



Markkula Center

for Applied Ethics

at Santa Clara University

**Organizational Culture and its Role in
Fostering Policy Development A Focus on
Sustainability Policy at SCU**

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After reviewing this case and assignments, participants should be able to:

1. Identify successful actions by administrators to drive progress towards strategic change.
2. Identify potential shortcomings in strategic planning/change management methodologies.
3. Reflect on the overall effectiveness of strategic plans and associated procedures.
4. Identify the importance of sustainability policy implementation in academia.
5. Explain the ethical responsibility of academic institutions to engage with social change and global issues.

Application

- This case is most appropriate for courses related to leadership, sustainability, management, organizational strategy, and business ethics.

Key Words

- Organizational Culture, Sustainability, Policy, Change Management, Organizational Strategy, Leadership.

Suggested Uses

- This case can be used to focus on one or more topics: sustainability policy, institutional leadership, organizational ethics, change management, organizational strategy and/or business ethics.

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Direction/Focus

The purpose of this case is to outline effective methodologies of leadership, ethics, and change management within an organization, for the purpose of motivating and engaging stakeholders to empathize with and carry out a shared directive. In this case, the topic of sustainability and the role of academia in pushing sustainability efforts will serve as a mechanism for exploring these topics, with a focus on their development and effectiveness at SCU. This case is designed to be used by students and faculty to examine SCU's approach to organizational leadership as well as people outside of SCU for the purpose of examining key components of organizational leadership and composition that lead to the successful integration of new strategies throughout an organization.

The term 'sustainability' throughout this case refers to the act of improving operations and processes for the purpose of reducing human impact on the local and global environment.

Introduction

Santa Clara University, founded in 1851 as the first institution of higher education in California, communicates its dedication to developing and preparing each generation of students for the responsibilities of the future. SCU's homepage states the following:

Located in the heart of Silicon Valley, Santa Clara University blends high-tech innovation with a social consciousness grounded in the Jesuit educational tradition. We are committed to leaving the world a better place. We pursue new technology, encourage

creativity, engage with our communities, and share an entrepreneurial mindset. Our goal is to help shape the next generation of leaders and global thinkers.¹

SCU's grounding as a Jesuit institution in Silicon Valley has influenced its development via immense technological innovation paired with ties to historical educational practices. It provides the opportunity to merge history with the developments of today, to cultivate students for the tasks of tomorrow.

One critical example of this is the development of sustainability related policies and actions at SCU, informed by Jesuit ideology regarding environmental sustainability paired with a global need to reduce carbon impacts and address the climate crisis. A university such as SCU sits at a critical juncture; as an institution catering to a global student body located in a hub of innovation, while operating with the backing of the Jesuits.

In light of this context, SCU has seen a flurry of developments in recent years regarding sustainability policy and efforts on campus. The origins of these efforts have come from both an institutional level as well as 'grass-roots' approach by faculty. Both of these efforts are designed with unique scopes and constraints, yet each designated towards the same general objective.

Although there are many characters involved with sustainability and climate related efforts on campus, two of the most dynamic and relevant people are Lindsey Kalkbrenner, the Director of SCU's Center for Sustainability (CFS), and Kristin Kusanovich, the founder and leader of tUrn Week, a independent campus organization.

¹"About Santa Clara University." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Lindsey Kalkbrenner was hired in 2006 as the first sustainability coordinator at SCU and has overseen the development and growth of the CFS, multiple sustainability strategies, achievement of climate neutrality in 2020, multiple STARS Gold sustainability rankings, and many other notable steps towards university-wide sustainability measures. Lindsey operates under the oversight of the President’s Cabinet and Board of Directors. As such her role, and by extension the CFS, is influenced and constrained by the upper levels of management in the organizational structure of SCU. The CFS operates as a designated department that focuses on the development of sustainability strategy on campus, and the integration of these strategies with existing operations to achieve targeted outcomes. The CFS relies on funding from the university to support its staff members, which includes student-staff, and its continued operations, which involve various sustainability-focused projects across campus. In terms of the driving forces at SCU and the cultural influences that have driven executive attention to sustainability, such as the release of *Laudato Si’*, Lindsey states:

“The Pope's saying it, that's huge. We're a Catholic institution, we can't ignore it. We have to act and we will look bad if we don't act and others are. We say we're a sustainable institution so we gotta be, right? And that's upping the game. But two, you know, since I started, we've had movies by Al Gore and Leonardo DiCaprio and there are large celebrities and it's more coming into the mainstream of conversation, climate change, and then we're all living the reality of fire season. We didn't have that ten years ago, you know? And then you're seeing all these food insecurity issues with our students and employees and there's this undeniability. Then you have organizations like tUrn who are

holding us, the university, accountable and having these conversations twice a year on campus... It's this combination of stuff that's been working in our favor.”

Kristin Kusanovich has been a Senior Lecturer at SCU for 20+ years, in the College of Arts and Sciences, teaching in both the Departments of Theatre and Dance and Child Studies. During her time at SCU, Kristin identified a lack of programming related to the climate crisis and the idea of a more gradual-sounding phenomenon of ‘climate change’. Inspired by the 2018 UNIPPC report and millions of youth protesting all over the world, she was concerned that a general wariness to teach about the climate crisis stood in the way of SCU’s mission to best prepare students for the future. In light of this, Kristin independently crafted what is now the largest, regular campus conference event known as tUrn Climate Action or tUrn Climate Crisis Awareness and Action, a bi-annual week-long event that provides a platform for in-depth discussion of the climate crisis and related justice issues. Kristin founded tUrn Week in 2019, seeking to fill a void in dialogue related to discussion of the climate crisis on campus:

“Climate education was not a focus at SCU that I could find. As a faculty liaison for over a decade, I never had the offer to learn about climate issues in my role as a faculty sustainability liaison, which is an informal role when faculty want to help their department be sustainable. The definition of sustainability at SCU had been understood to focus on campus climate footprint, waste, etc. The discourse about the climate crisis itself seemed to be minimal, over the first two decades 2000-2019 (Before tUrn Week).”

This effort, still run by Kristin and student staff, was developed with a small grant from the Center for Arts & Humanities that helped her develop the concept. Today many departments contribute to supporting students who work with tUrn and its guests, but it is still a volunteer-driven, grassroots affair, without any form of budget or structure originating from SCU leadership. tUrn week is technically one faculty member's scholarship and service project; it just happens to have an international reach. tUrn is widely recognized as a genuine effort by a motivated individual to raise critical awareness of the climate crisis, climate and environmental justice, decoloniality efforts, indigenous sovereignty, BIPOC climate leaders, and to uncover corporate practices like greenwashing, and debunk climate disinformation. tUrn is motivated by the common good, and receives no significant organizational sponsorship.

Academia in Society

The importance of academic institutions in shaping the societal narrative is increasingly showcased by constant media exposure and continuous requests for social commentary. The extent has been highlighted recently by dominating headlines related to academic institutions' reactions and responses towards global events, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict² or the Russia-Ukraine war.

Academic institutions have a universal responsibility to ensure and maintain a consistent organizational culture and ethical foundation, for the sake of societal progression and development of our collective consciousness. According to Makus Vogt and Christoph Weber:

²Betts, Anna. "A Timeline of How the Israel-Hamas War Has Roiled College Campuses." *The New York Times*, 12 December 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/12/us/campus-unrest-israel-gaza-antisemitism.html>. Accessed 29 January 2024.

Universities face heterogeneous role expectations: Education of a growing number of students with a simultaneous integration of all learners; producers of innovative knowledge for the economy; a place of critical thinking. The multitude of expectations creates considerable pressure. Autonomy helps to mobilize productivity and efficiency potentials. Often, however, this is a sham autonomy, since it merely addresses the resource constraints with a range of management instruments, which usually follow a business rationality model. The increase in university autonomy through liberation from state and political influence often leads to appropriation by other subsystems (e.g., by industry as a third-party donor).³

Academic institutions, occupying a highly visible position in society while simultaneously tasked with this range of responsibilities, exist in a state of constant push and pull between various outside influences. Although it may be preferred for an academic institution to operate with complete autonomy, often the economic and societal constraints for the establishment and maintenance of an institution eliminate this possibility. Considering these external pressures, an organization must rely on its mission and system of organizational ethics to balance competing needs and expectations.

Sustainability in Academia

As the climate crisis rapidly develops, placing humanity into the next mass extinction level period⁴, public institutions play a vital role in shaping our societal understanding, values,

³Vogt, Markus. "The Role of Universities in a Sustainable Society. Why Value-Free Research is Neither Possible nor Desirable." *MDPI*, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/7/2811>. Accessed 29 January 2024.

⁴"Are We in the Midst of the Sixth Mass Extinction?" National Center for Biotechnology Information, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK214887/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

and commitments toward issues that affect us all. Academic institutions in particular have a unique ethical and moral obligation to serve as the bedrock for the education that will guide future world leaders, and also serve as an assumedly credible source of collective information.

Since 2021, over 1,000 universities from 68 countries have made pledges to achieve carbon neutrality by or before 2050⁵. Thousands of other universities, utilizing their highly visible and influential position to yield societal change, have developed sustainability policies or made net zero commitments since this survey was originally collected.⁶

Although widespread commitments to sustainability development have been achieved and continue to develop globally, these accomplishments are no easy task. Academic boards face increasing scrutiny from external stakeholders, particularly when dealing with highly complex issues such as sustainability.

The concept of environmental sustainability remains a highly politicized concept, which for academic institutions seeking to balance student interests/current developments with the perspectives of existing stakeholders and funding lines, has the potential to create gridlock on progress. An effective sustainability policy engages the entire community, including professors, students, faculty, etc, and weaves these values throughout every operation and activity on campus. For organizational culture design, it is essential to begin cultivation via the integration of key ideals in the mission and vision of the organization. Academic institutions' high degree of visibility presents great opportunities and challenges, offering universities the ability to showcase

⁵ "Over 1,000 universities and colleges make net-zero pledges as new nature initiative is unveiled." *UN Environment Programme*, 28 October 2021, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/over-1000-universities-and-colleges-make-net-zero-pledges-nature>. Accessed 29 January 2024.

⁶"Rethinking higher education." *Nature*, www.nature.com/articles/s41599-017-0001-8. Accessed 13 May 2024.

great development and influence change, while also being subject to intense scrutiny and public challenge. Thus, executives in academia have a highly important and challenging role as they help direct public thought and change under the world's close watch.

University Ethos

The SCU Mission, Vision, and Values represent a succinct foundation of the university's central objectives and organizational culture. These three components have remained consistent among the last several SCU Presidents and have played a crucial role in the development of each University Strategic Plan over the last few decades. At SCU, it is common to find remnants of these statements within course syllabi and engrained into various communications to students and faculty. The majority of students and faculty can either recognize or verbalize some or all of the university's mission, indicating its clear impact and relevance amongst its constituents. If stakeholders are readily familiar with their organization's mission statement, it is an indicator of its relevance and accuracy in defining and guiding an organization's culture.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement

“The University pursues its vision by creating an academic community that educates the whole person within the Jesuit, Catholic tradition, making student learning our central focus, continuously improving our curriculum and co-curriculum, strengthening our scholarship and

creative work, and serving the communities of which we are a part in Silicon Valley and around the world.”⁷

Vision Statement

“Santa Clara University will educate citizens and leaders of competence, conscience, and compassion and cultivate knowledge and faith to build a more humane, just, and sustainable world.”⁸

Values

“The University is committed to these core values, which guide us in carrying out our mission and realizing our vision:”⁹

- Academic Excellence
- Search for Truth, Goodness, and Beauty
- Engaged Learning
- Commitment to Students
- Service to Others
- Community and Diversity
- Jesuit Distinctiveness

University Operating Background

As a private and Jesuit institution, SCU has both the privilege and the confines of a relatively predetermined mission and scope of work. SCU has more financial independence and spending options than public organizations, enabling SCU to pursue and develop specific

⁷"Mission, Vision, and Values." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/mission-vision-values/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

⁸"Mission, Vision, and Values." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/mission-vision-values/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

⁹"Mission, Vision, and Values." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/mission-vision-values/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

programs and opportunities on campus. However, as a private institution, SCU is more reliant on endowments and external donors, which can inadvertently guide decision-making procedures on campus. As a Jesuit institution, SCU is committed to embodying the Jesuit traditional education process, defined at SCU as, “educating the whole person—mind, body, and soul—and preparing students to create a more just, humane, and sustainable world.”¹⁰

Jesuit Implications to the Organizational Mission

Since its inception in 1851, SCU has maintained the Jesuit identity that many of its students prioritize when electing to attend. The educational theory and influence of the Jesuits originates from hundreds of years of global experience, all of which have been, and continue to be, directed by the Jesuit Headquarters based in Rome, Italy.

SCU’s history of integration and consistency of its Mission, Vision, and Values across campus programs has helped to cultivate an organizational culture that builds upon and circles back to its foundation. Vice President of Mission and Ministry at SCU, Alison Benders, argues that SCU’s strong mission is the critical factor of its success:

“I am convinced that it is the university's mission and vision that drive everything here. You hear it from alumni, you hear it from faculty and staff, you hear it from students, all of us are charged with it...It's because the mission and vision are living in the culture of the university. That makes a difference here, and lots of other universities have a mission, or they use buzzwords, but what makes them as clear as possible is that there's a consensus that we lead with mission, that the conversations are always framing the

¹⁰"Jesuit Catholic Tradition." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/jesuit-catholic-tradition/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

mission, and in the best way. I think this university is an incredible example. There's resistance sometimes to the mission, especially about fearfulness that if we live into the mission, we're expecting people to be Catholic. As the mission officer, my response is always that it is because the university has Catholic and Jesuit values and identity that gives the mission its power... We're not asking people to be Jesuit or Catholic, we're asking them to join the mission. That has been successful and really compelling. So I think it's the investment that the university community has made for decades and decades to really claim that people matter, that justice matters, the environment matters, and we matter. Our values guide us, and that is economically valuable, in terms of enrollment, or getting funding, or getting points of distinction. We're different from other private institutions in the Bay Area or state schools in the Bay Area, because of that, and so it's a point of distinction that makes our work better, and makes us thrive.”

Consistency and authenticity are two critical factors in the development and continuation of a successful organizational culture. Through its Jesuit roots SCU has integrated and enforced values that continue to drive forward SCU’s administrations, programs, and approach toward the future.

Organizational Structure of SCU

SCU’s executive leadership team consists of the Board of Trustees, a Chancellor, and the President's Cabinet, which includes the dean of each distinct school. This leadership team is tasked with the high-level operations of SCU, including long-term strategy, organizational change, mission scope, and general day-to-day functionality. Below the executive leadership sits

an assortment of directors of various operations and subject-specific department heads. The third layer of SCU's organizational structure is composed of faculty and staff.

The Board of Trustees consists of between 35 and 55 members, together which “holds full legal power and responsibility for the operation of the University, consistent with its [Bylaws](#).”¹¹ The aforementioned bylaws determine the scope of operations for the Board of Trustees including term limits (except for the President, the Rector of the Jesuit Community, and the Chair of the Board of Regents, who serve by virtue of their offices¹²), standards of care, planning structure, committee formation, key roles, and stipulations regarding voting, conflicts of interest, and amendments.¹³

Beyond the Board of Trustees exists the Board of Regents, which consists of “a group of volunteers who provide special advice and support to the University’s President and Board of Trustees.”¹⁴ The Board of Regents exists as a secondary advisor to the Board of Trustees and President's Cabinet regarding certain policy and operational issues. The Board of Regents typically meets as a board to consult on key topics, in addition to as individuals serving on various committees and boards across campus.

A Board of Fellows provides additional support to the Board of Trustees. It is a group dedicated toward fundraising efforts at SCU, in addition to the individual deans and directors across campus.

¹¹"Board of Trustees." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/leadership/board-of-trustees/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

¹²"Board of Trustees." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/leadership/board-of-trustees/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

¹³"Board of Trustees." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/leadership/board-of-trustees/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

¹⁴"Board of Regents." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/leadership/board-of-regents/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Distinct from the main grouping of Executives at SCU, the university uses a shared governance model to formulate policy on campus. This approach is common among universities. Santa Clara refers to their shared governance model as Collaborative Governance.

Culture of Leadership

There are many theories of how best to manage people, ranging from transactional exchanges, power dynamics, and micromanagement, including that of the distributed leadership model. It is a version of leadership that defies the reliance on top-down leadership and instead emphasizes multi-level teamwork and individual autonomy. This model re-distributes the power and associated responsibility of upper-level management among each constituent, placing an expectation and opportunity for high-level performance in line with the broader objectives of the organization, on the individual or group.

For a smaller organization such as SCU, it is remarkable for top-down and bottom-up leadership to both occur, let alone flourish, given its size. The organizational culture at SCU can be interpreted as a mix of top-down leadership paired with a distributed leadership model, both of which engage in very interesting ways. The established top-down leadership of SCU clearly sets the strategic priorities and directions of the university, guiding the institution in accordance with its Jesuit values. Yet simultaneously, these same Jesuit values call upon SCU constituents to act as leaders on an individual level and encourage bottom-up leadership initiatives, such as the development of tUrn week.

Jesuit Leadership Emphasis

Jesuits place great emphasis on the ability of all individuals to serve as leaders and encourage students to identify opportunities by which they problem-solve as leaders. SCU's landing page states, "Our goal is to help shape the next generation of leaders and global thinkers."¹⁵

President Julie Sullivan, in her inaugural interview with the Santa Clara Newspaper, reflected on SCU's desire to develop students for future leadership:

"...As an educational institution, we have a role to play to help our students have a different venue here, but also to be leaders of creating different venues outside of this institution as well. So I feel really strongly about that, and I think our students could be real leaders, and I think it very much is in sync with our Jesuit Catholic mission."¹⁶

Campus Leaders

Both Kristin Kusanvich and Lindsey Kalkbrenner serve as great examples of the culture of leadership present at SCU. Kristin built tUrn Week from the ground up, with no request from upper-level management, direct support, or requirements to do so. Kristin simply identified a problem in line with her personal ethical framework and took it upon herself to become a leader in the space, a clear example of bottom-up leadership. Lindsey, although hired directly into her role as SCU's first sustainability coordinator, took it upon herself to go beyond her role, leading the establishment of the Center for Sustainability on campus, crafting multiple strategic plans

¹⁵"About Santa Clara University." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/aboutscu/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

¹⁶"Inaugural Conversations with Julie Sullivan." The Santa Clara, www.thesantaclara.org/blog/inaugural-conversations-with-julie-sullivan. Accessed 13 May 2024.

towards sustainability efforts on campus, and earning multiple awards for SCU's efforts in the process, representing more traditional, top-down leadership in the process.

Kristin Kusanovich: Director of tUrn Week

Since its founding in 2019, tUrn Week, led by Kristin and a cycle of student staff, has evolved into the largest recurring conference on campus, receiving international recognition and partnerships. It serves as a prominent example of bottom-up leadership at SCU, in which Kristin decided to act on an issue she identified to be in line with her personal ethical framework, and took steps without direction from senior leadership to address this topic. Kristin states:

“It is not the job of the Board or Cabinet to micromanage people’s service or scholarship projects. In fact, there is a great deal of creative freedom here. I do not feel any limits have been put on the creative and intellectual enterprises and critical projects like tUrn. Yes, leaders could be showing the importance of supporting the Center for Sustainability or tUrn, verbally, visually, vocally, through media, etc. They could come out as a climate crisis-centric board but they have not. But they have not been asked to take a real stance on this either. It would be interesting to ask them.”

Kristin acknowledges that the culture of SCU provides an environment that has allowed her to develop her vision, yet also claims that there has not been explicit support from leadership on this particular subject, despite their endorsement of the latest Sustainability Strategic Plan (Which is detailed in a later section of the case). In fact, as of April 2024, SCU has not officially acknowledged a climate emergency, despite the fact that all University of California Schools, many Jesuit Universities, and the Mayor of San Jose have done so. Kristin states:

“This is the first time in history that a board or cabinet is presiding over an institution graduating people into a world where every hottest-ever summer you just had will be cooler than the next year. Temperatures are rising so fast, and ecological systems are breaking down so fast, that it is potentially going to be impossible for almost all species to comfortably inhabit the world within decades unless drastic measures are taken by all educational institutions in every city and country. Leaders, I believe, should lead from this knowledge. I am not sure all school leaders have the knowledge or are not in climate denial, or have the courage to lead from this place of real grounded understanding of a dire picture. Leaders like positive images. So they fail to lead from what is by necessity, a dire picture. tUrn has learned to do this precarious leadership dance. We have no choice but to succeed in this. School leaders often act as if it’s an option to care about the climate crisis. It is not an option to not care.”

Lindsey Kalkbrenner: Director of the Center for Sustainability

Lindsey Kalkbrenner, who has spearheaded the latest Sustainability Strategic Plan at SCU, and has directed the Center for Sustainability since its inception, comments on the evolution of sustainability focus at the executive level of SCU:

“I did not meet with the president when I first started in 2006. Now I will be updating her (Julie Sullivan) quarterly with regards to the Laudato Si' implementation. I think the university has become a lot more transparent with its decision-making and shared governance. I've been involved in two of the strategic planning processes, because when I started, there was already a strategic plan in place where sustainability was kind of

mentioned. There were some thought papers that were done around sustainability, but it wasn't yet core to the strategic plan. In our most recent strategic plan before this, sustainability was in one of the major priority areas, outlined in general terms, and then this time, it's the deepest integration we've had of sustainability in the strategic plan in the history of my knowledge. I think that was brought about in a couple of different ways. You have an administration that recognizes that sustainability is a core value in our mission, building a more humane, just, and sustainable world is in our mission statement, and you have a vice president of Mission and Ministry who believes that and communicates that. You have a president who believes that. So that's the number one difference.”

University-Wide Strategic Plan: Impact 2030

Every four to five years, the SCU leadership team develops a new strategic plan that will chart the path for the following five years of development and activities at SCU. Often this is fueled by a change in University President; there have been four Presidents¹⁷ since 2009, the newest and current President being Julie Sullivan.¹⁸ Sullivan began her role on July 1, 2022, serving as SCU's 30th President, she is the first female President of SCU as well as the first layperson¹⁹ to hold the office.

¹⁷"Past Presidents." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/president/about/past-presidents/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

¹⁸"Office of the President." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/president/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

¹⁹ A non ordained member of a church.

Planning Procedure

In her first year in office, President Sullivan began cultivating a new strategic plan known as [Impact 2030](#).²⁰ Impact 2030 is designed around four central ‘[Strategic Priorities](#)’ which span all organizations at SCU, with the goal to:

“expand our impact globally, encompass vast curricular ambitions in areas like health care and ethical AI, commit to providing access to a world-class Santa Clara education for anyone accepted to our University—regardless of financial circumstance—and build upon the power of our committed and passionate Bronco community to develop and sustain belonging and lifelong connections for the diverse classes of our future.”²¹

Sustainability Integration + Foundational Commitments

These Strategic Priorities do not include mention of environmental sustainability efforts on campus except for within Strategic Priority #2, which depicts fundraising for faculty scholars, “whose research helps fashion a more humane, just, and sustainable world,”²² in line with SCU’s Vision Statement.

Beyond the four strategic priorities exists the “Foundational Commitments”, serving as a verbal renewal of existing university commitments. The Foundational Commitments include the

²⁰"Impact 2030 Unveiling" YouTube, uploaded by Santa Clara University, www.youtube.com/watch?v=cg3rHPFc83U. Accessed 13 May 2024.

²¹"Strategic Plan." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/strategicplan/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

²²"Strategic Priorities: Solutions for Our Future." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/strategicplan/priorities/solutions/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

most sustainability-specific distinction across the broader Strategic Plan, found in Goal 4²³ of the commitment list.

Goal 4 revolves solely around operational progress, specifically the continuation of a carbon reduction goal (without using the phrase carbon-neutrality) and sustainable campus operations practices. It is important to note that this strategic plan was designed at the same time as the latest sustainability strategic plan, coordinated by the CFS and discussed in the next section. This might account for such a brief mention of sustainability in the strategic plan, given the university's commitment to creating a more sustainable world, as there is no mention of the CFS as a point of distinction or partner throughout this plan. The strategic plan concludes,

“Finally, as a Jesuit and Catholic university, our approach to people and operations includes promoting sustainable ways of working for the betterment of our environment. The Princeton Review has recognized our University as among the top 30 universities in the nation for our sustainable practices. Our foundational commitments focus on continuing progress as a national leader in sustainability.”²⁴

The foundational commitments, as detailed above, serve as the primary references to SCU's environmental sustainability commitment, within Impact 2030.

²³ **“Goal 4:** Position Santa Clara toward becoming a climate-positive university.

Initiatives include: Reduce the University's carbon footprint, Employ sustainable operational practices in procurement, waste management, water use, and landscaping”

²⁴“Foundational Commitments.” Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/strategicplan/foundational-commitments/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Sustainability Strategic Plan: Sustainable SCU: Leading Through Laudato Si'

The latest sustainability-specific strategy of SCU was released on March 14, 2024, titled Sustainable SCU: Leading Through Laudato Si', shortly after the latest University Strategic Plan: Impact 2030 and was designed to build upon and integrate with the commitments and specifications discussed in Impact 2030. Alison Benders, on her role with both Impact 2030 and Sustainable SCU stated the following:

“I gave a presentation to the PAC committee early on about our mission, and how we live our mission and identity and what it calls us to do - how that could provide a framing for the pillars and the goals that emerged, and if you see Impact 2030, if you read it, every goal is tied to our mission. That is what we all envisioned, the President was certainly a leader on that, it was her vision to connect those [Impact 2030 & Sustainable SCU].”

Laudato Si' and Jesuit Integration

A very important aspect of this latest sustainability plan, referred to from here on out as ‘Sustainable SCU’, is the partnership between both the CFS and the Division of Mission and Ministry (DMM). The partnership may have appeared surprising to many unfamiliar with the sustainability interest behind DMM on campus.

The DMM is rooted in the Jesuit Catholic Tradition and Ignatian Theology, and engages regularly with the Jesuit Headquarters in Rome, via a process known as the Mission Priority Examen²⁵, which involves an 18-month reflection and strategy alignment of organizational

²⁵"The Examen." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/mission-and-ministry/examen/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

culture as related to Jesuit values. SCU begins its second examen in the fall of 2024, and the DMM is eager to best integrate current Jesuit topics of urgency into SCU campus.

Developments amongst the Jesuits carry significant influence for an organization such as SCU, guiding campus organizations and university value structures. On May 24, 2015, Pope Francis released his second encyclical²⁶, titled Laudato si'. This encyclical served as the first established motion in the global Catholic Church towards addressing environmental sustainability and climate change. Within Laudato si', Pope Francis states: "The idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology ... is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry at every limit."²⁷ Laudato si' has inspired a global movement, particularly in the Catholic Church and amongst Jesuit institutions to reevaluate their environmental impacts and sustainability procedures. SCU is one of these institutions and frequently references Laudato Si' as a primary motivating factor driving campus sustainability developments and integration across the curriculum.

Upon its original announcement of the newest sustainability planning process, the Center for Sustainability posted the following:

The Center for Sustainability and Division of Mission and Ministry are embarking on a year-long strategic planning process to develop a Sustainability Action Plan that takes us through 2030, inspired by the Pope's encyclical Laudato Si'.²⁸

²⁶ A papal letter sent to all bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.

²⁷"Pope's Encyclical: Top 10 Quotes." CNN, 18 June 2015, www.cnn.com/2015/06/18/world/pope-encyclical-quotes/index.html. Accessed 13 May 2024.

²⁸"Our Common Home Initiative." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

This partnership between the CFS and DMM represents a critical aspect of Sustainable SCU: a continuation of the authenticity and consistency presented in the mission of SCU, drawing on its Jesuit origins and values to cultivate its plan for future developments on campus.

Planning Procedure

The CFS and DMM announced their partnership in October 2022 and engaged various stakeholders in an extensive planning process between October 2022 and December of 2023. The objectives of this planning process are described as follows:

“The intended outcome of our year-long planning process was to develop a sustainability action plan that takes us through 2030, rooted in Laudato Si’. Creating a 2030 sustainability action plan using Laudato Si’ as a lens will build upon SCU’s existing sustainability leadership and strengths while enabling our University to amplify our work and connect to the worldwide Laudato Si’ Journey. This planning process will also support and inform the University’s strategic planning process.”²⁹

This statement references the connection between the planning process of Sustainable SCU and the planning of the concurrent Impact 2030 Strategic Plan.

A major emphasis of this planning process³⁰ was the incorporation of the voices of students, staff, faculty, executives, and the general public:

²⁹"Our Common Home Initiative." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

³⁰ The CFS website provides a thorough mapping of the planning procedure and participation of stakeholder found [here](#). A timeline of developments can be found [here](#), with links to various press releases and related materials. An interactive visualization of the feedback received by the CFS roadshows can be found [here](#).

“In Fall 2022, the Center for Sustainability staff conducted 36 roadshow presentations that included input from more than 450 unique participants (including 30% of participants with no prior engagement with the Center for Sustainability). These initial ideas for the strategic action plan were plentiful and grouped into themes for easier dissemination. Five Working Groups (composed of nearly 60 faculty, staff, students, alumni, administrators, and donors) in the 2022-2023 school year took those roadshow results and other research into consideration as they drafted the initial goals, strategies, and sub-strategies for the plan in the five focus areas.”³¹

During the summer of 2023, the Center for Sustainability staff met with various subject-matter experts and consultants to develop estimates of costs, and create preliminary implementation plans, and objective completion timelines. The strategic goals and related programming was announced during tUrn week in the fall quarter of 2023.

“During the October 2023 tUrn week, the first community-wide update officially announced the strategic action plan goals and launched SCU’s Sustainability Playbooks³² program.”³³

As noted previously, Sustainable SCU was officially released in March of 2024, in coordination with the release of Impact 2030.

³¹"Strategic Action Plan for Our Common Home." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/strategic-action-plan/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

³² Sustainable SCU also introduced Sustainability Playbooks to encourage participation in sustainability related goals among students, faculty, staff, and alumni. The program aims to encourage individuals to collect various badges as recognition of their commitments to engage in sustainable behaviors and align with the goals outlined in Sustainable SCU.

³³"Strategic Action Plan for Our Common Home." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/strategic-action-plan/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Strategic Priorities

The first page of the Sustainable SCU document introduces the five key areas of the plan, as well as its expected opportunity:

“There are five key areas in this plan – academics, campus engagement, community engagement, energy, and resource use. It is our hope that by integrating efforts that focus on both justice and sustainability, our earth – and its people – will begin to heal and build a resilient future. SCU has been at the forefront of sustainability leadership for many years, and this new plan offers a chance to deepen our commitments, programs, and engagement to model for the next generations of diverse students how they, too, can become leaders in environmental justice, thanks to their time at SCU.”³⁴

Again, a key aspect of this communication is the theme of leadership and instilling these qualities in various stakeholders on campus.

The five goals of Sustainable SCU are outlined as follows:³⁵

Academics:

SCU will be recognized for scholarship, research, and thought leadership around integral ecology, and equip all of our graduates to contribute to building a sustainable world through their academic experiences.

³⁴"Strategic Action Plan for Our Common Home." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/strategic-action-plan/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

³⁵ "Goals." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/strategic-action-plan/goals/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

Campus Engagement:

SCU will engage all students and employees in cultivating a culture of just sustainability by building a community who leads with a care ethic and applies an intersectional approach to care for our common home.

Community Engagement:

SCU will use its platform in our local community, in the field of higher education, and in the global Jesuit network to scale climate resilience and regenerative practices through partnerships building environmental justice and an equitable economy.

Energy:

SCU will position itself to be a climate positive university, accelerating the reduction of carbon pollution by driving down energy use through conservation and efficiency, decarbonizing our purchased energy and investments, and improving sustainable transportation options for our students and employees.

Resources:

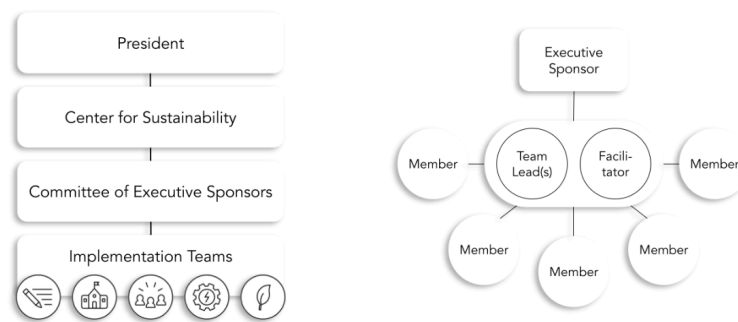
SCU will model sustainable operational practices by minimizing harmful impacts on humans and the environment through ecologically managed grounds, sustainable procurement, waste minimization and recovery, and decreased water use.

The above goals are designed to be broken up into five distinct implementation teams, each with unique resources and team members. With regards to Sustainable SCU, the CFS takes responsibility for the following:

The Center coordinates process management, facilitates both the Implementation Team and Executive Sponsor meetings, manages data collection, and fosters transparency via

reports, presentations, storytelling, and other opportunities for campus and community engagement. Since this plan leads the University's strategic sustainability work through 2030, it's critical that flexibility and adaptability are embedded within our implementation roadmap – including sharing successes, updates, and pivots.³⁶

The CFS will oversee the various processes associated with the achievements of the five goals of Sustainable SCU, via the associated implementation teams that have each developed unique roadmaps for how they plan to achieve their objectives. The image below highlights the organizational structure of Sustainable SCU and the action teams responsible for each objective's achievement.



Structure of implementation process (left) and structure of individual Implementation Teams (right).³⁷

The leaders and members of each implementation team are detailed [here](#), in addition to the Committee of Executive Sponsors.

Another key focus of Sustainable SCU is providing transparency surrounding progress on the stated goals. This will take the form of progress presentations during both the Fall and Spring

³⁶"Implementation." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/strategic-action-plan/implementation/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

³⁷"Implementation." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/strategic-action-plan/implementation/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

tUrn Weeks, as well as through an interactive tracking visualizer, to be posted to the CFS website in late April 2024.³⁸

Integration

A unique opportunity of this sustainability plan was the coordination with the broader development of Impact 2030. As outlined below, Sustainable SCU was designed with the intention to be directly connected with the objectives identified in Impact 2030:

Leading Through Laudato Si' goal	Relates to the following areas in SCU: Impact 2030
Academics	Priority 1: Reach on a Global Scale, Goal 2 Priority 2: Solutions for the Universal Good, Goals 1, 2, and 4
Campus Engagement	Priority 1: Reach on a Global Scale, Goal 2 Priority 4: Belonging for All Broncos
Community Engagement	Priority 1: Reach on a Global Scale, Goal 2 Priority 2: Solutions for the Universal Good, Goals 1, 2, and 4 Priority 3: Opportunities for All Talented Students Priority 4: Belonging for All Broncos
Energy	Foundational Commitment Goal 4: Position Santa Clara toward becoming a climate-positive university
Resources	Foundational Commitment Goal 4: Position Santa Clara toward becoming a climate-positive university

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The coordinated release of Sustainable SCU following Impact 2030, highlights the relationship between campus organizations and the communication structure established between the two planning committees. In the introduction to Sustainable SCU, President Julie Sullivan states,

³⁸"LTLS Strategy and Sub-Strategy Progress." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/ltls-strategy-and-sub-strategy-progress/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

³⁹"Our Common Home: Strategic Action Plan." Santa Clara University, www.scu.edu/ourcommonhome/strategic-action-plan/. Accessed 13 May 2024.

“Significantly, the sustainability goals described here have been incorporated into SCU: Impact 2030, Santa Clara University’s Strategic Plan, a roadmap for divisions and departments across Santa Clara University.”⁴⁰ This indicates that there was a two-way element of design between the two plans and that Sustainable SCU not only builds upon the objectives outlined by the university strategic plan but also helps to inform a degree of the creation of the same objectives.

Ultimately both Impact 2030 and Sustainable SCU reveal strong integration with both the SCU mission as well as the Jesuit ideology that has informed SCU’s development. The result is a sense of authenticity and consistency in the motivations behind these plans and a network of individual leadership and communication that has facilitated their development. However, the efficacy of these plans remains to be seen.

Outcomes

A major factor of SCU’s culture development in 2024 is the coordinated release of both Impact 2023 and Sustainable SCU, and the interdependence between the two strategic plans. With regards to pushing the narrative of sustainability and climate-related issues on campus, Lindsey Kalkbrenner reflects:

“Of course, I think we could do better as far as integrating sustainability into our major planning documents, but I think this is a huge achievement compared to anything the university has ever done before, and I'm really excited to see where this takes us. We've got these great documents and we've got attention and we've got folks working on this, more people than we've ever had working on sustainability. But I'm just almost awake at

⁴⁰ [Leading Through Laudato Si' strategic action plan \(one page view\).pdf](#)

night thinking like, okay, now the pressure's on. We got to actually do this. And so that's why we created the expectation that we're going to have twice-yearly progress reports. So the implementation teams need to have something to say to the public and to the executive sponsors every quarter, about how we're progressing. The strategic planning process is just getting underway. They need to figure out how to cost out all the goals, to look at the metrics. It's still gonna take a year or more to start implementing. In the meantime, we've already started and so the pressure is on because I've worked with implementation teams before and committees in the past that fizzle out because people get bored or get pulled to other new things. So what we have in our favor are the vice presidents attached to this, who are expecting updates. We have facilitators from our center who are organizing the change management so that there are going to be facilitated meetings with deliverables and timelines. We actually have things we need to accomplish, and then we have this, you know, strategic plan to point at to make sure that we have the momentum to work.”

Lindsey continues, explaining the impact of the coordination between Impact 2030 and Sustainable SCU, which both call for increased sustainability efforts at SCU:

“We have a vice president as the executive sponsor for each of their major areas in the Leading Through Laudato Si’ plan. That's just huge because now you have a VP who is responsible financially, and also overall governance-wise, is trying to see us be successful in these processes. Where in the past, it fell on the CFS to do. If we wanted to help the university reduce energy use, we had to advocate to facilities, and then they had to advocate for the funds, which were competing with other priorities. At a normal

institution, you get a lot of that. Now that we have champions from within facilities, for example, because they're on these committees, and were part of the process in developing the goals, and developing the strategies. Then their VP has said, this is important, we need to figure out how to make this work. That doesn't mean we're gonna have every single thing that we want funded. That doesn't mean we're gonna be prioritized over other really important things, but we're at least at a good starting point and a level playing field, rather than tugging on the back of somebody's coattail saying, please remember us; it's very different. That part of it was manufactured culture. Part of it was how we were at the right time and right place.”

Following the release of Sustainable SCU, Kristin Kusonovich stated the following:

“The goals are a strength of this plan that the academic, campus engagement, energy, and resources, are promising areas of this plan. The fact they have done so much to build relationships and reach laterally through different units on campus to build this report is very impressive. The strategies that they delineated, everyone having a sustainability learning requirement, implies that the core needs to shift, I think is a strength. Using the words sustainability and justice is a good start, but the strategies would be better matched to our global reality if it addressed sustainability, climate, and justice. Of course, we know it means environmental sustainability when it comes from CFS, whereas “sustainability” in some contexts, like in some business circles, just means sustainability of the bottom line. In a way, systems like capitalism and white supremacy sustain everything some people already have for the people who want to keep things that way

and make the differences between people more pronounced. Hence the justice and equity components are truly needed. In fact, you have to do diversity work in parallel with climate work. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and decoloniality work make climate action into climate justice.”

On the topic of SCU's actions with regard to its Jesuit distinction, Kristin commented:

“As far as being a Jesuit institution, there are two components: One is that as a Jesuit university, you can think that you are doing something better than other places because we think we are special, but there are other places doing these same attributes better. I am always a bit humbled when I feel places are doing the mission of a Jesuit institution and are not themselves Jesuits. The positive side of Jesuit institutions is the Ignatian discernment of deep internal reflection, leadership, and understanding of what is our collective purpose and what is drawing us forward. All of these Ignatian spiritual concepts are very helpful to our campus ethos and the charism of SCU when it is at its best. An institution like SCU should be wary of pronouncedly marketing itself as magically imbued with the cache of those principles, but not living them in reality. When the people running an institution are actually being just and effecting justice, and making things more just, that is when an institution is authentic, and values-driven. Value statements often serve only to drive fundraising. That is not the same thing as being values-driven...The board’s business seems to be helping SCU succeed as a financial operation to generate revenue and keep our reputation stellar.”

President Julie Sullivan remarked the following regarding what others may learn from SCU in terms of policy development and integration:

“One is that policy development is not political, it's values-based. I think the climate change issue took off, and when political parties got divided on it, it took off again as a political issue. I don't think SCU thinks of it as a political issue, we think of it as a part of our Jesuit mission and values. We, of course, are very supportive of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, and his subsequent encyclical. We think about forming people to be people for and with others, we should be worried about those others who are in the next generation, and whether we are taking care of this common home so that they will continue to thrive. So you've got to put this policy in a value-based framework. It's not a political argument. It's whether you care about other people, whether you care about our common home, and if you want to make a difference in preserving it not only for all people in our generation but more importantly, for future generations. And if you believe it's a value, and you believe it's the right, moral thing to do, as part of the mission of your organization, then it is much easier to implement. Now, you do have to put some kind of structure around implementing it. There's the issue about sustainability as it crosses our institution, so how do we, as an institution, live in a sustainable way so that all of our operations, from how we maintain our lawn, how we build buildings, how we procure products, what kind of vehicles we have on campus. So it's how we operate as a campus, but then it's since our mission is education, it's how do we incorporate this into our teaching and learning in our research? So I think that's one of the reasons we have a thriving environmental studies program. We have to think about it and the academic

setting, the teaching, and the research piece, and then also how we operate the University.”

Discussion Questions

1. Change Management / Leadership

a. Development Strategies:

- i. Examine the methodologies used during the development and implementation of Impact 2030 and Sustainable SCU. What worked well? What didn't?

b. Stakeholder Engagement:

- i. How are faculty, staff, and students engaged in the policy change/development process at SCU?
- ii. Discuss the role of leadership in fostering organizational culture.

2. Organizational Ethics

- The following questions reference three conditions, that when present in organizations, make it more likely for ethics to be used. These conditions were sourced from the following study: [Managing Organizational Ethics](#)⁴¹:

a. Sense of Responsibility

- i. Does the organization have a sense of responsibility to society?

b. Culture of Mutual Trust and Understanding

- i. Does the organization have a culture in which an individual can bring forth issues and create change?

c. Ethical Deliberations/Transparency

⁴¹Martinez, Cecilia, et al. “Managing Organizational Ethics: How Ethics Becomes Pervasive within Organizations.” Business Horizons, Elsevier, 21 Oct. 2020, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0007681320301233.

- i. Does the organization engage in ethical deliberation? Ie. involving stakeholders, discussing downstream impacts, sharing thought patterns, and making data-driven decisions?

3. Strategic Planning

a. Alignment with Institutional Goals:

- i. Discuss how SCU's sustainability initiatives align with broader institutional goals.
- ii. Did sustainability become integrated into the overall strategic plan of SCU? If so, how?

b. Long-Term Vision:

- i. Examine SCU's long-term vision for sustainability. How does this vision guide strategic planning?

c. Organizational Mission:

- i. Discuss the role of a central mission of an organization. Is Sustainable SCU consistent with the organizational mission?

4. Sustainability Policy

a. Success:

- i. Has SCU achieved success in terms of sustainability policy? If so, how?

b. Administrator Actions:

- i. Identify specific actions taken by university administrators that could contribute to the success of SCU's sustainability policy.
- ii. How did these actions align with broader sustainability goals?

c. Stakeholder Involvement:

- i. Discuss the role of stakeholders in the development and implementation of SCU's sustainability policy.
- ii. How were various stakeholder perspectives integrated into the policy?

d. Policy Adaptation:

- i. How has SCU adapted its sustainability policy over time in response to changing circumstances or emerging issues?
- ii. The foundational commitments of Impact 2030 serve as the primary references to SCU's environmental sustainability commitment. Is this articulated strongly enough in Impact 2030 alone?

Appendix

- A brief history of Santa Clara University's Sustainability Policy can be found [here](#).

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