

University of Cambridge Leadership Award Professor Jeremy Sanders

About the project

Summary

Through Professor Jeremy Sanders' inspirational leadership, the University of Cambridge's approach to embedding sustainability into the institution's thinking, decision-making and operations has been transformed. He is Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Affairs, responsible for policy and strategy in the areas of environmental sustainability, human resources, relationships with the local community and public engagement. Under his leadership, there has been an obvious step-change in the University's ambition for environmental sustainability, including a substantial increase in the level of staffing and resources dedicated to achieving this vision.

The results

The challenge

Jeremy's personal vision for sustainability, that the University should make a positive impact through outstanding sustainability performance, drove him to initiate a major University-wide review, the results of which are now encapsulated in the University's overall vision for Environmental Sustainability. The positive sustainability impacts of the University's research are world class and some of its teaching has a positive sustainability impact. He believes that the University can go further to embed sustainability into the curriculum and that enhancing these positive impacts does not give the University an excuse to ignore the direct negative impacts of our own operations.

The approach

During Jeremy's four year tenure as Pro-VC, substantial changes have taken place to embed sustainability into University thinking, decision-making and operations. The significance of achieving this at Cambridge is not to be under-estimated. It is an institution with a devolved and democratic governance and decision-making structure, and to achieve change requires dedication, commitment and many conversations. Examples of initiatives that have resulted from Jeremy's leadership include:

- The creation of the Environment and Energy Section in 2013. This brought together existing functions relating to environment and energy and created several new posts, tripling the number of posts from 4 to 12. This included the creation of a new senior post of Head of Environment and Energy reporting directly to the Director of Estate Strategy with a dotted reporting line to the PVC. The new posts included the University's first Carbon Reduction Manager and Travel Plan Manager.
- Adoption of a new Environmental Sustainability Vision, Policy and Strategy, which includes the University's commitment to making a positive impact through outstanding environmental sustainability



Profile

- HEI
- 18,000 students
- 11,000 staff
- Urban

performance. Jeremy chaired the Review Committee through an 18 month review process and he presented the proposed policy at meetings of 13 University Committees and Groups in order to increase levels of buy-in into the new policy and strategy.

- A key player in ensuring the signing of the Cambridge City Deal which will see a £billion invested in improving transport and facilitating housing delivery in the Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire area. This will, in part, greatly assist the implementation of the University's Travel Plan through sustainable transport measures such as priority bus lanes, new bus routes and improvements to cycle infrastructure.
- Responsibility for the North West Cambridge Development, a mixed academic and urban community being built on the edge of Cambridge. The development is designed to encourage people to live more sustainable lives and is being built to the highest standards of sustainability. The development will include the largest water-recycling system within the UK, a district heating network, extensive cycle and pedestrian routes to promote connectivity and an underground bin system. All new homes in phase one will be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5, with the development having approximately two-thirds of all the homes built to this level.
- A champion for diversity and inclusion, he introduced the Returning Carers Scheme, led achievement of Athena SWAN Silver success, joined the 30% Club and chaired the "Women in Science Engineering and Technology Initiative" steering group. He believes that recognising a variety of pathways to success, adjusting the current reward mechanisms and celebrating all contributions towards excellence will allow a diverse group to flourish.

Our goals

The University of Cambridge is committed to making a positive impact through outstanding environmental sustainability performance.

The details of how the University aims to meet this vision are set out in the University's Environmental Sustainability Vision, Policy and Strategy (www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/environmental-sustainability-vision-policy-and-strategy).

Performance and results

The adoption of a new Environmental Sustainability Vision, Policy and Strategy: This policy framework shows how the environmental sustainability vision aligns with the University mission and one of its core values. It contains four underpinning principles and three priority areas, and conveys the University's key environmental sustainability impacts and the supporting approaches available to manage these impacts. The University's multi-step Environmental Sustainability Strategy contains details of the aims, targets, key performance indicators and implementation mechanisms in nine areas including sustainable procurement, biodiversity, teaching and research.

The creation of a strong new governance structure: the new Environmental Sustainability Strategy Committee will be reporting jointly to the General Board, which has responsibility for educational matters, and to the Council. As a result, aspects of sustainability, including sustainable procurement, biodiversity and academic activity, will be properly considered and in more depth than they have ever been before at Cambridge.

The creation of an Environment and Energy Section: a professional team of University Officers who drive forward the implementation of policies, projects and initiatives to achieve the University's environmental sustainability vision

He has also led the University's Equality and Diversity activities over the past four years, putting in place new schemes leading to long-term cultural change and which have already led to a measurable increase in the number of women applying for and achieving senior posts and promotion. This must improve the sustainability of the work force for the long term.

The future

Lessons learned

1. Invest in people – ensure that you have the appropriate staffing structure to work towards your vision.
2. Build capacity at all levels across the University.
3. The process is just as important as the outcome — time invested in University-wide consultation helps ensure buy-in across the democratic institution.

Sharing your project

A key part of Jeremy's role is engaging with senior members of the University to advocate on behalf of environmental sustainability matters. He engages with staff at all levels and with students and frequently raises environmental sustainability matters during University committee meetings. He willingly offers his time to support staff and speak at events.

He also endeavours to engage with his peers external to the University on environmental sustainability matters. For example, he contributed an editorial on environmental matters to a top international Chemistry research journal

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Winning this award would be fitting recognition of the leadership that Jeremy has shown in embedding sustainability into University thinking, decision-making and operations. It would also help to inspire our staff and students to adopt sustainable practices.

Professor Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Vice-Chancellor

Further information

Jeremy Sanders, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Affairs

Web: www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk

Email: environment@admin.cam.ac.uk

Twitter: @CambridgeSust

Facebook: CUenvironment