

Auburn University has long held a prestigious position in the academic landscape, distinguished by its commitment to teaching, research, and community engagement. As the world grapples with urgent and unprecedented challenges, embracing sustainability as a strategic priority presents an exceptional opportunity for Auburn to elevate its stature further and create a positive impact on a global scale. By embracing sustainability as a core value and strategic imperative, Auburn can unlock an exceptional student experience, foster impactful research and scholarship, and spark a culture of innovation and excellence, creating a triple win for the university, the Auburn Family, and the place we all call home.

AN EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE ROOTED IN SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability transforms the student experience into an immersive journey of discovery and impact. It offers more than classroom teachings; it fosters hands-on engagement, community involvement, and transdisciplinary collaboration. Students delve into real-world challenges, participating in sustainability-focused projects, research, and internships both on and off campus that cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a profound sense of responsibility toward each other and the natural world. This engagement transcends traditional academic boundaries, helping to foster a sense of belonging by creating a supportive learning environment that values diverse perspectives, sparks passions for creating positive change, and develops leadership and collaboration skills. Whether tending to gardens, researching renewable energy, or developing policy solutions, students find purpose in contributing to a better world and graduate well-equipped with the knowledge, experience, and skills increasingly sought after by all sectors of society. Furthermore, sustainability efforts contribute to a healthier on-campus environment, positively impacting students' physical and mental well-being. In essence, sustainability acts as one catalyst for a holistic education, shaping ethical leaders, innovators, and global citizens who emerge from their Auburn experience equipped with knowledge and a deep understanding of and commitment to embracing their roles in creating a livable and just world.

IMPACTFUL RESEARCH & SCHOLARSHIP FUELED BY SUSTAINABILITY

Auburn's research and scholarship can reach new heights by embracing sustainability as a core focus. With its rich academic resources and diverse faculty expertise, Auburn improves lives worldwide by tackling critical global challenges like climate change, food insecurity, poverty, and human health and well-being, among others. Research on wicked problems like these necessitates a comprehensive approach, bringing together scientists, engineers, social scientists, humanities scholars, and stakeholders to collaborate on groundbreaking efforts that push the boundaries of traditional disciplines and shed light on the complex interconnectedness of our world. By translating research into tangible solutions, Auburn amplifies its impact beyond the academic sphere. Collaboration via outreach and Extension ensures research findings inform policy decisions, influence industry practices, and empower

communities to take action on critical sustainability issues. This real-world application of knowledge demonstrates Auburn's commitment to positive change and establishes the university as a leader in Alabama and beyond. Furthermore, prioritizing sustainability research attracts top talent and secures significant funding opportunities. This influx of talent and resources will allow Auburn to conduct cutting-edge research, build innovative research facilities, and attract renowned scholars, further solidifying our position as a global leader and establishing us as a hub of impactful and positive change.

A CULTURE OF INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE INSPIRED BY SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability serves as a catalyst, igniting a culture of innovation and excellence that fuels a dynamic ecosystem where creativity thrives, and groundbreaking ideas take root. It transcends disciplinary and institutional boundaries, encouraging collaboration that sparks new perspectives and inventive solutions to complex global challenges. Sustainability-driven initiatives inspire a mindset of continuous improvement, prompting students, faculty, and staff to explore novel approaches in research, education, and practice. This ethos of innovation can permeate campus life, and on-campus sustainability initiatives allow Auburn to serve as a living laboratory, showcasing a commitment to innovation and demonstrating leadership and responsible stewardship, thus setting a positive, inspiring example for other institutions and communities. Furthermore, embracing sustainability nurtures an environment that values experimentation, diversity, resilience, and forward-thinking strategies. It fosters a culture where we celebrate curiosity, failure is seen as a stepping stone to success, and a commitment to excellence drives every endeavor. Auburn can cultivate leaders and innovators through this dedication to sustainable innovation and set a benchmark for fostering a culture of excellence that positively shapes the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For 15+ years and through the vision, passion, and hard work of many in the Auburn Family, sustainability efforts on and off campus have generated positive outcomes and enhanced all aspects of Auburn's mission. To build on these efforts, remain competitive in the higher education landscape, and fully embody the university's mission, it is imperative that Auburn integrate sustainability into its vision. In this spirit and with a belief in and love for Auburn, we* propose the following actions.

- Embed sustainability as a prominent theme throughout the strategic plan.
- Establish official committees for sustainability and resilience in all governance bodies.
- Create a Vice President position to represent and connect all stakeholders contributing to sustainability and resilience, including academics, research, outreach, Extension, and operations.

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