topic focuses on the generation and consumption of energy and the production of greenhouse gas emissions. It encompasses the roles of both operations and human behaviour.

2. CONSUMPTION & WASTE

The Consumption and Waste topic addresses how goods are consumed, reused, and disposed of. It considers the types of resources and products that are used, where they are sourced from, how they are consumed, and how their disposal is managed.

3. MOBILITY & TRAVEL

The Mobility and Travel topic addresses how campus visitors travel to, from, and around the university. It includes what the modes of travel are, who can use them, and what infrastructure is required.

4. SOCIETY & EQUITY

The Society and Equity topic focuses on people. This topic addresses levels of diversity, acceptance, well-being, safety, ethics, and fairness in decision-making.

5. LEARNING & DISCOVERY

The Learning and Discovery topic encompasses ways of providing an array of opportunities to learn, discover, and innovate. It includes how knowledge is transmitted and exchanged, and where that takes place – in the classroom, lab, field, or community.

6. RISK & RESILIENCE

The Risk and Resilience topic encompasses the ability to identify, plan for, and withstand institutional risks, which may include climate change impacts or other factors that may threaten infrastructure, community members, or the environment.



THE STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY VISION

Presented here is a vision for the future of SFU, which was created by students from different campuses, departments, and backgrounds. It imagines what a truly sustainable SFU could look like, and how we might get there.

We first provide an overarching Vision Statement that describes this future SFU. This Vision Statement is followed by descriptions of what success looks like for each of the six sustainability topics, and actions that will drive that success.

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THE VISION STATEMENT

At SFU, decision-making incorporates social, environmental, and economic sustainability, and students are informed and engaged in university governance. The university fosters well-being and a sense of community, acknowledging Indigenous heritage and stimulating inclusion within campus communities and throughout surrounding regions. Sustainability education and training opportunities are provided to all university members through diverse learning methods.

Across the university's three campuses, bold waste- and emission-reduction measures are prioritized, and sustainable food and transportation options are readily available. Spaces are accessible, healthy, and inclusive.

SFU is a leader in sustainability.



ENERGY & EMISSIONS

SFU is at the forefront of the transition to a low-carbon economy. We serve as a model throughout the region for what efficient and effective decarbonization can look like. We are a leader in climate change mitigation measures, and we openly share our experiences and expertise with other institutions, organizations, governments, and individuals to enhance our collective action.

Our leadership is driven by progressive institutional energy policies, an empowered community, and a dedication to conserving our planet and its inhabitants. We embrace innovation, implement novel practices, and adopt emerging technologies that minimize our dependence on fossil fuels. We work to protect future generations and advocate for climate action.

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

1. SFU powers its campuses using renewable, carbon-free sources of energy generated in on-site facilities.
2. All campus construction and renovation projects prioritize energy efficiency measures and are designed to attain, at minimum, LEED Gold certification.
3. The built environment incorporates natural and LED lighting, energy-generating technologies, and recycled materials to reduce the university's carbon footprint.
4. SFU has established an interdisciplinary centre for the research and development of renewable energy and zero-emission technologies, and it integrates the centre's outputs into operations at the university's three campuses.
5. SFU regularly hosts university-wide campaigns that promote awareness and behaviour change around energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.



CONSUMPTION & WASTE

At SFU, we acknowledge the bounds of the planet, its resources, and ecosystems. To ensure that we work within these limits, we collaborate with others to minimize our consumption of disposable products and generation of waste. Where waste is generated, we have appropriate systems in place that ensure these outputs are reused as inputs in our operations.

We can see the results of our collective efforts in every corner of the university – from abundant and interconnected green spaces to rainwater collection and management systems. We celebrate our successes in this area and publicly report on our initiatives and share our experiences. We are a zero waste institution.

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

1. SFU has waste reduction policies in place that guide all aspects of the university's operations. These policies are regularly revisited to ensure that leading sustainability principles are upheld.
2. SFU establishes and maintains abundant public green spaces that offer an array of benefits to the institution, community, and environment. These benefits include natural systems of stormwater management, water filtration, and food production.
3. Multi-stream waste bins are the norm across SFU's three campuses, and the university is a leader in waste diversion among Canadian post-secondary institutions.
4. Processes are in place that ensure all waste from the university's various resource systems are captured, recycled, and reused as inputs, exemplifying a closed-loop system.
5. SFU actively supports behaviour-change workshops, projects, and student-led initiatives that educate the university community about the impacts of its consumption and waste.



MOBILITY & TRAVEL

At SFU, our campuses are complete communities that liberate people from private vehicles. Accessible, affordable, safe, and practical transportation infrastructure is widespread and ensures that people of all abilities can easily move to, from, and throughout our three campuses.

We maximize mobility options while minimizing the environmental impact – an approach that is supported by, and shared throughout, SFU’s departments. We have created a culture that acknowledges the importance of active and public transportation, and we work with other institutions and community partners to spread this attitude across the region.

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

1. SFU advocates to all levels of government for increases in capacity, accessibility, efficiency, and affordability of public transportation.
2. The improvement of active and public transportation options is an institutional priority that is reflected in SFU’s policies, decisions, and long-term plans.
3. SFU has developed infrastructure, support systems, and educational programs that ensure walking and cycling are safe, convenient, accessible, and efficient in all weather conditions and times of day.
4. The university seizes opportunities, such as the electrification of vehicles and novel systems of carpooling, to transition away from privately-owned conventional vehicles.
5. People of all abilities are regularly consulted regarding campus accessibility, and their needs are met through inclusive infrastructure.
6. Goods consumed on campus are sourced as locally as possible and are transported using zero-emission modes of transportation.



SOCIETY & EQUITY

SFU is a safe and supportive space that cultivates a strong sense of belonging among students, faculty, and staff. We provide opportunities for interaction – where new relationships can be forged and existing ones enhanced. We embrace diversity and support equality, and see these as the fundamental building blocks of a just society.

Knowledge is not seen as a privilege for the few. An informed, engaged, and valued university community is the norm. We make decisions collectively and collaboratively, and provide opportunities to anyone who wishes to take part. We actively work to break down barriers and ensure open participation. We understand that all of the aforementioned qualities are essential for students, faculty, and staff to thrive.

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

1. Students, staff and faculty are provided with regular opportunities to contribute to the implementation, evaluation, and revision of programs.
2. Decisions are made using a non-hierarchical, direct, democratic, and accountable process.
3. Education is accessible and affordable, with equitable tuition rates for domestic and international students.
4. Spaces are provided at SFU's three campuses for people of diverse backgrounds to come together and interact in a safe and supportive environment.
5. SFU opposes, and works to break down, forms of systemic injustice by recognizing the connections among social categorizations, including ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, mental and physical ability, socioeconomic status, and age.
6. Employees at the university are provided with a living wage that ensures a fair and equitable income.



LEARNING & DISCOVERY

SFU excels in providing meaningful education opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and the wider community – regardless of individual, social, or structural barriers. These opportunities are abundant, accessible, and expose individuals to experiences in which they discover things about themselves and the world. We recognize and accommodate a diverse range of learning styles through innovative teaching methods. We value relationships within and between faculties, and understand that the best ideas are born out of collaboration. SFU is connected to - and forms an integral part of - the wider community.

We excel at applied research and support programmes that can make a positive difference in the world. We provide all students with a working knowledge of social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Our leadership in education has created an empowered community of citizens that possess the tools to solve the world's greatest issues.

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

1. Interdisciplinary courses are a customary part of the SFU experience, encouraging collaboration and knowledge exchange among faculties.
2. Sustainability is integrated into the curriculum of all undergraduate and graduate programs, providing students with a basic understanding of the interactions between social, environmental, and economic systems.
3. SFU collaborates in a meaningful and lasting way with Indigenous partners and community members to identify and conduct research projects.
4. Classes offer alternative forms of learning, including hands-on work, field research, online learning, as well as peer-to-peer and challenge-driven learning.
5. Students are actively informed and engaged in university issues, thereby making them respected and valued stakeholders in SFU's decision-making processes.
6. SFU involves students in the creation and advancement of the university's Sustainability Strategic Plan through diverse working groups and committees.

RISK & RESILIENCE

At SFU, our preparedness allows us to withstand significant stress and adversity. We have developed resilient communities built upon a foundation of strong and diverse relationships, both within and beyond our campuses. We have mechanisms in place that ensure we can appropriately manage and reduce risk, adapt in the face of pressure, and emerge unscathed following periods of uncertainty and distress.

Our actions reflect an understanding that risk and resilience warrant ongoing attention in order to promote the long-term well-being of our community. The emerging social, environmental, and economic risks that we face are mitigated through innovative financial and planning practices. We incentivize leading research on resilience, and continually test and incorporate new initiatives that can build our capacity. As a university, we harness our collective knowledge to respond to change.

DRIVERS OF SUCCESS

1. SFU minimizes its long-term financial risk by shifting investments away from companies involved in the exploration, extraction, production, and transportation of fossil fuels, and toward companies that align with the university's values and future outlook.
2. University decisions regarding SFU's infrastructure and investments use a transparent process to account for, and mitigate, climate change impacts.
3. SFU has independent utilities, as well as provisions and emergency systems in place that ensure the campus can be self-sustaining – even during times of distress.
4. A resiliency model of prevention that considers potential risk and protective factors is incorporated into all decision-making processes at SFU.
5. Infrastructure design and retrofits apply principles that enhance the environment, health, and the resiliency of SFU's community members and supporting ecosystems in the face of major global shifts.
6. SFU creates and supports opportunities for establishing connections across disciplines, sectors, and regions, fostering academic and community networks as a result.

CONCLUSION

USING THE VISION

We are witnessing a time of rapid and substantial change. With each passing year, we see the world transform before our eyes. Our climate, our environment, our cultures, our economies, and our societies continuously shift in dramatic and, sometimes, unprecedented ways. The Student Sustainability Vision was created with this context in mind. Its purpose is to help us imagine and plan for a future that may be wildly different from the world we experience today.

The future, sustainable SFU that we envision is the picture of what is possible if our collective efforts are united for a common cause. It is a university of leadership – one that challenges the status quo and capitalizes on its unique strengths. It is a university of opportunity – one that continually strives to enhance the well-being of its patrons while protecting the natural environment. It is a university of action – one that supports positive change and the intellectual capacity that the university contains. Perhaps, most importantly, it is a model for what SFU can be, as imagined by students.

In order for SFU to fulfill this vision, the level of change that is needed is significant. It will require joint efforts from students, faculty, staff, and the larger community. It will require hard work, resources, leadership, and perseverance – but it is a transformation that must take place. Fortunately, SFU is in a unique position to succeed: its three campuses are situated within engaged communities, and the university has at its disposal an immense capacity of knowledge and passion that exists in few other places. With this vision in hand, all that is left to make the transformation a reality is for each of us to come together and get to work.

What are we waiting for?

SIDENOTE

This Vision is a snapshot of the priorities of current SFU students. Embark is committed to leading a new engagement initiative in 2021 to update the Vision and have it reflect the continually evolving priorities of the student body.

APPENDIX

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ABOUT EMBARK

Embark Sustainability Society is an independent, student-led non-profit society based out of Simon Fraser University. We empower our 30,000+ undergraduate and graduate student members to lead sustainable change through grants, training, and engagement.

To learn more about Embark and ways to get involved, please visit our website embarksustainability.org



ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

The Student Sustainability Vision was the result of a university-wide engagement campaign that interacted with students from SFU's three campuses (Burnaby, Vancouver, and Surrey).

Hundreds of students provided input into the Vision through in-person engagement, an online survey, and the Student Sustainability Summit.

BY THE NUMBERS

524 students directly engaged
377 in-person interactions
112 online interactions
35 Summit attendees



LEARN MORE

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