



Green Gown
Awards 2016



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University of Alberta Sustainability Professional Office of Sustainability

About the project

Summary

Trina Innes joined the University of Alberta in 2009 as the inaugural director of the Office of Sustainability. She facilitates solutions for integrating sustainability into UAlberta's procedures, practices & campus life. Trina has concentrated her efforts on strategic leadership, awareness programs, and fostering the capacity for change.

Trina facilitated the development of UAlberta's first two sustainability plans, benchmarked the institution's sustainability performance, and inspired the creation of many initiatives. She has championed dozens of opportunities for students, faculty & staff to increase their awareness of campus, local, regional & global sustainability issues & solutions, and nurtured numerous action projects that integrate sustainability into campus practices/services, social norms, experiential learning & professional development.

Under her leadership UAlberta has achieved a Gold Rating in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, received an Alberta Emerald Award, and been recognized as one of Canada's Greenest Employers for 8 years running. Hundreds of labs, events, offices and resident rooms have received Green Spaces certification under her tenure. Over 80 projects valuing more than 500 thousand dollars have been implemented to advance UAlberta's sustainability performance.

Project partners

The Office of Sustainability partners with approximately 100 organizations and groups each year including local government, student clubs, non-profit organizations, community groups and other higher education institutions.

The results

The problem

The Office of Sustainability began as an idea of the VP Facilities & Operations and the Deputy Provost. The office began with one staff person and a world of opportunities and possibilities. It was the job of the Chief Sustainability Officer to customize a campus sustainability initiative that would inspire students, faculty and staff to engage in sustainability at the University of Alberta.



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Profile

- One of Canada's top universities
- 38,733 students (includes full and part time students)
- 15,000 staff
- Urban

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The approach

Developing our office has comprised a number of activities, pilots and iterative feedback loops. In short, they approach involves researching best practices, sensing the state of readiness in the organization, benchmarking our performance, looking for gaps in our performance, conducting feasibility studies or pilots, developing partnerships, and seeding projects through information, funding and leveraging of relationships.

Our goals

The goals of our Office of Sustainability are informed by our institutional strategic plan, our sustainability plan needs analysis, research into best practices and evaluation results. We frame our work using a logic model. A condensed version of the model is provided below.

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes		
	Programs & Projects	Participation	Short-Term	Intermediate	Long-Term
Sustainability Commitment Institutional Strategic Plan Sustainability Plan Core Funding Staff, Interns, CSVs Collaborators Content Experts (professional & academic) Working Groups Project Revenue Sponsors Cost Recovery/Fee for Service	Leadership, Planning & Reporting <i>Facilitate projects that institutionalize sustainability into strategic plans, policies, operations & decision-making. Formally benchmark & share leadership within & beyond Campus Alberta.</i> Building Awareness <i>Create opportunities for students, faculty & staff to increase their awareness of campus, local, regional & global sustainability issues & solutions.</i> Fostering Capacity for Change <i>Foster action projects that integrate sustainability into campus practices/services, social norms, experiential learning & professional development.</i>	Students Faculty Staff Alumni Campus Visitors Senior Leaders Project Managers Community Members Partners Campus Alberta Local & Provincial Organizations	Awareness/ Knowledge/ Values. <i>Increase in campus community awareness, knowledge & appreciation for sustainability.</i> Skills/Engagement. <i>Increase in engagement of campus community in sustainability skills development & action projects.</i> Process Outcomes.	Behaviour. <i>More people are engaged in sustainability practices.</i> Coordination/Connectivity. <i>Sustainability is seen as an opportunity to strengthen relationships & decision-making.</i>	Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive social sustainability benefits are experienced by students, faculty and Economic Operational costs are reduced. Environmental <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecological footprint reduced (i.e. energy, water & waste, greenhouse gas emissions) Ultimate Outcome: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability is established as a core value in our culture. Continuously improved sustainability performance. Positive reputation for sustainability.



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Obstacles and solutions

Obstacles	Solutions
Large, comprehensive institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek opportunities to bring the system to the table in the form of working groups, project teams, leaders networks, etc.
Multiple audiences with different levels of experience with sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a range of opportunities for people to engage. Find ways to help them be successful learn on, and then give them the tools they need to advance to more complex projects and ideas. This could range from simple competitions up to complex grant programs where people can frame and implement their own ideas.
Limited resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about what others are doing at the institution and find ways to infuse sustainability into their work so their initiatives experience increased success because of the partnership with the campus sustainability initiative. Create ambassadors and volunteer programs to extend the reach and impact of initiatives.

Performance and results

Below please find a few samples of statistics from our office over the last six years.

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
# people reached	15,392	19,758	27,371	33,993	40,598	30,012
# engagement activities	65	82	117	140	273	362
# Certified Green Spaces	No program	No program	10	83	381	340
# articles in media	33	31	47	40	27	32
# newsletter subscribers	1,588	3,473	4,445	6,661	8,140	9,014
# Facebook likes	482	1,026	1,436	2,009	2,528	2,984
# Twitter followers	825	1,445	2,256	2,824	3,396	3,913
# Flickr photos loaded	562	776	1,557	2,002	2,317	2,763
# partners & sponsors we collaborate with	51	64	77	110	109	98
# kg recyclables & reusables collected during Eco Move Out	No program	No program	2,982	9,429	12,374	15,844



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The future

Lessons learned

Leading change requires us to think differently about systems, their interactions and change agency. Formal training in change management and stakeholder engagement is beneficial.

Tools and techniques for planning agendas, participatory processes and facilitation are key elements in a sustainability professional's toolkit.

Campus audiences are at varying stages of readiness when it comes to engaging in sustainability. A comprehensive campus sustainability initiative will include a range of opportunities to ignite people's awareness, understanding, skills and action.

Sharing your project

Information about the Office of Sustainability and the whole campus sustainability initiative is shared regularly through communications channels both on and off campus. This includes news media, social media, lawn signs, digital displays and press releases. We share our performance through benchmarking tools like the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System.

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

"I am delighted that Trina Innes has received this award. She has collaborated extensively across campus to bring our sustainability commitment to life, and establish the University of Alberta as a leader, both nationally and now internationally. This recognition allows us to share our accomplishments and ingenuity with the world."
David H. Turpin, CM, PhD, LLD, FRSC, President and Vice-Chancellor

Further information

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