

anagha & winston POLICY WHAT IT TAKES. PAPER

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Sustainability: Student Government Agency

Summary

We will **create a Sustainability Agency within Student Government** to support student organizations working in this space and to advocate for more eco-friendly practices at UT. The University of Texas at Austin's commitment to advancing sustainability is evident in its operational, academic, and policy level initiatives. The Office of Sustainability spearheads and coordinates sustainability efforts at all levels of the university. For years, students, faculty, and staff have been collaborating across disciplines and departments to forward these efforts through student organizations and individual initiatives.

Background

According to the Office of Sustainability, The University of Texas at Austin is one of the first public institutions of higher education in Texas to rigorously focus on sustainability. Our university is a leader in waste reduction, energy conservation, water consciousness, and green space construction. However, our tradition of sustainability shouldn't stop there. For current and future longhorns, we have to do WHAT IT TAKES today to make UT a sustainable campus.

Recommendation

We propose the establishment of a Sustainability Agency within Student Government, which would provide funding, support, and a platform for student activism, awareness, and

advocacy for sustainability projects and initiatives on the Forty Acres. Specifically, the agency would provide grants to sustainability-related student organizations and projects, and advocate directly with the Office of Sustainability about student needs regarding sustainability efforts on campus.

Feasibility

The growing awareness surrounding climate change and sustainability has seen a growth in sustainability-focused agencies at other universities, such as NC State, University of Miami, and USC.^{1,2,3} Creating a new agency in Student Government requires a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote in the Student Government Assembly.⁴ This was accomplished most recently with the creation of the Mental Health Agency in 2018, which facilitates mental health-related programming for Student Government.⁵ The President and Vice President have the power to deem certain agencies as active or inactive, and many agencies listed in Student Government's Code of Rules and Procedures are currently formally inactive (i.e. deemed inactive by the current Student Body President and Vice President), or functionally inactive (i.e. deemed active by the current Student Body President and Vice President, but do not have an operating budget).⁶ Reallocating funds from inactive agencies could help fund programming for a new Sustainability Agency.

¹ <https://orgs.ncsu.edu/student-govt/sustainability/>

² <https://sg.miami.edu/branches-and-agencies/agencies/eco-agency/index.html>

³ <https://green.usc.edu/students/>

⁴ https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oXhVEMjncZJEKkCMCBR2FU3x5LcNXujqOVVnH_Mnbs/edit?usp=sharing

⁵ <https://thedailytexan.com/2018/04/03/rally-for-reality-erasing-the-stigmas-of-mental-health-through-open-dialogue>

⁶ https://docs.google.com/document/d/104LL5Xm_aR1gBeFgLPPpCDvDNc1hL7xT1UIrlFPgl38/edit?usp=sharing