

University of Pittsburgh
Ad Hoc Faculty Committee for Sustainability

Pitt Sustainability Institute Proposal

December 2023



Report on Proposed Pitt Sustainability Institute

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Executive Summary

OUTCOME AND SUMMARY: To advance the *Plan for Pitt* and University-wide Sustainability goals, we must build on our existing strengths to elevate a new **Pitt Sustainability Institute**. This Institute will constellate existing sustainability functions, create new value propositions for Pitt, and fundamentally align our University to tackle the biggest sustainability challenges we aspire to address.

➤➤ **ASK:** It is now time for Pitt leadership to identify sustainability as a fundamental value and support the creation and success of The Pitt Sustainability Institute through visible prioritization, organizational infrastructure, and an annual financial investment of \$4.5M.

➤➤ **PROCESS TO GET HERE:** In 2021, the Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation (MCSI) initiated a 2-year, Provost and SVCR-supported strategic planning process to evaluate the interest, need, and support for a university-wide Sustainability Institute. A robust and cross-cutting strategic planning effort was guided by a [Faculty Ad Hoc Committee for Sustainability](#) and with stakeholders engaged from all academic schools.

➤➤ **ACTIONS:** Create and fund the Pitt Sustainability Institute through leadership's visible prioritization, organizational infrastructure, and financial investment. This will occur in two parts:

Build Research Capacity within four core areas with environmental & climate justice at its core by:

- **Regenerative Solutions Respecting Planetary Boundaries:** Water Equity, Circular Economy & Sustainable Materials, Complex Sustainable Systems, and Just Energy Transition
- **Thriving Futures in the Face of Regional Change:** Climate & Health, Sustainable Healthcare, Urban Food, Community Resilience, and Equitable Built Environments
- **Resilient Ecological Systems:** Water, Ecosystems, Biodiversity, Ecological Justice, & Natural Resources
- **Reclaiming Environmental Discourse:** De/Growth, Preserving Our Past to Understand Our Future, Climate Anxiety, and Environmental Justice, Film Studies, & Media Disinformation

Strengthen Education and Engagement Core

Harness the momentum from the rapid growth in enrollment in sustainability education programs by:

- **Co-creating Educational Offerings:** Improving accessibility to our programs by co-creating sustainability course offerings across departments and schools in ways that align with and elevate each discipline.
- **Experiential Learning:** Creating interdisciplinary and experiential learning courses and degree programs that align with external partner needs in industry, government, and non-profit sectors.
- **Community Impact:** Enhancing our community impact by expanding the geographic reach of our partnerships at the local, regional, national, and international level.

OBJECTIVES FOR YEARS 1-5 [Performance Metrics]:

- Launch Pitt Sustainability Institute in FY25
- Increase Pitt-led transdisciplinary research to solve complex sustainability challenges [Research Revenue, Publications]
- Attract and retain high-caliber students and faculty through the development and expansion of course offerings and programs including creative on-line programs. [Course Development, Students Impacted]
- Create expanded mutually benefiting partnerships with industry, nonprofits, and government [Partnerships, Grants]
- Cultivate a strong and connected alumni network who are proud and actively engaged with their alma mater [Engagement, Impact]
- Elevate sustainability funding opportunities to attract and secure large-scale donor support [Engagement, Funding]
- Increase Pitt's brand recognition and positive perception [Media Attention, Awards and Honors]

Why Sustainability? Why Pitt? Why Now?

Over the past 20 years, Pitt's commitment to sustainability has resulted in numerous exemplary initiatives across our University. The next phase of our journey involves channeling this wealth of talent, passion, and vision into a unified constellation that further enables us to address society's most pressing sustainability challenges **together**.

Our benchmarking efforts have revealed a scarcity of universities effectively integrating their sustainability research, education, engagement, and operational missions. With Pitt's proven success in these areas, a unique opportunity exists for Pitt to distinguish itself among peer institutions -- and those it aspires to match. The envisioned Pitt Sustainability Institute holds the promise of elevating Pitt's genuine leadership in sustainability education, accelerating our research agenda, expediting our journey toward climate neutrality, and uniquely positioning our campus as a vibrant living laboratory.

What will make the proposed Sustainability Institute uniquely Pitt and advance our institutional goals?

1) Uniquely Pitt and Pittsburgh

- Pittsburgh's regional, national, and global brand includes innovative environmental and economic transformation – positioning us as leaders in critical areas, including environmental and climate justice.
- Given historical and persisting challenges surrounding environmental justice, it's crucial for Pittsburgh to showcase tangible progress in resolving regional issues and share these lessons globally to provide international benefits.

2) Building on Twenty Years & Strategic Partnerships

- Pitt has been invested in sustainability since 2003. We are already leveraging strong academic offerings and research capacity, witnessing notable growth in our programs.
- National higher education sustainability leaders have highlighted the future trajectory of sustainability, emphasizing the alignment of research, academics, and institutional operations. Pitt is among a select few higher education institutions already actively engaged in this integrated approach.

3) The Future is Interdisciplinary & Sustainability is a Driver

- In a complex world, disciplinary silos are dissolving; sustainability is an approach with demonstrable results connecting and breaking down those silos.
- Through our planning efforts, we've pinpointed research themes where interdisciplinary Pitt teams are poised to drive significant progress. The SI will foster, culture, and support sustainability research for basic, applied, and action-oriented research.

4) Financial Opportunity

- The surge in federal funding and investment directed toward sustainability and climate action is substantial. By strategically supporting faculty in actively pursuing these and other funding opportunities, we will increase our likelihood of success in accessing these new resources.
- A Sustainability Institute will attract new collaborations, forge partnerships, and help secure these opportunities.

Sustainability is a moral imperative and is embraced as a core value of the University. Given demonstrable student, faculty, staff, and alumni interest, sustainability should be considered basic infrastructure of any thriving university.

-Melissa Bilec, Gena Kovalcik, Aurora Sharrard, and David Sanchez

Motivation & Goals

We are witnessing a global sustainability crisis that has regional, national, and international implications. Pitt must step forward as a major player and help to be a part of the solutions, which are impacting everything from science, health, engineering, social science, law, and business/economics.

Recognizing this great challenge, leadership has already identified sustainability as a universal value at the University of Pittsburgh, yet organizational alignment and strategic investment are lagging. Building from an initial Phase 1 discovery led by the Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation (MCSI), the Provost appointed an [Ad Hoc Faculty Committee](#) for Sustainability in October 2022 and tasked it with developing recommendations for a University-wide Sustainability Institute.

The Ad Hoc Committee's charge was as follows:

- 1) Develop a shared vision, mission, and goals of the sustainability institute.
- 2) Develop measurable actions to elevate research, education, and engagement in sustainability.
- 3) Explore options and support for a faculty cluster hire in sustainability.
- 4) Explore governance options and develop phased budget models.

Process

We embarked on a phased strategic plan to define how the core value of Sustainability can be further woven and advanced at Pitt. We explored how to accelerate the positive impact of our research on key sustainability topics. We learned how to more closely connect various sustainability centers, initiatives, programs, and activities on campus. We also discovered how to strengthen the critical link between academics and research with our operations, student activities, and communities.

We engaged 8 Deans, dozens of sustainability leaders, nearly 50 faculty, 15 staff leaders, and over 100 students. Our internal and external conversations were complemented by internal research on similar efforts and an extensive external peer (and aspirational peer) research effort. In Phase 1, the **strategic framework** for Advancing Sustainability in Academics and research at Pitt (ASAP) was developed, which included alignment with Pitt's Sustainability Plan and Pitt's Climate Action Plan. The strategic framework developed in Phase 1 set forth a pathway for the Phase 2 work.

Starting in November 2022, the framework shown in

Figure 1 was used by the Ad Hoc Committee and culminated in this document, with a detailed Phase 2 process documented. This document summarizes the recommendations and path forward.



Figure 1. Advancing Sustainability in Academics & Research at Pitt (ASAP) Strategic Framework




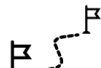
Strategic Priority Recommendations

To advance the Plan for Pitt and University-wide Sustainability goals, we must build on our existing strengths to elevate a new **Pitt Sustainability Institute**. This Institute will constellate existing sustainability functions, create new value propositions for Pitt, and fundamentally align our University to tackle the biggest sustainability challenges we claim to aspire to address. The ad-hoc committee has identified strategic priority recommendations, vision and mission, and 14 goals (denoted herein).

The proposed Pitt Sustainability Institute is founded on partnerships created across the university with multi-disciplinary Pitt community members. It will embody and implement Sustainability as one of the University's core values by building on the 2018 [Pitt Sustainability Plan](#)'s primary objectives of Exploration, Stewardship, Community, and Culture; and the 2022 [Pitt Climate Action Plan](#), including building clearer intersectionality between these themes.

A Sustainability Institute will carry forth the strategic priorities and goals adopted in university-wide plans. Previous Phase 1 planning efforts made strong connections to Pitt's strategic plan, and the Sustainability Institute will continue to connect to this strong foundation, along with future University-wide strategic planning efforts and their outcomes.

The Pitt Sustainability Institute's four key drivers and recommendations are:

	Recommendation 1	Recommendation 2	Recommendation 3	Recommendation 4
	 <p>CONSTELLATE Sustainability Efforts at Pitt</p>	 <p>ACCELERATE Sustainability- related Research</p>	 <p>WELCOME and CONNECT our community</p>	 <p>FOSTER enlightened sustainability journeys</p>
Description	Break down silos, share capacity, elevate existing nodes of activity, and provide places for collaboration and innovation.	Expand impact in priority research areas and their intersections; environmental and climate justice are a thread woven throughout.	Front door for sustainability at Pitt, welcoming external partners, establishing service opportunities, & advancing global impact.	Education and interfacing opportunities for faculty and students, including using campus as a living laboratory

VISION

The Pitt Sustainability Institute's vision is to co-create research, education, and engagement opportunities by shattering silos and fostering critical connections to solve the complex sustainability challenges facing our planet while co-creating more just, equitable, and sustainable communities at the University, within the region, and around the world.

MISSION

The Pitt Sustainability Institute is the collaborative, interdisciplinary hub of sustainability at the University of Pittsburgh, focused on making positive impacts that address our grand sustainability challenges. The Institute connects, strengthens, and complements existing, emerging, and exploratory sustainability nodes at Pitt.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Constellate Sustainability Efforts at Pitt

CONSTELLATION GOALS

- GOAL 8. Enhance staff resources to strengthen engagement, break down silos, and enhance internal networks and external partnerships through shared functions.
- GOAL 12. Build shared knowledge of existing efforts and increased organizational capacity

The Pitt Sustainability Institute is a collaborative hub of the University's sustainability efforts, charged with connecting and elevating sustainability efforts and nodes across Pitt.

Significant academic sustainability-related activity already exists in several centers across the University, including the following:

- Center for Global Climate Change (DAS)
- Center for Energy (SSOE)
- Center for Healthy Environments & Communities (GSPH)
- Center for Humanities (DAS)
- Center for Sustainable Business (BUS)
- Environmental Law Clinic (LAW)
- Ford Institute for Human Security (GSPIA)
- Johnson Institute for Responsible Leadership (GSPIA)
- Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation (SSOE/Provost/SVCR)
- Pittsburgh Collaboratory for Water Research, Education, & Outreach (DAS)
- Pymatuning Laboratory of Ecology (DAS)
- University Center for Social and Urban Research (University-wide)
- University's Community Engagement Centers (University-wide)

Pitt Sustainability Institute enhances staff resources to strengthen engagement, break down silos, enhance internal networks, and increase external partnerships through its shared functions.

The Institute connects existing research centers, academic programs, and University-wide operations with shared resources, amenities, and offerings, while creating additional shared staff capacity across centers and functions to better support and advance Pitt's Sustainability goals.

Priority focus areas for shared functions include:

- Communications and marketing
- Research grant management (pre- and post-award)
- External outreach and partnerships

The Sustainability Institute also builds shared knowledge of existing efforts and increases organizational capacity by providing informal and formal networking opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to engage with one another.

The Institute creates the time and space (physical and virtual) for idea incubation and sharing -- as well as for new programs through which the Pitt community will better understand the value of each other's work and how we can more effectively work together for greater positive impact.

The Institute will create opportunities for casual collisions of diverse and interdisciplinary Pitt minds, which are invaluable in meeting the vision of fostering critical connections to solve the complex challenges facing our planet while co-creating more just, equitable, and sustainable communities at the University, within the region, and around the world.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Accelerate Sustainability Research

ACCELERATION GOALS

- GOAL 2. Elevate and expand our research centers in key sustainability focus areas.
- GOAL 7. Grow core research areas through strategic and diverse faculty hiring.
- GOAL 10. Enable inter- and trans-disciplinary research teams.

The Sustainability Institute will help ensure that we strategically expand the positive impact of our sustainability-focused and -related research in areas most aligned with Pitt’s current and emerging areas of research. Connecting research efforts across Pitt’s academic schools and centers will help produce a larger impact on Pitt’s sustainability research constellation.



The Ad Hoc Committee and key sustainability researchers across Pitt were guided through a four-step process to advance the research themes (Figure 2). This process was based on a combination of who/what/why, SWOT analysis, and organizational structures used in the Plan for Pitt. Working groups, led by chairs, were intentionally multi-disciplinary (Figure 3); this work was conducted and completed over the summer of 2023.

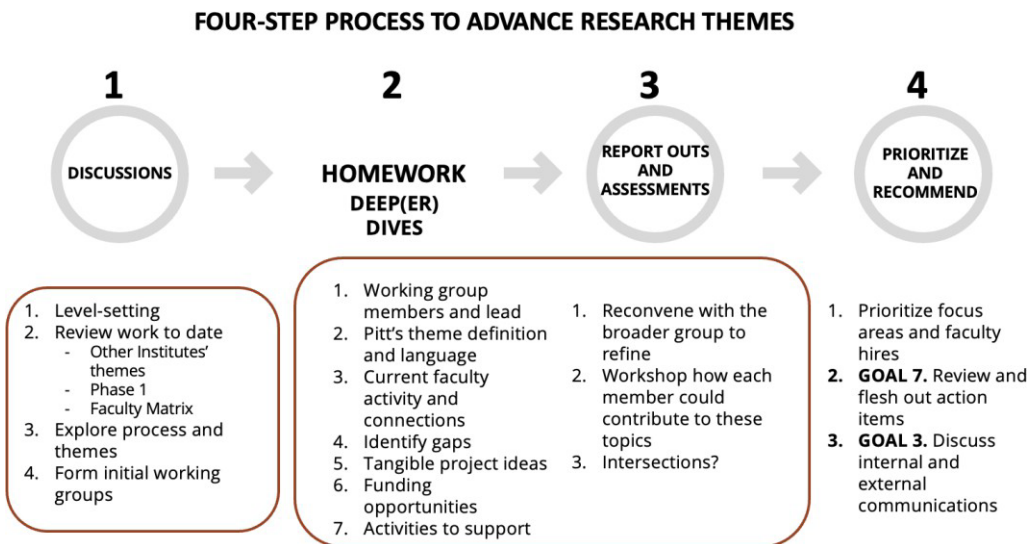


Figure 2. Working Example of Sustainability Research Themes Process

Four-Step Process to Advance Research Themes

Step 1. Discussions, include

1. Level-setting
2. Review work to date, including other institutes' themes, Phase 1, and faculty matrix
3. Explore process and themes
4. Form initial working groups

Step 2. Homework = Deep(er) Dives

1. Working group members and lead
2. Pitt's theme definition and language
3. Current faculty activity and connections
4. Identify gaps
5. Tangible project ideas
6. Funding opportunities
7. Activities to support

Step 3. Report-Outs and Assessments

1. Reconvene with the broader group to refine
2. Workshop how each member could contribute to these topics
3. Intersections?

Step 4. Prioritize and Recommend

1. Prioritize focus areas and faculty hires
2. Goal 7. Review and flesh out action items
3. Goal 3. Discuss internal and external communications

	Regenerative Solutions Respecting Planetary Boundaries		Thriving Futures in the Face of Regional Change		Resilient Ecological Systems		Environmental Discourse		Education & Engagement	
Chair	Goetz Vesper	Engineering	Tina Ndoh	Public Health	Patrick Shirey	Geology	Ruth Mostern	History	David Sanchez	Engineering
Members	Marcela Gonzales Rivas	GSPIA	Michael Glass	Sociology/Urban Studies	John Walsh	French & Italian	Tony Kerzmann	Engineering	Nicola Foote	Honors
	Daniel Mosse	SCI	Mary Ohmer	Social Work	Matt Kropf	UPB Engineering	Jeremy Weber	GSPIA	Cassie Quigley	Education
	Markus Chmielus	Engineering	Corey Flynn	Rehabilitation Sciences	Dan Bain	Geology	Drew Armstrong	Art & Architecture	Allyson Delnore	UCIS
	Shanti Gamper-Rabindran	GSPIA	Aaron Barchowsky	Public Health	Cori Zawacki	Biology	Frayda Cohen	Women's Studies	Jennifer Wasco	Nursing
	Carla Ng	Engineering	Carissa Slotterback	GSPIA	Justin Kitzes	Biology	Sara Moore	Film Studies		

Figure 3. Working Group Members and Chairs

Figure 4 outlines the Sustainability Institute’s four proposed themes. Environmental and climate justice will be a thread that weaves through and helps guide our research and education thrusts.

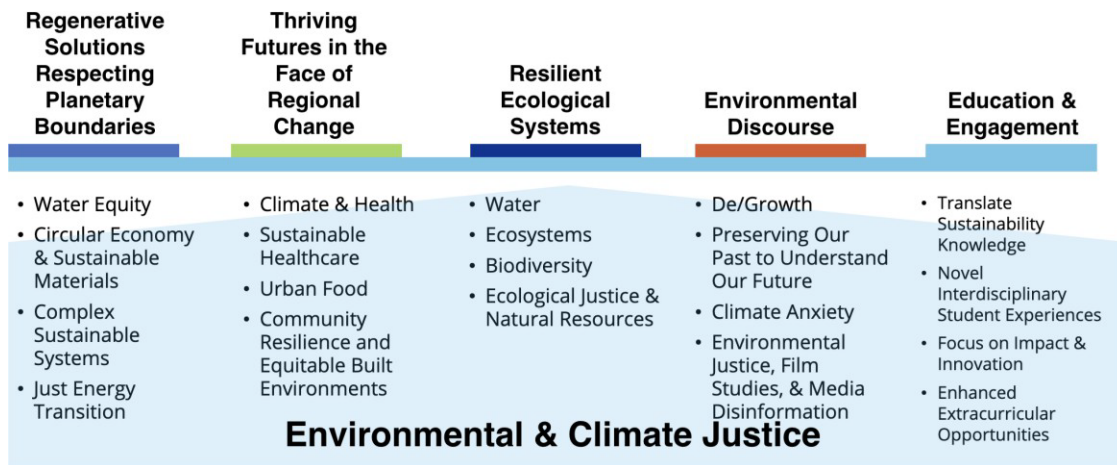


Figure 4. Pitt Sustainability Institute Thrust Areas

We envision a balanced Institute with focus on Research, Education & Engagement.

Regenerative Solution Respecting Planetary Boundaries

We recognize that our current models of consumption and production are unsustainable. We envision communities that thrive within planetary boundaries while developing and implementing solutions that provide equitable and just opportunities for all. This thrust is dedicated to exploring and promoting regenerative solutions that advance the quality of life within the natural limits of planet Earth with a specific focus on just energy transitions, water sustainability, and circular materials flows. Through collaboration, innovation, and community engagement, we seek to create a more equitable, sustainable, and regenerative world for current and future generations.

Thriving Futures in the Face of Regional Change

This research area seeks community engaged solutions that leverage the realities of regional change to build sustainable futures. Communities thrive when they define and enact their vision for the future; Pitt can partner with communities to tackle interconnected problems including food insecurity, health disparities, climate change, and economic shifts. Our success is measured by centering the needs and future aspirations of individual communities while creating trans-local partnerships to help the entire region thrive.

Resilient Ecological Systems

The Resilient Ecological Systems is an integrated, cross-cutting effort to coordinate student experience, connect people, and build understanding of socio-ecological systems through research and education.

Environmental Discourse

A research cluster focused on creative, critical, curatorial, communicative, and political dimensions of sustainability research and challenges. Our activities fall into five research sub-areas: (1) Worldviews and Ideologies, (2) Narrative, (3) Creative Expressions, (4) Power and Politics, (5) Persuasion. While these five research areas are interdependent, this sequence reflects the fact that Power, Politics, and Persuasion rely on unstated Worldviews, Ideologies, and Narratives.

Education & Engagement

The Education and Engagement group is a university-wide team focused on synthesizing Pitt's expertise and partnerships to translate sustainability knowledge to our students and add value to the world by engaging both our local and global communities.

Part of the Sustainability Institute's core motivation is to better support faculty leading in the identified research thrusts and incentivize strategic faculty hires.

- 1) To better support faculty leading in the Institute's research areas, the Institute will serve as both a matchmaker and network builder to develop stronger, more diverse collaborations that will empower SI faculty to successfully advance new research directions.
- 2) The Institute will work with its partner constellation entities to identify short-, medium-, and long-term funding opportunities, implementing actionable plans for targeted research funding/submissions.
- 3) Post-doctoral and research assistant resources will be provided to complement faculty growth.
- 4) To help grow and expand existing and new research foci the Institute will advocate for new faculty and help structure an effective sustainability-focused faculty cluster hire.
- 5) The Institute will facilitate a sustainability cluster hire and/or advocate for new faculty who will help grow and expand existing and new sustainability research foci.

The Pitt Sustainability Institute will continue to advance the University's national prominence and leadership reputation in sustainability via faculty hiring and retention.

The Sustainability Institute enables, convenes, and supports inter- and transdisciplinary research teams to encourage large, multidisciplinary institute-level grants.

It does so by establishing mechanisms for faculty and students to collaborate; providing pre- and post-award grant support; building an accessible and living database of researchers, faculty, and staff skillsets; and identifying and engaging willing external and internal partners able to advance our core research areas. This culture of innovation creates a structure that rewards interdisciplinary research and encourages innovation, entrepreneurship, and collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Welcome & Connect Our Community

WELCOMING & CONNECTING GOALS

- GOAL 9. Expand external, alumni, and community partnerships.
- GOAL 13. Expand global impact and programs.
- GOAL 14. Elevate Pitt's sustainability service mission to community.



There is a clear need for a single point of access to Pitt for all things related to sustainability (for both internal and external stakeholders). The Pitt Sustainability Institute provides a single portal for partners and collaborators for all academic, research, operational, and community connections to and through sustainability. Direct connection to the University's Office of Communications & Marketing is critical for seamless messaging at the University level, as is a connection to Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement, to help advance both Institute and University-wide funding and capital campaign needs and priorities.

Connecting our community includes expanding external, alumni, and community partnerships.

The Sustainability Institute enhances collaborations with businesses, local and state governments, nonprofit organizations, media, and other external partners while growing existing programs and creating new opportunities that provide faculty and students with real-world partnerships and collaborations.

We embrace a culture of impactful service through long-term investment in our communities.

Partnerships are critical to elevating Pitt's sustainability service mission to our communities. The Pitt Sustainability Institute embraces regional sustainability initiatives to be leaders and takes an active leadership role in sustainability initiatives at scales from local to global. The University will continue to demonstrate and partner in developing solutions to our grand challenges locally. We incentivize sustainability-focused community work internationally by providing copious partnership opportunities, including matching students and employees to opportunities for volunteerism, internships, service, and community engagement efforts that focus on sustainability.

While connecting to our local Pittsburgh communities, we are also expanding global impact and programs.

The Sustainability Institute engages with the world by exploring and addressing issues that improve global environments and quality of life, expanding our understanding of the relationship between local and global activities, and exploring expanded research and academic programs globally. The Sustainability Institute also aims to increase the number of sustainability-related international service projects.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Foster Knowledgeable & Innovative Sustainability Journeys

FOSTERING GOALS

- GOAL 4. Provide undergraduates with understanding of, insights into, and first-hand experience with our grand sustainability challenges.
- GOAL 5. Elevate our graduate student's research & educational offerings, especially for interdisciplinary.
- GOAL 6. Support faculty to increase sustainability in the curriculum.
- GOAL 11. More closely integrate academics, research, and operations via Campus as a Living Lab program.

The Pitt Sustainability Institute takes on the imperative function of supporting Pitt's students, faculty, and staff through their sustainability journeys.

The Sustainability Institute offers a variety of sustainability-focused and -related strategies to advance education, operations, and engagement. Key to this charge is supporting faculty to increase sustainability in the curriculum. The Institute creates faculty tools, workshops, and incentives that encourage the incorporation of sustainability into current and future syllabi and ensure courses are correctly identified as sustainability-focused / sustainability-related.

We prioritize the success of our students – undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate.

The Sustainability Institute provides undergraduate students with an understanding of, insights into, and first-hand experience with our grand sustainability challenges.

We do this by engaging and supporting passionate students to further Pitt's sustainability-related efforts; broadening and increasing awareness of sustainability-focused and -related academic, research, and extracurricular opportunities on- and off-campus; fostering experiential sustainability projects and experiences in alignment with and in support of other Pitt programs; seeding convergent sustainability teams to solve complex challenges; providing undergraduates with increased offerings and engagement with discovered sustainability pathways; elevating and celebrating undergraduate student achievements; and strategically supporting student groups and projects with mentorship and funding.

The Sustainability Institute must also elevate graduate students research and educational offerings, especially for interdisciplinary collaborations.

These efforts closely align with the Institute's other motivations. The Institute creates new graduate and executive programs, including creating more integration across academic schools. The Institute creates and fosters collective and shared experiences for graduate students via increased interactions with sustainability on-campus, including developing financial support for talented students passionate about sustainability in opportunities including cohort programs. The Institute will provide direct and indirect financial support with intentional focus on students from historically under-represented populations. The Institute also continues and expands its elevation and celebration of graduate student research, service, and achievements.

The University's physical environment and campuses directly impact our sustainability journey, with the closer integration of academics, research, and operations representing a massive opportunity. The Institute will foster an inclusive and diverse Campus as a Living Lab program in close connection with the University's operations team (led by and including the Office of Sustainability). This open-innovation ecosystem will better integrate learning, research, and development focused on sustainable solutions. The Pitt Sustainability Institute will create a



strong process, structure, and support network to implement new ideas and research outcomes over time, while generating visible enthusiasm and support for campus sustainability efforts.

Continued collaboration with Pitt's sustainability leadership constellation group noted above is imperative, as well as seeding and building stronger partnerships within Engagement & Community Affairs, Innovation and Entrepreneurship and Global Studies to name a few.

HIRING, GOVERNANCE, AND BUDGET

- Goal 1: Establish a process to define how the Institute is operated, governed, and funded.

FACULTY CLUSTER HIRE

The Ad Hoc Committee sub-groups identified in Figure 3 examined where Pitt currently has collective faculty expertise to further advance funding and reputation in each of the research thrust areas. The groups also discussed topical areas with noticeable gaps in faculty expertise where strategic hiring could gain Pitt strength and opportunity. As plans for an Institute develop, we urgently advocate for a faculty cluster hire across the University in strategic areas that will further our prominence and potential.

GOVERNANCE

To help make recommendations related to an Institute's governance structure, the SI steering planning team has engaged with both internal and external thought and practice leaders and designed several governance models to aid alignment with the Chancellor, Provost, and SVC for Research, as well as with the new policy and budget model under development for Pitt centers and institutes. Once the new directives become concrete in further discussions, we will align our final, formal recommendation on institute governance accordingly.

- 1) **Executive Leadership:** Because the Sustainability Institute has functions related to academics, research, and operations, we strongly urge the creation of an "Executive Leadership Steering Committee on Sustainability," a strategy employed by other universities. This body should be comprised of key Senior Leaders, including but not limited to the Chancellor, Provost, SVC for Research, SVC for the HS, SVC for Business and Operations, and SVC of Philanthropic and Alumni Engagement.
- 2) **Internal Governance:** Given the elevated Institute structure, an opportunity to reimagine the existing [Chancellor's Advisory Council on Sustainability](#) alongside formalizing and integrating the [Faculty Sustainability Task Force](#) present themselves as internal governance opportunities. These efforts would include new and renewed membership that balances faculty and staff while updating the Council's charter to best reflect the University's Sustainability vision and intentions.
- 3) **Sustainability Institute Team:** The Institute will include a passionate and experienced team of faculty and staff sustainability leaders with the shared values outlined above.
- 4) **Student Engagement:** The Institute would continue to expand Pitt Sustainability's alignment and collaboration with University-wide student sustainability functions, including, but not limited to, the Student Office of Sustainability (*established 2014 in Student Affairs by SGB*), the Pitt Green Fund Advisory Board (*established in 2010 by SGB*), and other student engagement functions -- while also expanding graduate student engagement and activities.

CONNECTIONS WITH THE OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY & CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL TEAM

As currently proposed, the Pitt Sustainability Institute is a hub to enhance, connect, accelerate, and (where appropriate) create sustainability efforts. While the Pitt Sustainability Institute could become the single incorporation of Sustainability for the University, its final governance and structure is heavily dependent upon the factors addressed in "Governance," above.

Established in 2018, the Office of Sustainability is a separate entity reporting to and primarily funded by the SVC for Business and Operations. Over the past five years, the Office of Sustainability has centralized campus-wide sustainability activities, strategies, and partnerships; it leads University-wide sustainability strategy, activities, policies, collaborations, & partnerships that builds on the *Plan for Pitt, 2018 Pitt Sustainability Plan, 2022 Pitt Climate Action Plan*, and other University-wide strategic plans.

The Office of Sustainability also ensures all of the University’s Sustainability progress and accomplishments are shared internally and externally, coordinating across all academic and operational divisions, as evidenced in the [2018-22 Progress Report on the Pitt Sustainability Plan](#).

The University’s Office of Sustainability and Executive Director of Sustainability have been strong partners and supporters of the Sustainability Institute development process (and this document).

Continuing University-wide Sustainability collaborations as part of a Sustainability Institute provides a unique opportunity to ensure the intersections between research, education, community, and operations are clearly, fully, and ideally realized. The Pitt Sustainability Institute creates an enhanced opportunity to continue University-wide Sustainability collaboration on hiring, internships, campus as a living lab projects, and other initiatives, collaborations, and programs.

PHASED BUDGET

The steering committee explored a phased budget over a 3-year period beginning in Fiscal Year 2025. The budget presents opportunities where a centralized Institute would provide value-added services to faculty, staff, and students across the University who are advancing research, education, and service goals related to sustainability. Through our listening sessions and meetings with Pitt faculty and leadership we determined that the need for centralized services is key including staff support for **communications and fundraising** as a first phase of support and then the build-out of the additional key services including **grant administration and project management**. In addition, based on the sustainability research themes we identified where a **faculty cluster hire** would help to build upon current strengths and put us further into a position to lead large federal proposals and gain national and international prominence in core areas Table 1.

Table 1. Proposed Budget Roll-Out

Institute Implementation - FY25	Institute Implementation - FY26	Institute Implementation - FY27
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing & Communications Liaison • Manager of Constituent Relations (philanthropy and engagement) • Director of Online Education Programs • Faculty Research and Education Leads • Institute Branding, Marketing, and Promotion • Budget to expand signature programs and support new initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants Administrator & Project Manager • Faculty Hiring, Phase 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Resources, Financial Support Staff • Living Lab Creation & implementation • Faculty Hiring, Phase II

The proposed budget roll-out parallels the proposed schedule, which includes advancing to Phase 3 through operational alignment, implementation, and investments (Figure 5). Please note that Goal 3 is a part of Phase 3 (Goal 3: Build new brand and improve communications around the center and the constellation of our efforts.)

In summary, it is now time for Pitt leadership to identify sustainability as a fundamental value and support the creation and success of The Pitt Sustainability Institute through visible prioritization, organizational infrastructure, and an annual financial investment of \$4.5M.

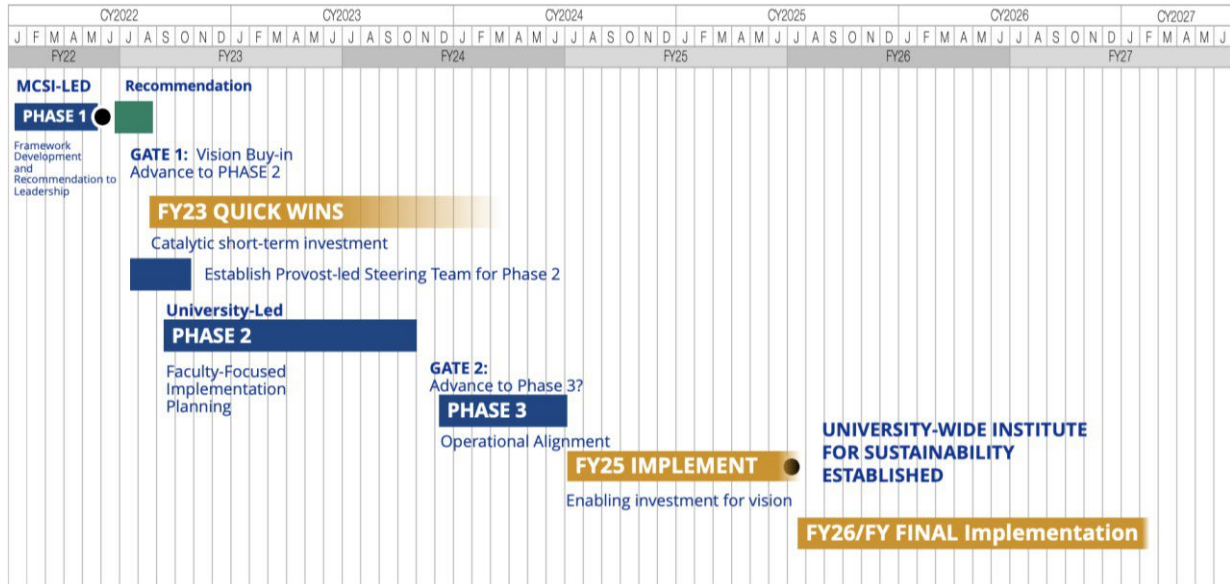


Figure 5. Sustainability Institute Schedule

What's Next

We are at the conclusion of Phase 2, and our recommendation is for the university to create and fund the Pitt Sustainability Institute through leadership's visible prioritization, organizational infrastructure, and financial investment. This will occur in two parts:

Build Research Capacity within four core areas with environmental & climate justice at its core.

- **Regenerative Solutions Respecting Planetary Boundaries:** Water Equity, Circular Economy & Sustainable Materials, Complex Sustainable Systems, and Just Energy Transition
- **Thriving Futures in the Face of Regional Change:** Climate & Health, Sustainable Healthcare, Urban Food, Community Resilience, and Equitable Built Environments
- **Resilient Ecological Systems:** Water, Ecosystems, Biodiversity, Ecological Justice, & Natural Resources
- **Reclaiming Environmental Discourse:** De/Growth, Preserving Our Past to Understand Our Future, Climate Anxiety, and Environmental Justice, Film Studies, & Media Disinformation

Strengthen Education and Engagement Core Harness the momentum from the rapid growth in enrollment in sustainability education programs by:

- **Co-creating Educational Offerings:** Improving accessibility to our programs by co-creating sustainability course offerings across departments and schools in ways that align with and elevate each discipline.
- **Experiential Learning:** Creating interdisciplinary and experiential learning courses and degree programs that align with external partner needs in industry, government, and non-profit sectors.
- **Community Impact:** Enhancing our community impact by expanding the geographic reach of our partnerships at the local, regional, national, and international level.

OBJECTIVES FOR YEARS 1-5 [Performance Metrics]:

- Launch Pitt Sustainability Institute in FY25
- Increase Pitt-led transdisciplinary research to solve complex sustainability challenges [Research Revenue, Publications]
- Attract and retain high-caliber students and faculty through the development and expansion of course offerings and programs including creative on-line programs. [Course Development, Students Impacted]
- Create expanded mutually benefiting partnerships with industry, nonprofits, and government [Partnerships, Grants]
- Cultivate a strong and connected alumni network who are proud and actively engaged with their alma mater [Engagement, Impact]
- Elevate sustainability funding opportunities to attract and secure large-scale donor support [Engagement, Funding]
- Increase Pitt's brand recognition and positive perception [Media Attention, Awards and Honors]