

# Lakehead University Sustainability Stewardship Council Terms of Reference

January 2023

## **Preamble**

Lakehead University aspires to make sustainability a shared priority in all sectors of university life. Pursuing this goal will require flexible and adaptive organizational structures that empower the self-organizing talents of creative individuals and groups. The purpose of this document is to put in motion a comprehensive participatory process that will continuously build, revise, and communicate Lakehead University's unique sustainability profile. Together we have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership around a broad range of sustainability-related issues, and to create an approach to sustainability that reflects the distinctive characteristics of our university community and our place in Northwestern Ontario and Simcoe County. In October 2019, Lakehead University approved a 5-year [Sustainability Plan](#) ).

Lakehead's comprehensive approach to sustainability reflects, in part, its participation in AASHE (the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) and its completion in 2014 of the STARS assessment. The Sustainability Stewardship Council was created in 2016 with broad representation and participation, and four Working Groups, which are organized around the four major STARS categories: Academics, Engagement, Planning and Administration, and Operations (see [Lakehead's 2014 STARS report](#) ).

Lakehead's [Organizational Plan for Sustainability](#) creates spaces where the diverse aims of sustainability can be discussed and debated over time as the University necessarily changes and evolves. As in any political process, dissent and disagreement, as well as negotiation and compromise, will necessarily be part of the ongoing collective work. The power to create a more sustainable Lakehead lies in our collective willingness to authentically engage with the issues and with each other, and in our commitment to translate our ongoing dialogue into meaningful actions.

The intent of these Terms of Reference is to describe the purpose and function of aspects of Lakehead's [Organizational Plan for Sustainability](#). These terms of reference, and the structures they describe, shall be revisited every three years by the Sustainability Stewardship Council, and amended as needed in consultation with the Executive Advisory Council.

Crafting a governance plan for sustainability raises issues of power, authority, and accountability. The purpose of these Terms of Reference is to empower a wide diversity of actors to contribute meaningfully to Lakehead's sustainability vision and goals by setting some of the terms of engagement. Where these terms are found to be disabling rather than enabling, they must be revised. Efforts to be inclusive and inviting of diverse perspectives will depend on fostering a non-hierarchical ethic of democratic dialogue and decision making. Practicing such an ethic is everyone's responsibility.

### **1. Title**

Sustainability Stewardship Council.

### **2. Definition**

**Sustainability is a diverse, global movement in society, economics, environment, and in higher education.** At Lakehead University, sustainability is considered in a pluralistic and inclusive way, encompassing human and ecological health, social justice and equity, Indigenous rights, secure livelihoods, workplace wellbeing, and leadership for

vibrant and resilient communities. It is a complex term, as its meaning can differ from place to place and from person to person. For more discussion, see the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education: <http://www.aashe.org/>.

### **3. Purpose**

**3.1.** The Lakehead University Sustainability Stewardship Council (LUSSC) provides a forum for students, faculty, administration, and community members to create Lakehead University's unique sustainability profile by examining key sustainability issues impacting all sectors of the University at its Thunder Bay and Orillia campuses. A key role is to help implement the Sustainability Plan (2019-2024) and develop future Plans every 5 years.

**3.2.** Key organizations that regularly report on their activities to the Council include The University Office of Sustainability, and the LUSU Sustainability Initiative. LUSSC Working Groups will also report to the Council.

The University Office of Sustainability focuses on integrating the interconnected sectors of sustainability as described in the STARS reporting tool and report. The Office of Sustainability promotes a culture of sustainability at Lakehead. This includes advancing strategic objectives, academic programming, operational programming, and events and communications related to sustainability. The Office of Sustainability considers a lens of social, environmental, and economic justice in all its decision making.

The LUSU Sustainability Initiative promotes and facilitates campus sustainability at Lakehead and by responding to student needs, concerns, and interests.

Working Groups within the LUSSC develop and implement action plans around key dimensions of campus sustainability and are organized around the four major STARS categories: Academics, Engagement, Planning and Administration, and Operations.

These organizations communicate with one another regularly and support and partner with one another where appropriate.

**3.3.** The Lakehead Office of Sustainability regularly reports to the Executive Advisory Committee, composed of the Provost, the Vice-President of Finance and Administration, the Vice-President of Research, Economic Development and Innovation, the Principal (Orillia Campus) and the Vice-President of External Relations, along with other members appointed by the Provost. The LUSU Sustainability Coordinator reports to LUSU.

**3.4.** The Sustainability Stewardship Council:

- examines the key issue of sustainability impacting all sectors of university life;
- works to articulate and refine University sustainability goals, plans, reports, and products;
- discusses and creates options for coordinated pan-university sustainability approaches;
- enhances understanding and synergy of different groups working on sustainability issues on campus;
- fulfils an ambassador role in promoting sustainability initiatives on campus;
- disseminates ideas and proposed directions to representative organizations and to leaders;
- as a group of people with expertise in sustainability may make its position on matters related to sustainability known externally as part of its responsibility to provide leadership and engage with the community, and

- reports to and is accountable to the Executive Advisory Committee, including action plans and requests for resources.

**3.5. Key Council outcomes include:**

- increased awareness and understanding of on-campus sustainability challenges and opportunities for Council members, students, faculty and staff;
- the development of sustainability policies and programs by faculties, departments, and the university; and
- an increased partnership among members of campus communities internally, as well as between campus communities and external organizations working on Lakehead and Lakehead-related sustainability initiatives.

**3.6. The Council meets as a committee of the whole and will create working groups, drawn from Council members and others, with specific and limited temporal and topical mandates.**

**4. Membership**

**4.1. The Council is made up of students, at least one faculty member from each Faculty, staff, administrative representatives, and community members.**

**4.2. The size of the Council can vary in size, typically around 25-4 participants. Membership shall include representatives from the following groups:**

Senior administration: employees whose overall duties are to manage and lead the University such as the President, Vice-Provosts, Vice-Presidents, Deans, and Directors.

Faculty: academic personnel such as professors, associate professors, assistant professors, adjunct professors, and contract lecturers.

Student: people who are studying at the University.

Staff: employees of the University other than faculty and senior administration.

Community members: people external to the University.

Below is a list of groups to be represented on LUSSC. Deans/Directors or other heads of a unit will appoint a representative for their respective unit. This may be the head of the unit themselves or another employee of the unit.

**Senior Administration and Staff**

- Lakehead Sustainability Office (1)
- LUSU Sustainability Initiative (1)
- Physical Plant (1)
- Academic Support Services (2)
- Libraries (1)
- Purchasing (1)
- Residence (1)
- Food and Conference Services (1)
- Human Resources (1)
- Indigenous Initiatives (1)
- External Relations (1)

- Alumnus (1)
- Other internal members at large (2)

#### Faculty Members

- Faculty members (1 from each Faculty, 2 where Faculties are present in both Thunder Bay and Orillia)

#### Students

- Students (6; ideally at least 2 graduate students, and representation from both Thunder Bay and Orillia)

#### Community Members

- Members at large from the community (3 Thunder Bay, 2 Orillia)

**4.3** Faculty members will be nominated through their respective faculties through an inclusive and transparent process initiated by Faculty Deans. All Faculty members should be made aware of the Council and opportunities to participate. Nominees will be approved by the Executive Advisory Committee. Faculty terms are for two years and are renewable. If a representative misses three meetings in a year, the Faculty will be asked to find a replacement representative.

**4.4** Student members will be selected by the Office of Sustainability and the LUSU Sustainability Initiative through a well-advertised application process. Student terms are for one year and are renewable.

**4.5** Staff members will be appointed by the Directors or other heads of their unit(s) according to their organizational roles and expertise. Staff terms are for two years and are renewable. If a representative misses three meetings in a year, the staff member will be asked to find a replacement representative.

**4.6** Community members will be nominated by the LUSSC and appointed by the Executive Advisory Committee. Community member terms are for two years and are renewable.

**4.7** Members of the Executive Advisory Committee may serve on the LUSSC in a non-voting capacity.

### **5.0 Roles and Responsibilities of Council, Working Groups, and Committee Members**

**5.1** The Sustainability Stewardship Council (LUSSC) Executive shall consist of one Chair or two Co-Chairs (at least one Chair to be a member of senior administration). The Executive may meet between meetings to advance agenda items from Council meetings.

**5.2** LUSSC Co-Chairs (one faculty or staff) will be nominated and voted on from within the LUSSC and approved by the Executive Advisory Committee. The senior administrator Co-Chair will be decided upon within the Executive Advisory Committee. In the absence of Co-Chairs, one Chair position may be assumed.

**5.3** Working Groups were originally struck around the four major categories of the STARS assessment: Academics, Engagement, Planning and Administration, and Operations. In practice, these groups shift to reflect the evolving needs of the LUSSC. At the time of this revision, there are three operating working groups: Academics, Climate

Action, and Operations. Items related to Planning and Administration have been addressed by the Executive Committee. These groups are formed by an open invitation initiated by the LUSSC at its first full meeting of the academic year. Working groups will be led by a Chair or Co-Chairs, one of whom must be a LUSSC member. Working Group Chairs are expected to be faculty or staff; students are not expected to volunteer. However, if a student demonstrates significant interest, they may serve as a Co-Chair with a faculty or staff member. Co-chairs will be decided upon within the working groups. The smallest working group should be four individuals. Each working group will be open to participation from the entire university community. One responsibility of LUSSC members is to generate wider campus participation through the working groups.

**5.4** The Office of Sustainability provides support for the Council and acts as a liaison between the Council and other sectors of the University.

**5.5** The Executive Advisory Committee provides institutional support for the Office of Sustainability, the Sustainability Stewardship Council, and Working Groups.

**5.6** Members of the LUSSC and the Working Groups act as ambassadors for sustainability initiatives to the entire campus community.

## **6.0 Operations**

**6.1** The LUSSC will meet once quarterly to assess progress on the Sustainability Plan (2019-2024) and, when needed, develop a new Plan.

**6.2** The LUSSC will assist in communicating and gathering support for sustainability plans and activities throughout the University.

**6.3** Working Groups will meet as needed to develop, refine, and implement action plans. Working Groups will report on their activities at each meeting of the LUSSC.

**6.4** Members will substantively contribute to the LUSSC and to Working Groups respectively.

**6.5** LUSSC meetings shall be conducted by one or both of the Co-Chairs. Procedural rules (e.g., modified consensus) developed by the LUSSC shall be used by the Co-Chairs to facilitate meetings.

**6.6** Any member may suggest items for discussion. Members should advise Co-Chairs and the Office of Sustainability two weeks in advance of the meeting to allow relevant papers to be circulated and to allow members adequate time for preparation.

**6.7** The LUSSC shall seek to operate by consensus without the need for formal votes. When a member requests a formal vote and when sufficient numbers of members are present to establish a quorum, a motion will be carried when supported by one half plus one of the members present.

**6.8** Members may designate an alternate in the event that they will be absent for a meeting.

**6.9** At regular meetings, a quorum shall be one half of the appointed representatives. In the absence of a quorum, a LUSSC meeting may continue but no formal votes may be taken.

## **7.0 Reporting**

**7.1** All LUSSC meetings shall be documented including attendance, agenda, decisions made, and handouts. The Executive Advisory Council will provide administrative support to the Co-Chairs for documenting and archiving minutes and LUSSC records.

**7.2** Working Groups will provide brief reports at each SSC meeting. Annually, each working group will propose an action plan to the LUSSC.

**7.3** The SSC will provide advice on the annual and public reports of the Office of Sustainability which will be submitted to the senior administration of the University for the Board of Governors.

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