Engaging in Sustainability
Macquarie University Case Study

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY | SUSTAINABILITY

Description	Case Study Analysis
Task Type	In-Class or Tutorial Activity
Time	50 mins
Level	Intermediate, Advanced
Class Size	Minimum 20 students
Learning Outcomes	Students should be able to: ✱ Demonstrate an understanding of the complexity in trying to engage different stakeholders in changes towards sustainability ✱ Develop an argument and counterargument in two contexts
Method	Use this case study as an example of an organisational activity that raises sustainability issues. Prepare a general factual introduction and up to five statements of the viewpoints of stakeholders.
Concluding Activity	Link this back to learning about sustainability from the student activity. Issues to address might be: ✱ What do we mean by sustainability? ✱ How do stakeholders view sustainability differently?
Assessment	Assessment may occur on the basis of the argument/perspective put forward by individuals or as a group task.

Tips	- Keeping to time is the key to the success of this activity. - Understanding the importance of stakeholder involvement is also critical.
Student Instructions	You will work in groups of five. Everyone will be given some background material on the Project. Each group will then be given some material relating to five stakeholders with differing views about the Project. One group member will be assigned to each stakeholder. You should read the material for the stakeholder you've been assigned to but don't discuss it with the rest of your group. The groups will then be rearranged so that those with the same information become an expert group on each stakeholder's views. Each of these expert groups will consider the information given and decide how each member will present their views to 'non experts'. For example, if you're part of the Academic Group how could you best explain their position to other stakeholders? The original groups will then reconvene and will now contain an expert on each stakeholder's views. You will then consider and discuss the issues based on the background information you've been given, and the contributions of each expert who will argue the interests of their respective stakeholder. Your discussion should include, but need not be limited to the following: - What sustainability issues does the Project raise? - How would the stakeholder you are representing argue the sustainability case? - Based on your view of sustainability should the project proceed? - Assume the project is going ahead; what concessions or assurances would the stakeholder you represent seek in order to feel satisfied that the project was sustainable? You will have about 25 minutes to work on this – 10 minutes for each expert group, and then 15 minutes for the original groups. At the end of this time each original group must give a 5 minute group presentation which addresses the following two questions: - What sustainability issues are relevant to the Project? - Does your group believe this Project can proceed and be successful?
Additional Material	Attached below

Information Sheet

Macquarie University is a large organisation with approximately 35,000 students and 3,500 staff. It occupies 126 hectares of land in the North Ryde area, much of which is green space with pockets of natural bushland. Energy generation is derived from various sources including tri-generation, geothermal and traditional sources of supply (with 6% offset through Gold Power purchase).

Until mid 2007, the University had done little in any coordinated way to embed principles of sustainability into its everyday practices. However since 2008 and the initial appointment of one full time employee, the Macquarie Sustainability team has expanded to a team of nine, working hard to make many changes towards sustainability in the following areas:

- Resource Efficiency including water, waste and energy
- Emissions Reduction
- Transport
- Biodiversity
- Learning and Teaching
- Procurement including Fair Trade
- Refurbishments and new buildings
- Communication and engagement

While Macquarie Sustainability has been able to accomplish a great deal in the space of just 30 months, the biggest hurdle the Team face is engaging its staff and students in the process of change. Technological and process improvements assist in meeting some of the targets and objectives identified, but the real success comes when students and staff play a participatory role themselves. To this end, Macquarie Sustainability is considering forming and launching a Sustainability Representative Network to increase staff and student engagement.

In general, it could be said that Macquarie has a fairly unengaged community. There are many factors that contribute to this including workloads of staff, study- and work-loads of students, complexities of personal lives, and across campus communication difficulties. Universities are also traditionally known for their silo like nature – that is, little consideration is given to working with others outside of the department for a more systemic approach to achieving goals and objectives of the University. The proposed Network will endeavour to not only break down the silos and fill the communication gaps, but provide an avenue for engagement with sustainability goals and objectives at the grass root level.

The project raises three main issues. First, the question of whether this will be an appropriate vehicle to encourage engagement. Second, the question of what it is the Representatives will be expected to do. Lastly, the question of what supporting structures need to be in place to ensure the initiative is successful.

Perspective of Senior Executives

The structure of Macquarie University is similar to that of many large organisations with the Senior Executives collaboratively setting the direction for the University. The Senior Executive consists of:

* *Vice-Chancellor*: The VC has overall responsibility for the operation and direction of the University
* *Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost*: The Provost has overall responsibility for the planning, quality and delivery of education provided to Macquarie's students.
* *Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer*: The role includes overseeing the University's finances, information technology and infrastructure, archiving, campus development and student services.
* *Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research):* The role has overall responsibility for planning and quality of research undertaken.
* *Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Relations):* The role has a broad range of responsibilities including domestic and international marketing, international student recruitment and support, and the Office of Institutional Advancement.
* *Director, Human Resources:* The role has overall responsibility for the areas of payroll, recruitment, remuneration, occupational health and safety, equity and diversity, Indigenous employment and relations.
* *Executive Director, Campus Experience:* The role has responsibility for the creation of a student and staff centred approach to the planning, delivery and evaluation of all campus services including wellbeing, engagement, facilities and services.
* *Chief Financial Officer:* The role is responsible for all financial matters pertaining to the organisation.

As can be seen from the brief role descriptions, each Senior Executive is associated with different aspects of the University and therefore has different priorities. Sustainability fits within the Vice-Chancellor's portfolio. Not all Senior Executives believe they have a role to play in the change the University is making to become more sustainable, though each will agree it is something that needs to happen.

The Senior Executives are supported in their roles by many people, most prominently the Executive Deans and Department Directors. It is at this level and the many levels below that most of the work is done to achieve objectives and goals. It is usually difficult to be successful in any undertaking without the support of the Senior Executives and the next level Senior Managers. To date, support for sustainability initiatives has been good but distant. That is, whilst supporting sustainability as a notion, Senior Executives and Managers have had very little direct involvement with implementation of initiatives.

Each of the Senior Executives is time poor and very focused on their own goals and objectives. They will be keen to understand what impact the initiative has on them (time and cost wise), and anyone within their directorates.

Perspective of Academics

Academics, which fulfil teaching and research roles, constitute approximately half of the 3,500 staff employed at the University. Each academic is required to work within an academic workload, which is developed by the academic and their supervisor, as the model by which they perform their role. The workload is broken into percentages of time spent undertaking (for example):

* Teaching activities (e.g. 50%)
* Research activities (e.g. 30%)
* Administration and governance (e.g. 15%)
* Outreach (e.g. 5%)

Maximum workload allocations are set within a limit of 1575 working hours per year (45 weeks at 35 nominal hours per week) for full time staff.

Within their academic workload, each academic has a responsibility to show how they are contributing to the Macquarie@50 goals of being placed in the Top 8 research universities in Australia and the Top 200 internationally. Macquarie currently sits in 9th position nationally, and 248th position internationally. 2014 is the target date to reach the targets.

Recently academics have been placed under a considerable amount of stress with numerous large-scale changes occurring:

* Throughout 2007/8 a major restructure was undertaken to move the University from 47 Divisions and associated Departments to 4 Faculties and associated Departments. This restructure brought many challenges; not least of all were the redefining of roles and the integration of previously separated Departments.
* Towards the end of the restructure, a major curriculum review occurred which involved defining graduate capabilities; identifying and discarding underutilised units of study; and identifying existing and developing new People and Planet focused units for implementation in 2010.

By default, sustainability is now something that should be high on the learning and teaching agenda for academics, given that it is incorporated into the framework of the graduate capabilities and throughout the People and Planet themes. In actuality, few academics have the time to understand the concept and apply it to the units they teach, let alone undertake research in the field. Requests for support in developing tools and resources to embed sustainability into learning have come from the Learning and Teaching Centre – the Centre responsible for supporting academics in their roles as teachers. Other than this, only a few motivated academics have sought to include sustainability into curriculum, so discussions remain highly theoretical. Practical sustainability actions are usually not given due consideration as a general rule – support exists, but capacity to implement may be lacking. Many see sustainability as something 'extra' in their day, or at the extreme - a passing management fad.

Perspective of Professional Staff (non-academic)

Professional staff constitute approximately half of the 3,500 staff employed by the University. There are a number of areas of employment as a professional (or non-academic) staff member including:

- Facilities Management: Responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of buildings and facilities across campus and all operational aspects pertaining to water, waste, energy, cleaning and general refurbishments.
- Marketing: Responsible for internal and external communications and branding regarding what the University is doing. Provide the templates and guidance for university websites, documents, slide shows etc. Some responsibility for event management.
- ITS: Responsible for managing the campus wide IT infrastructure, as well as general IT support for several Departments
- Campus Experience: Provides the essential non-academic services and facilities such as food and retails, child care, well-being, sport and recreation facilities, clubs and societies, events and entertainment.
- Library: Manages all functions associated with the library.
- Major Projects: Responsible for managing the numerous large developments on campus
- Finance: Provides a wide range of financial and management services including purchasing functions, budget processes, financial reporting, debtors system and student loans
- Human Resources: Manages a number of support functions for staff such as payroll, recruitment, professional development, OH&S, employment and working conditions

Within each of these larger departments are numerous staff working in either managerial, specialist or administrative roles. It is not uncommon for professional staff to have workloads above and beyond their actual capacity, contributing to an inability to be involved in initiatives and activities outside of their role requirements.

Whilst some professional staff view sustainability as something 'extra' in their day, there is generally good support for sustainability, though few are well versed on what is happening on campus, let alone their role in making a successful change towards sustainability. Feedback from professional staff often revolves around making actions mandatory or compulsory through policy, senior management KPIs and action setting, which would filtrate down to all levels. If given the appropriate tools and structure, it is likely that many professional staff would endeavour to undertake actions towards sustainability. The issue is that they feel unsupported and confused about what to do at this stage.

Perspective of Students

Macquarie University has approximately 35,000 students enrolled in numerous degrees undertaken through four main Faculties – Human Sciences, Business and Economics, Arts and Science. Obviously, not all students come to the University to study sustainability related degrees, yet with the introduction of the People and Planet focused units in 2010, all students will take part in at least two sustainability related units of study.

There exists a number of ways for students to get involved with campus life outside of the degree they are studying. With 150 registered student groups on campus ranging from religion to politics to multiculturalism, this is a popular avenue for student engagement. Of the 150 groups, only 10 or 11 could be considered to embrace and stand for social and/or environmental sustainability. In fact, religious and political based groups constitute the majority. Aside from student groups, there are also opportunities for involvement in the Global Leadership program, the Macquarie Transition Program, the campus bushcare program, numerous sports and the student representative group MUSRA. Even with all these channels, the number of actively involved students is relatively small.

With the high cost of living and studying, many students now undertake some kind of part time or casual work, which often fills much of the time not devoted to studying. When on campus, the primary focus for most students is completing the necessary units of study in order to complete their degree and find appropriately paid full time employment. These factors have a combined impact on a student's desire to be involved in extra-curricular activities, despite the benefits that can be gained from experiencing how a large organisation such as Macquarie runs.

Communicating effectively with the entire student population is a difficult task. There is a dedicated student magazine – Grapeshot – in which some sustainability focused material and articles makes a regular appearance. There is also a weekly announcement issues from Marketing as a way of communicating with students, but getting content included in this email is often difficult if it doesn't meet specific criteria. The New and Current students website pages are another useful tool for communicating, but relies on students actively checking the website to be useful.

Most students nowadays have a reasonable understanding of what sustainability is about, and those who have a passion towards environmental and/or social issues will generally be active in some way. The issue is trying to incorporate the engaged students in a meaningful way, and at the same time communicate and persuade the majority that awareness and involvement in sustainability initiatives benefits students in numerous ways.

Perspective of Macquarie Sustainability

Macquarie Sustainability is a new department at the University, sitting within the Vice-Chancellor's portfolio. The team consists of: Director of Sustainability; Manager, Operational Sustainability; Sustainability Officer; Multimedia Administrator; Biodiversity Planner; Transport Officer; Sustainability Assistant. Each of the roles have specific responsibilities with the Manager, Operational Sustainability, Biodiversity Planner and Transport Officer working with Facilities Management on the operational side of things, and the rest of team concentrating on learning and teaching, procurement, Fair Trade, awareness and engagement. The Team is supported by the Sustainability Working Group, which consists of approximately 17 staff and students from across the campus.

The Team is really keen to increase the engagement, participation and communication between staff and students and the achievement of sustainability goals and objectives. To date, attempts to entice participation have only been mildly successful. One example is the formation of Action Groups representing each of the focus areas. The premise behind the Groups was to bring together key and interested people into discussion forums to draw on knowledge and expertise to assist in meeting goals and objectives, as well as provide an avenue for staff and students to feel involved. Initially there was enthusiasm from a few interested staff and students but over time, all but a few have disappeared. The Groups that remain – Learning and Teaching, Water, Biodiversity, Transport and Fair Trade – continue predominately due to the ongoing commitment of participants, and because solutions are still required, whereas other Groups – Energy and Waste for example – have little to meaningfully involve participants.

On the communication side, the Team currently utilises a number of media to raise awareness and educate the community. These include the online staff newsletter, face-to-face meetings within Departments, student group emails, regular catch ups with the MUSRA Environmental Officer, Town Hall meetings, a quarterly sustainability e-newsletter, the new and current student website and any other opportunities which present themselves throughout the year. Despite the regular communications, awareness and participation in initiatives remains low.

The Sustainability Team has an appreciation of concerns associated with a new initiative being implemented, such as the Sustainability Representative Network. An area of concern to the community is the idea that the role will require workloads to be expanded once more – staff and students are already time poor. There is also a perception that without effective support mechanisms and structures from senior management, the Representative initiative will not last. This is closely linked with Senior Management support.

As part of recognising the time that the Representatives are likely to expend in progressing the initiative, the Director feels it is necessary for some kind of formal acknowledgement of the role. If the proposed initiative does not go ahead, Macquarie Sustainability is in a position where an alternative solution to encourage participation and bridge communication gaps needs to be found.