

## V. ACADEMICS AND STUDENT LIFE

Xavier University is committed to educating students in the Jesuit tradition of a liberal arts education. To that end, students are trained in their particular field of choice, but are also exposed to a broad core curriculum from many other disciplines. As part of our Catholic heritage, it is of central importance to incorporate ideas of sustainability throughout the academic curriculum. Xavier seeks to prepare students for “lives of solidarity, service, and success.” This includes training students to understand the issues and challenges of creating a sustainable future for all.

Sustainability as an academic field overlaps many traditional disciplines. It is important to have the scientific literacy understand research from the natural sciences in order to make informed decisions. It is equally necessary to understand how human systems work from the disciplines of History, Economics, Political Science, and Sociology. Within a Jesuit education, sustainability needs to be dealt with from philosophical and theological perspectives, as well as from the perspectives of ethics and social justice. In addition, many other disciplines (e.g., English Literature, Marketing, Entrepreneurial Studies, Fine Art, etc.) are integral to the weaving of sustainability themes throughout the curriculum. The goal is to infuse ideas of sustainability throughout the undergraduate academic experience where there exists the best chance to reach the broadest range of students.

On college campuses, learning is not limited to experiences in academic classes. Students are exposed to new ideas and perspectives in social and extra-curricular activities. Many of these can be more powerful in shaping future attitudes and behavior than academic work. Through both coursework and co-curricular activities, Xavier endeavors to foster a culture of environmental awareness and receptivity to new approaches to sustainability among students, faculty and staff.

### ACADEMICS

**Long-term Vision:** To create an academic curriculum that introduces every Xavier student to ideas and issues of sustainability from a variety of perspectives in many different classes and to become a dynamic research center for interdisciplinary collaboration working toward sustainable solutions to environmental and societal problems.

#### A. Curriculum and Teaching

For many years, Xavier University has offered classes throughout the curriculum that focused on sustainability issues. Most of these courses have been organized into an interdisciplinary Environmental Studies minor. The minor is rooted in two main disciplines: Ecology and Economics. Students seeking the minor also have an elective that can be satisfied from a variety of departments such as Theology, English, and History. A 2009 campus-wide survey of faculty revealed that 81 different courses from 35 departments incorporate some discussion of sustainability. In responding to the survey, many professors said they would like to include more sustainability-related content into their courses

**Goal:** To introduce students to themes of sustainability from a variety of perspectives



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## 1. ACTION PLAN:

### Short-term Goals (1-2 years)

- *Offer workshops for faculty to foster dialogue between disciplines that will aide faculty in incorporating more sustainability themes into existing courses. These would occur on a formal basis annually (rotating between offering during the semester and summer), as well as informally (through faculty brown bags) beginning in the Fall of 2010.*
- *Develop other ways to encourage and facilitate faculty incorporation of sustainability themes into existing courses.*
- *Develop new courses, with sustainability as a central element, with the support of the Center for Teaching Excellence, such as Faculty Learning Communities and other course-development supports.*
- *Pilot departmental self-written sustainability plans within the Business School before expanding this opportunity to the University as a whole.*
- *Develop a major in environmental sciences. Having a science degree focused on the environment will help Xavier recruit students interested in sustainability. These students, encouraged by their coursework, will help to change the culture on campus to be more aware of sustainability issues.*

### Mid-term Goals (3-5 years)

- *Promote greater awareness of faculty and staff choices around sustainable living in order to give the students role models and guidance in their own personal choices.*
- *Continue to offer opportunities for faculty to develop sustainability into the courses they already teach as well as create new courses focused on sustainability. These may be summer workshops, brownbag lunches, or other informal meetings to provide faculty with information, motivation, and encouragement coordinated by the sustainability director.*
- *Continue to administer surveys of faculty to track the progress of including more sustainability themes into a diversity of courses.*
- *Engage all academic departments in self-written sustainability plans as modeled from the Business School pilot experience.*
- *Offer a sustainability certificate program within the Center for Adult and Part-time Students.*
- *Identify courses with sustainability content in the course catalogue so that students can make well-informed course selections.*
- *Develop relationships with local organizations to place students into practical internships as a supplement to their coursework in completion of the degrees in environmental science and sustainability studies.*

### Long-term Goals (5-10 years)

- *Seriously consider requiring students to take one core class with sustainability content.*



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- *Develop an interdisciplinary major in sustainability or environmental studies. As more sustainability- course content is developed across departments, we should be able to offer such an interdisciplinary degree. The “Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education” reported in 2009 that there were more than 100 new majors and minors in sustainability, up from three in 2005. Two factors have led to this growth: student and employer demand for students trained in this area.*

### 2. CHALLENGES AND FUNDING:

- Academic changes, such as listing courses with sustainability content and slight modifications of the core curriculum, must pass through the faculty governing structures
- Funding will help academic programs grow. Specifically, a sustainability director is needed to help coordinate these efforts and others in this Plan. In addition, funding should be sought to provide for an endowed faculty-chair position as director of sustainability or environmental studies. Environmentally-conscious donors could be identified who will contribute to such a specific academic program.
- Unless sustainability becomes a key University priority, faculty engagement is likely to remain limited.

### B. Research

Even though Xavier University is primarily an undergraduate teaching institution, the University has as part of its academic mission to engage in scholarly research. The faculty currently has expertise and active scholarship in a range of disciplines relating to sustainability, including Ecology, Economics, History, and Theology. Certainly more can be done to support and encourage research in these and other fields. In addition to faculty conducting research within their respective disciplines, undergraduate research experience is a fundamental component of the education at Xavier. The University highlights student research in its annual “Celebration of Student Research and Creative Activity.”

**Goal:** To develop many sustainability-related research activities on campus. Foster interdisciplinary collaborations between interested faculty, and opportunities for students to participate in research on campus and in local organizations.

### 1. ACTION PLAN:

#### Short-term Goals (1-2 years)

- *Provide small internal research grants for faculty to develop sustainability-related research projects.*
- *Designate a sustainability category within the “Celebration of Student Research and Creative Activity” to offer special recognition through a sustainability award.*



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### Mid-term Goals (3-5 years)

- *Hire new tenure-track faculty with expertise and research interests in sustainability. AASHE reports that in 2008, 57 sustainability-focused academic positions were advertised.*
- *Provide incentives for faculty to establish interdisciplinary collaborations addressing sustainability issues.*

### Long-term Goals (5-10 years)

- *Establish a sustainability center, with designated space in an academic building, and a faculty director who is granted teaching-release time to focus on research activities.*

## 2. CHALLENGES AND FUNDING:

- At present, Xavier does not have available space for new scientific research labs.
- Xavier is growing and in the midst of a building phase. Some of this new construction should be devoted to research facilities to accommodate new faculty with research in sustainability.
- Funding sources should be identified to provide seed money for internal grants that will position faculty to apply for larger external grants from traditional (and nontraditional) sources.

## STUDENT LIFE

**Long-term Vision:** To bring the campus culture to a greater awareness of the impact our daily decisions have on the local, regional, and global environment

### A. Co-Curricular Activities and Raising Awareness

There have been a variety of initiatives that have taken place across the University campus. Xavier participated, to a small degree, in the nationwide “Recyclemania” competition with other colleges and universities. Student groups provided a number of events during “Earth Week,” which included the distribution of reusable water bottles. Additionally, Xavier has brought in speakers through the ER/S lecture series to talk about sustainability (e.g., Robert F. Kennedy Jr., David Orr, Michael Pollan, Vandana Shiva and Wendell Berry.)

#### Goals:

- To raise the awareness of students, faculty and staff through a multitude of sustainability-focused initiatives occurring outside the classroom.
- To change the culture at Xavier University to create an aware campus firmly committed to a sustainable lifestyle.



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### 1. ACTION PLAN:

#### Short-term Goals (1-2 years)

- *Increase participation in “Recyclemania,” along with better publicity for the recycling program, which might include information displaying what is and is not recyclable and what happens to the recyclable materials.*
- *Use dorm metering to educate residents about energy use.*
- *Incorporate sustainability and related topics into the “Manresa Orientation Program.”*
- *Reduce waste during move-in and move-out by making recycling and donating options widely available and widely publicized.*
- *Ensure that all Resident Assistants coordinate one sustainability-focused program each year.*
- *Create a Xavier-specific “Green Pledge” for students, faculty and staff to sign pledging to live a more sustainable lifestyle. The number of people pledged may be displayed in Gallagher Student Center or on the “Xavier Green” website.*

#### Mid-term Goals (3-5 years)

- *Develop sustainability consultants for students, student groups, faculty and staff to go to for help or advice regarding the environmental implications of their issue or event as well as provide advice to create greater sustainability.*
- *Provide all incoming students with a guide for sustainable living on campus and in the community.*
- *Establish an ongoing faculty and staff education program on sustainability to help increase the sustainable culture.*
- *Support an annual or semi-annual Sustainability Lecture series.*

### 2. CHALLENGES AND FUNDING:

- Most of these efforts can be accomplished with little funding. Some publicity and signage would cost several thousands of dollars on a one-time basis, i.e., an annual lecture series would cost approximately \$25,000.
- The sustainability student group and interns can carry some of this out, but administrative and the Student Government Association (SGA) support will also be necessary.

#### **B. Service Learning, Internships, and Volunteering**

Xavier University has a long history of promoting experiential learning that results in students becoming active and engaged citizens, particularly in solidarity with the marginalized. Most notably, the Academic Service Learning Semesters, the Community Building Institute and, now,



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the Eigel Center for Community Engagement, the student-run Alternative Breaks program, and courses that offer service learning experiences as a component, have all played an important part in fulfilling this part of our mission in the past. We need to build on this breadth and depth of experience to ensure that students are exposed to ideas, not just about economic justice, but also environmental justice and sustainability.

**Goal:** To ensure that every Xavier student has at least ten hours of experiential experience with sustainability work before graduating.

### 1. ACTION PLAN:

#### **Short-term Goals (1-2 years)**

- *Secure funding for environmental fellows program.*
- *With students and Peace and Justice programs, help to develop a local, sustainability-focused “Alternative-Breaks” trip.*
- *Encourage departments and student organizations to develop new service learning opportunities that provide exposure to sustainable practices.*

#### **Mid-term Goals (3-5 years)**

- *Identify and promote courses that have an experiential learning component that focuses on sustainability.*
- *Ensure that all off-campus learning opportunities operate in the most sustainable way possible, including transportation, food and purchasing.*
- *Join and participate in the “National Wildlife Federation Campus Ecology Program.”*

#### **Long-term Goals (5-10 years)**

- *Create a sustainability center (equivalent to the Eigel Center) that promotes Xavier’s sustainability efforts both on campus and in the community.*

### 2. CHALLENGES AND FUNDING:

- The biggest challenges to achieving the short-term and medium-term goals are funding, and faculty/student participation and interest. But the goals are not very expensive relative to other goals in the Plan, in the order of thousands of dollars.
- The environmental fellows program will cost approximately \$6,000 annually for two students; the “Alternative Breaks” program should not have any additional cost. Encouraging departments and student organizations to develop new service and experiential-learning opportunities will be more successful with faculty-development opportunities. Depending on the level of opportunity, ranging from a semester sabbatical to summer research to Wheeler grants, the cost can be \$5,000 to \$50,000 or \$2,000-3,000/individual. A sustainability center would require funding minimally in the



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range of \$200,000-300,000, depending on the number of staff and the size of the space requirements.

### C. Campus Events

Extra-curricular campus events from dorm-wing discussions with a faculty member to big-name lectures sponsored by the Ethics/Religion and Society Program are an important part of Xavier's community life. These events can help promote sustainability and educate the entire community and the campus.

Xavier has been offering a variety of sustainability-related events for some time. Various clubs, through Peace & Justice programs, have sponsored speakers and educational sessions on issues of justice, hunger, and poverty. The "Vision of Hope" speakers' series has had a sustainability focus as well. The "Justice Across the Campus" committee, and its environmental subcommittee, sponsored a forum on green building several years ago. and The Student Activities Council has sponsored "Earth Day" in April for many years. In addition, the Ethics/Religion and Society lecture series, over the last two years, has had sustainability and ecology as its theme.

**Goal:** To offer and help promote events that educate about sustainability. Ideally, Xavier will become a hub of sustainable events linked in with Norwood, Evanston, North Avondale and Avondale, the Greater Cincinnati area, area universities and citizen organizations.

#### 1. ACTION PLAN:

##### Short-term Goals (1-2 years)

- *Develop and maintain the campus sustainability calendar on the website.*
- *Develop an annual community-wide sustainability event such as an "expo" or environmental film festival.*

##### Mid-term Goals (3-5 years)

- *Cintas Center has a greener operation that includes recycling for all events, washable dishware, choices of local and organic food for all catering, etc.*
- *Cintas arena and concessions become promoters of green operations, thanks, in part, to entrepreneurial students who work with them.*

##### Long-term Goals (5-10 years)

- *Become known for hosting local conferences that promote green practices but also networking of local scholars, business personnel, politicians, etc. rather than national conferences that promote long-distance air travel.*



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### 2. CHALLENGES AND FUNDING:

- Most of the above actions will require commitments of both personnel and resources.
- Website maintenance requires that someone dedicate part of their workday to this task. The annual community-wide event will require a Xavier co-sponsor and willingness to pay for technical needs and space for the event. Cintas Center changes will likely have few costs. To become a “green conference host,” someone in Cintas would need to be trained in elements of green conferencing in order to handle this responsibility.

