
STL HIGHER ED SUSTAINABILITY CONSORTIUM

The Saint Louis Higher Education Sustainability Consortium (STL-HESC), as a collective organization, seeks to advance sustainability initiatives in higher education institutions located within the greater St. Louis region. To this end, the mission of the STL-HESC is to connect the strengths, resources, and knowledge of St. Louis area universities and colleges, to advance collective sustainable initiatives that cultivate innovation, to eliminate non-productive competition, and to create a network that is more than the sum of its parts.

Vision

The vision of the Consortium is to generate regional momentum towards a more just and sustainable society, using avenues open to us as institutions of higher education. In five years, STL-HESC will have an active presence as a collaborative network, advancing the various agendas of individual institutions through measurable initiatives and touchstones that all schools can participate in. We will knit together separate plans to create a cohesive outlook for sustainability within the higher education sector and serve as a known resource and role model for the community at large.

Values

The STL-HESC, as a dynamic learning organization, is responsive to our individual institution's needs, the students and communities we ultimately serve, and each other. Members strive to embed sustainable theory and action into the culture of our colleges and universities, and we are willing to embody eco-literate praxis in our own lives to serve as models for our students and campus communities. We value working side-by-side with our colleagues at other institutions, participating in their enthusiasm, and developing innovative initiatives together.

Objectives

Consortium objectives include:

- Inspiring our students, faculty and staff to become more responsible local and global environmental citizens.
- Embracing and advancing collective sustainable initiatives that cultivate innovation by participating in such programs as Recyclemania, the AASHE STARS Assessment program, and multi-campus sustainability conferences.
- Supporting efforts to make sustainability relevant to all students by:
 - integrating sustainability into curriculum offerings
 - being a resource for faculty and staff development
 - advancing a sustainably built environment, and
 - supporting student clubs focusing on sustainability
- Fostering a sense of collaboration by maintaining resource databases and encouraging multi-institutional engagement in community projects
- Promoting the St. Louis region as a leader for sustainability in higher education

Evolution and History

2006-2009

The EarthWays Center of the Missouri Botanical Garden and the U.S. Green Building – Missouri Gateway Chapter’s Higher Education Committee created significant momentum and cohesion for sustainability initiatives within the region. Prominent examples of past successes include:

- Waste audits of several local college campuses.
- Events such as the 2006 Campus Sustainability Day hosted by Maryville University and the EarthWays Center.
- The “St. Louis Campus Sustainability Network” newsletter, published quarterly by the EarthWays Center.

During this time period, most institutions had implemented sustainability initiatives within their own campus boundaries and began sharing their information and experiences with both the higher education and business sectors.

2009-2010

Tim Gaidis (HOK), Heather Rich (Saint Louis University) and Peggy Lauer (Maryville University) were looking for ways to collaborate and expand sustainability efforts in the St. Louis Region. Most institutions were engaged in their own initiatives but not necessarily working together to leverage their combined potential. A meeting was held with key sustainability leaders to discuss creating a consortium. The idea was that the Consortium, if led by the institutions themselves, could gain a momentum of its own. The EarthWays Center and the USGBC-STL acted as facilitators of institutional information exchange, but the hope was that the institutions would take ownership and address issues, leveraging greater sustainability opportunities in the region, and create a comparatively more sustainable academic region than other parts of the country/world.

The Consortium would continue to leverage the capabilities of entities like the EarthWays Center, the USGBC-STL, consultants, vendors, etc., but in a more synergistic way. The next step that seemed advantageous is that it would decrease competition between institutions where it’s unnecessary and increase competitiveness against institutions from outside the region. Ultimately, this would benefit everyone by creating a larger market for green/sustainable economy and the service it requires.

The USGBC-STL/STL Campus Sustainability Network lunch forum was as robust a vehicle for higher education sustainable exchange as any in the area. The decision was made to bring the consortium idea to the institutions at the next lunch forum meeting in March 2010. The Consortium was embraced by EarthWays, USGBC-STL and higher education sustainability leaders.

The official “launch” of the St. Louis Regional Higher Education Consortium took place on April 6th, 2010.

2010-2013

The St. Louis Higher Education Sustainability Consortium began tackling projects and programs as a united collective. With the continued assistance of the EarthWays Center, quarterly newsletters and luncheons were achieved. Notable projects accomplished together include:

- The concerted effort to become one of the highest participating regions in the annual Recyclemania Challenge. This resulted in the subsequent analysis of waste issues affecting the higher education sector.
- Acknowledgment by the EPA Region 5, which allocated a portion of its resources to support a green procurement workshop. This resulted in membership for all Consortium schools in the Responsible Purchasing Network.
- Exploration of participation in the St. Louis High Performance Building Initiative. The Consortium discovered that the lack of sub metering capabilities on many of the campuses would prevent this from becoming adopted Consortium-wide.
- Internship credit and workforce experience in institutional greening for students via the EarthWays Center’s volunteer program.

Organizational Structure

The STL-HESC is an organization led by campus sustainability champions at area institutions of higher education, and with support from Tier II (see section 3.1) agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations.

1.1 Tier I Universities or College Members

1.1.a Steering Committee Membership

While meetings of the General Assembly will be valuable for continuing to meet Consortium goals, day-to-day matters will be handled by a select group of members identified as the Steering Committee. Membership of this Steering Committee shall be voluntary. Each Tier I member institution may elect one representative to serve on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee shall be responsible for making decisions related to progress and efforts of the Consortium. The Steering Committee shall meet at least quarterly throughout the calendar year. Steering Committee members, or a selected representative, must attend at least three of the four meetings, which generally meet quarterly, to be considered part of the Steering Committee.

1.1.b General Assembly

Membership to the Consortium is free to participating institutions. Any university, college, or other higher education institution within the St. Louis regional area may become members of the STL-HESC General Assembly by attending the General Assembly meetings and agreeing upon the shared values of the Consortium. Upon agreeing to become a member of the General Assembly, the university or college will receive the same recognition regardless of size.

2.1 External Interfaces – Administrative Coordinator

EarthWays Center of the Missouri Botanical Garden

The STL-HESC duties of Administrative Coordinator currently fall to the EarthWays Center of the Missouri Botanical Garden. The Missouri Botanical Garden manages grants that provide funding for the Consortium programming. The goals of the Consortium align with the goals of the EarthWays Center to promote sustainability in institutions of higher learning.

When entering into this agreement both parties agree to adhere to rules defined in section 3.1 Tier II Organizations and Agencies, as well as additional responsibilities as defined below:

- Provide a bi-annual report of progress, accomplishments, and challenges describing completed Consortium work including major and minor milestones
- Compare actual progress to planned progress, and develop strategies for continual improvement towards meeting goals

If either of the two parties has an issue with work associated with the STL-HESC they have a right to request a meeting between the Missouri Botanical Garden and STL-HESC Steering Committee to improve productivity. Meetings shall be granted within one month of the original request.

If the Consortium should grow to require a fiscal agent, multiple models of using MBG as a fiscal agent and umbrella organization currently exist and this possibility would be explored. Some of these models include partnerships with the USGBC-Missouri Gateway Chapter, and the Deer Creek Watershed Alliance.

3.1 Tier II Organizations and Agencies

Tier II Organizations and Agencies are any non-higher education institution, non-profit, or business that wishes to engage with the STL-HESC in order to further meet Consortium goals. To avoid any conflict of interest, the Consortium holds certain expectations for any organization that it chooses to partner with, including but not limited to, transparency in motive through:

- Clear and forthright communication
- Equitable & non-exclusive relationships with every institution
- Shared values for promoting sustainability within the community

In embarking on any project, certain outlying factors should be identified upfront by any contractual or assisting staff. Tier II organizations and agencies shall adhere to roles, responsibilities, and rules of conduct as agreed upon by both parties clearly prior to work begins. These factors include:

- Project specifications including goals & objectives of project, length, timeline, associated costs, and resource requirements.
- A detailed itemization of resources allocated to each major component of the project
- Specification as appropriate of allocation of the following resources:
 - Personnel
 - Computing resources
 - Software tools
 - Special testing and simulation facilities
 - Administrative support

Tier II members are called upon as advisors and are responsible to the larger Consortium in the areas of:

- Raising the visibility of the STL-HESC brand
- Identifying and cultivating potential corporate and organizational relationships
- Supporting internships and career opportunities for students
- Executing STL-HESC events, programs, and strategic initiatives
- Promoting philanthropy toward STL-HESC

Acronyms

As understood by Consortium members the following definitions and acronyms have been recognized:

- STL-HESC: St. Louis Regional Higher Education Sustainability Consortium
- MOBOT or MBG: Missouri Botanical Garden
- USGBC (often USGBC-MO Gateway): U.S. Green Building Council (often the Missouri Gateway Chapter)
- AASHE: The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
- ACUPCC: American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment
- STARS: Sustainability Tracking and Assessment Rating System

Signatory Institutions

On behalf of my institution, I accept the terms of the Charter of the Saint Louis Higher Education Sustainability Consortium (STL-HESC) and affirm my institution as a charter member of the group.

Signature

Date

Name: _____

Institutional Role: _____

Institution: _____