

# LSA Carbon Neutrality Task Force Recommendations

*This task force met throughout the academic year 2021 - 2022. This summary document was shared with LSA community members in October, 2023*

## Introduction

“We are a diverse intellectual community, working together to reimagine the world and create positive, purposeful change.” LSA’s vision statement captures the spirit of this report—to form a college community that is collectively working to reduce our carbon emissions and embrace a sustainable future.

The climate crisis demands radical changes in how we operate. As the impact of inaction grows, so too does the need for leadership and action at UM. The President’s Commission on Carbon Neutrality (PCCN) was an important first step in this direction and provides important recommendations to move the university as an institution toward carbon neutrality. However, given the urgency of the crisis and our shared responsibility, LSA must act to substantially decrease its own carbon emissions and to educate its community on how it can contribute. As the largest college on campus, LSA has a unique and pivotal role to play in the university’s carbon neutrality efforts. The LSA Carbon Neutrality Task Force was formed to identify the specific actions LSA can take to move the college towards a more sustainable and environmentally-just operation, and to establish LSA as a leader in this effort at UM. Many of the recommendations require new or additional financial support and resources. These costs should be seen for what they are—overdue investments into a shared, sustainable future.

## Contributing Members

Former Associate Dean of Natural Sciences Chris Poulsen

Facilities and Operations Team: Dan Rife (Chair), Ana Austin, Aimee Classen, Charles McCrory, Craig Delap, Kim Seifert, Lydia Schaafsma, Linda Tesar

Research and Education Team: Anne McNeil (Chair), Rose Cory, Moni Dressler, Zackariah Farah, Tim McKay, Vincent Pinti, Evan Romero, Perrin Selcer, Elliott Smith, and Natalia Umana.

Reducing Scope 3 Emissions Team: Nate Sanders (Chair), Hang Lu, Adam Simon, Lisa Disch, John Harmala, Jen Wolff, Kelly Campbell, Tobin Brenner, and Eva Schwarz.

Participating Environ 391 students: Lea Baker, Cesar Cano, Aubrey Fitts, Ena Humphries, Olivia Kierzek, Haseeb Mahmood, KT Meono, Mikayla Mitchell, and Theo Shapinsky

## Top Recommendations

**Incorporate sustainability into LSA’s core values.** LSA’s commitment to carbon neutrality and sustainability should be woven into the fabric of college decision-making by committing to carbon neutrality as an LSA core value. Adding carbon neutrality into LSA’s Strategic Vision and Areas for Action would be a first step toward aligning our community’s actions with our stated goals and values.

**Foster a culture of sustainability.** LSA should strive to foster a culture of sustainability across campus. The college’s success in developing a DEI culture is a model and was achieved by implementing structural changes (e.g., leadership positions, unit-level DEI committees, DEI hiring initiatives and awards, training, DEI statements as part of applications, and DEI as criteria for promotion and merit raises). We believe that LSA can also be a leader in creating a culture of sustainability by following this model, and this report offers specific actions that align with these steps.

**Create an executive leadership position within LSA.** We propose a new executive-level position to set the college's vision and goals, coordinate with central, oversee implementation of ideas from this report, as well as curate, generate, and implement new ideas. This position might follow the successful model of leadership in DEI, such as the LSA Associate Dean for DEI.

**Create a sustainability staff officer within LSA.** We propose a new staff position focused on the implementation of sustainable measures across LSA and at the department level. Similar staff positions exist to support activities focused on DEI, disabilities, and lab safety. We anticipate the sustainability officer will lead LSA community engagement and awareness efforts, implement sustainability practices in research and building operations, and assist with and coordinate departmental sustainability efforts.

**Establish a graduation requirement in sustainability for all LSA students.** Our students are our legacy and our future. We have an extraordinary opportunity to educate, inspire, and motivate over 18,000 LSA students each year to live sustainably and to contribute to LSA's carbon neutrality goals. There is strong student interest for a sustainability graduation requirement that could be met through coursework or co-curricular activities.

**Convert an LSA facility to carbon neutral.** LSA should commit to being the first College/School to convert an existing facility into carbon neutral operations. The LSA Building, the Biological Station (UMBS), and the Research Museums Center all present opportunities to achieve this goal.

**Make sustainability and environmental justice a hiring priority.** LSA should make sustainability and environmental justice hiring priorities via hiring initiatives or by making sustainability and environmental justice priorities when evaluating annual position requests from departments.

**Make 2024 the year of sustainability in LSA.** We recommend focusing our college-wide efforts in 2024 to both launch many of the initiatives outlined here and to organize a series of discussions and events focused on carbon neutrality and environmental/climate justice with efforts to engage faculty, staff, and students. These events might include lectures, exhibits, performances, film series, and more.

**Implement a carbon tax on travel and other activities.** Given the urgent need to move away from fossil fuels, the college needs to embrace significant and creative measures to disincentivize carbon emissions and to support the college's sustainability efforts. To this end, we recommend implementing a carbon tax on all business-related CO<sub>2</sub>-emitting travel for LSA faculty, staff, graduate students, and campus visitors that is funded by university sources (including sponsored grants). The college should investigate expanding the carbon tax to other business-related activities. All carbon tax proceeds should be placed in a LSA sustainability fund to help support the college's sustainability activities.