Goals of 2022-23 Campus wide Strategic Planning

This is a defining moment in time for UC Santa Cruz. It has been 57 years since our founding in 1965 and we have matured into a preeminent student-centered research university, an HSI and AANAPISI, and member of the AAU. Over nearly six decades, we have continued to proudly embrace and amplify our founding values of social justice and environmental sustainability.

The last campuswide strategic plan, Envision, was launched nine years ago in October 2013 around six goals: advance and support student success, allocate faculty resources strategically, support research excellence, make UC Santa Cruz a place where people enjoy working, address workload issues, and tell the world our story. In 2017-18 the campus began work on a Strategic Academic Plan (SAP) with a focus on interdisciplinary research and faculty hiring and reducing recognized barriers to collaborative and interdisciplinary activities.

The strategic planning we will undertake this year will build on these prior strategic planning efforts, but will be broader than the SAP and more similar to Envision in addressing opportunities for improvement and transformation impacting a wide cross section of campus constituents and experiences. The strategic plan will chart a path for progress on our campus goals over the next decade and establish metrics by which success will be measured. The plan will be opportunity-focused, identifying new and emergent future dimensions of research, education and service to advance our global and regional impact, improve the experiences of our students, staff and faculty and strengthen the university in our efforts to lead at the intersection of innovation and social justice.

Charge - Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee

Addressing climate change urgently requires multidisciplinary research-driven collaboration and collective action. Because climate change disproportionately impacts poor and other historically marginalized communities, and in line with our campus founding values, climate justice must be foundational to all discussions about UCSC’s climate response portfolio. The committee will create opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to discuss how the campus should approach climate change, sustainability, and resilience through our teaching, research, and campus operations over the next decade. Venues for discussion might include town hall meetings and open forums, both in-person and online, as well as focus groups and surveys. The cross-cutting themes of equity, social justice, and academic excellence should be central to every aspect of the committee’s work and meaningfully integrated into all committee outputs.

The impetus for this committee arose from a proposal by Academic Senate Leadership to establish a joint Senate-Administration task force to address climate change and its impacts. Building on this shared vision, the areas addressed by the Climate Change, Sustainability, and Resilience Committee will lay the foundation for the future work of a Joint Academic Senate/Administration climate task force when this strategic planning process sunsets.
The work of the committee will also build upon UCSC’s long-term commitment to sustainability, and our current sustainability plan, which defines and underscores the need for “inclusive sustainability”. The committee’s efforts and final report will provide a foundation for the development of our next standalone campus sustainability plan.

In parallel with the work of the Committee on Climate Change, Inclusive Sustainability and Resilience, the newly established Decarbonization and Electrification Task Force has launched a RFQ (Request for Qualifications from consulting firms) for a study that would complete a full energy and load assessment of the Main Residential Campus, Westside Research Park, and Coastal Science Campus and include an analysis of options to improve or replace the cogeneration plant and the remaining natural gas systems, including the financial costs and feasibility. Though the work of the Decarbonization and Electrification Task Force is operationally focused and that of the Climate Change, Sustainability and Resilience Committee is broader and more strategic, the work of both groups is synergistic and collaboration between the two groups will be enhanced by participation of some members in both committees.

The committee is asked to address the following areas but may choose to consider additional topics based on community input:

- Identify ways that UCSC can create and sustain a campus climate and culture that reduces environmental impacts while centering inclusive sustainability, advancing climate justice, empowering students, and engaging local communities/partners, including indigenous communities.

- Propose undergraduate and graduate student learning opportunities, including curricular and extracurricular pathways (e.g. general education, experiential learning opportunities in natural and built environments, capstone projects, certificate programs, minors or majors) by which all students would have an opportunity to learn about climate change science and policy, climate justice, resilience and inclusive sustainability.

- Identify emerging or new collaborative interdisciplinary research areas related to climate change, climate justice, resilience and/or inclusive sustainability, to prioritize for campus resources. Provide a rationale for how these priority areas would advance UCSC’s mission and research leadership position.

- Recommend high level strategies to evaluate and reduce the environmental impacts of meeting the university’s mission on our campus and local community. This includes strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., transportation, energy usage, renewable energy, and electrification infrastructure), increase sustainable food and procurement, reduce resource consumption and waste, and responsibly steward water, natural and cultivated lands, and more.

- Recommend strategies to improve climate resilience on campus, including strategies related to: fire safety, drought, climate anxiety, economic losses, climate justice, data-driven assessment, and other issues that may emerge from the stakeholder engagement process.
The outcome of the committee’s efforts will be goals, metrics and a narrative for each area addressed summarized in a report that incorporates campus feedback on climate change, sustainability, and resilience. The final version of the report will be integrated with the work of the other committees to form the campus strategic plan.

With the completion of the strategic planning process, the chancellor and CP/EVC will formally launch the Joint Academic Senate/Administration task force on Climate Change, Sustainability and Resilience. The mandate of the joint task force will be to work towards the implementation of the strategic plan recommendations on climate change, sustainability and resilience and monitor progress towards achieving the goals outlined in the plan. The joint task force will also provide recommendations to the chancellor and CP/EVC on the implementation of the recommendations of the Decarbonization and Electrification task force report.