

# Carolina Sustainability Council

Meeting Minutes      December 9, 2021      Via Zoom

Council members in attendance were: Mike Piehler (chair), Ileana Fenwick, MC Gray, Nikhil Kaza, Nathaniel Maniatis, Jonas Monast, and Aaron Salzberg.

Student presenters in attendance were: Barret Buehler, Ana Dulskiy, Justin Fligstein, Ashanti Greene and Dante Oliva.

UNC staff in attendance were Vik Agabekov, Melanie Elliott, Cindy Shea, Steve Wall and Emily Williams.

Attendees: Noah Upchurch, UNC student

Chair Mike Piehler began the meeting at 11:00 and welcomed members of the Council. Council members approved minutes from the September 2021 meeting.

## Chair's Report

Piehler began his remarks by referencing the recent release of the Sustainability Report which features many of the ongoing sustainability activities across the Carolina campus and outlines the role of Sustainable Carolina in amplifying these accomplishments.

Piehler emphasized that utilizing renewable energy at Carolina continues to be a priority for the university. He commented on the Green Source Advantage program and noted legislative text in the recent budget bill that could provide an additional opportunity for progress on this issue.

Piehler discussed the connection between Sustainable Carolina and experiential education at Carolina. He provided examples of this work such as, the Green Office program, participation in capstone classes, working with EcoStudio interns on sustainability projects, and the Sustainable Triangle Field Site.

Piehler concluded his presentation by informing the Council that the hiring of a Communications Specialist was imminent to support the program.

## Student Environmental Coalition

MC Gray and Nathaniel Maniatis outlined the progress of the student environmental coalition comprised of leaders from environmental groups at UNC. The coalition involves more than twenty groups and is intended to strengthen connections among the groups. The coalition is building more collaborative leadership structure rather than relying solely on one student.

The presentation highlighted two activities of the coalition, which included 1) a mentoring program with graduate students with Ana Dulskiy helping shape that effort and 2) a focus on planning Earth Week events to highlight sustainability issues. Jonas Monast offered to assist with getting law students from the Environmental Law Project involved with these efforts.

### Impact Investing Club

Justin Fligstein began the presentation with background on impact investing. He commented that the primary goal of the club was to assist students in learning more about impact investing. The club currently has more than 250 members. Barret Buehler explained the club's focus on the Climate Resilience Fund. Ashanti Greene described the role of the club's advisory board and detailed the investment process. Dante Oliva shared information related to the financial performance of the club's fund. The next major action for the club is to transition from a paper fund to a real fund.

Aaron Salzberg inquired about the impact of the pandemic on the performance of the fund. Buehler responded that the fund was heavy with technology companies which generally helped with the performance. Piehler praised the club for positioning themselves as available to all UNC students and not just limited to the business school.

### Sustainable Carolina Strategic Framework

Vik Agabekov discussed the initial work of the strategic framework for Sustainable Carolina. He stated that the foundation of the framework was the establishment of values, mission, vision and goals. Agabekov stressed that underlying the mission and vision was a partnership between operations, research, and education. He outlined three strategic sustainability goals:

- Provide sustainability leadership
- Enable transformative action
- Foster sustainability education

He concluded his presentation by describing the community structure outlined in the framework.

### Champion Sustainability Fund

Melanie Elliott gave an overview of the fund and a description of how cost savings will be reinvested in the fund. She outlined the membership and important role of the Advisory Committee that includes representation from UNC and Champion. Elliot detailed the selection criteria for choosing projects, which includes payback period, energy/water savings, use of innovative technology and several more factors. She concluded with an explanation of the application process.

Piehler commented on the valuable role the Advisory Committee in anticipating challenges of managing the fund. He also stated that initial projects supported by the fund were likely to focus on energy efficiency. Salzberg raised the issue of allowing for credit enhancements as part of the fund.

### Public Question and Answer

The Council provided time on the agenda for public comment from attendees at the meeting. Noah Upchurch asked about the ways that students could get involved with the Council and sustainability activities on campus. Piehler stated that his intent is to have broad participation and engagement among students on these issues. Agabekov listed several specific current opportunities available to students on these topics. Piehler cited the importance of the student Environmental Coalition.

Piehler offered concluding remarks for the meeting and noted that the UNC Water Plan would be a priority during the spring semester. Piehler adjourned the meeting at 12:35.

The full meeting is available for viewing at: [UNC Sustainability Council Meeting | Dec. 9, 2021 - YouTube](#)