



# SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

an integrated approach to embedding sustainability in all aspects of campus life including academics, research and innovation, operations, governance, and through on and off campus engagement

2024-2029



University  
of Windsor



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The University of Windsor sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi. We respect the longstanding relationships with First Nations people in this place in the 100-mile Windsor-Essex peninsula and the straits – les détroits – of Detroit.

The Indigenous People of Canada have a profound connection to this land, and we would like to thank the people who have and continue to act as stewards, caring for this land since time immemorial. We acknowledge this land is home to the Wendat (Huron-Wendat) community and respect the Dish with One Spoon agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg, to cherish and share the land and all the resources it provides (from the land, water, and skies). We are sincerely grateful for the opportunity to gather, live and learn on this land with respect and cooperation as it nurtures and sustains all of creation.



*Consult the interactive [Native Land map](#) to learn about the Indigenous Peoples who inhabited the land in your community, prior to colonization .*





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# INTRODUCTION

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Dear Students, Colleagues and Community Members:

As global temperatures rise and severe climate events become more frequent, compounded by biodiversity loss and amplification of social inequalities, climate change is affecting all of us in diverse ways. The burning of fossil fuels and deforestation are two of the primary human activities driving these events, which has motivated the University of Windsor to assess our impact and implement meaningful change in our day-to-day operations to foster a sustainable future.

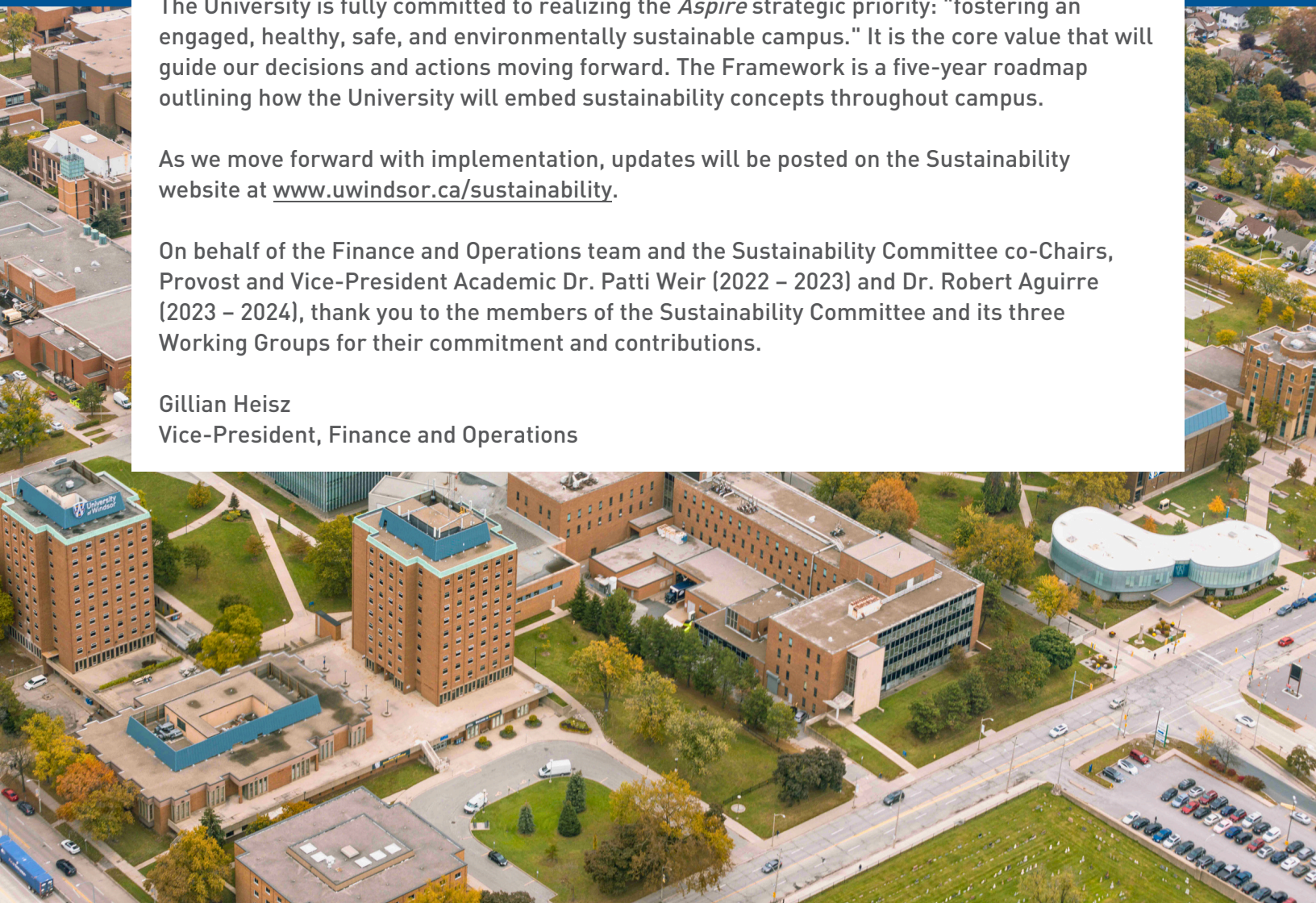
We are called by our institutional mission to empower positive change regionally and globally and proactively pursue innovative and impactful solutions for future generations. This call to action is at the heart of this inaugural campus Sustainability Framework for the University of Windsor, endorsed and championed by the Executive Leadership team.

The University is fully committed to realizing the *Aspire* strategic priority: "fostering an engaged, healthy, safe, and environmentally sustainable campus." It is the core value that will guide our decisions and actions moving forward. The Framework is a five-year roadmap outlining how the University will embed sustainability concepts throughout campus.

As we move forward with implementation, updates will be posted on the Sustainability website at [www.uwindsor.ca/sustainability](http://www.uwindsor.ca/sustainability).

On behalf of the Finance and Operations team and the Sustainability Committee co-Chairs, Provost and Vice-President Academic Dr. Patti Weir (2022 – 2023) and Dr. Robert Aguirre (2023 – 2024), thank you to the members of the Sustainability Committee and its three Working Groups for their commitment and contributions.

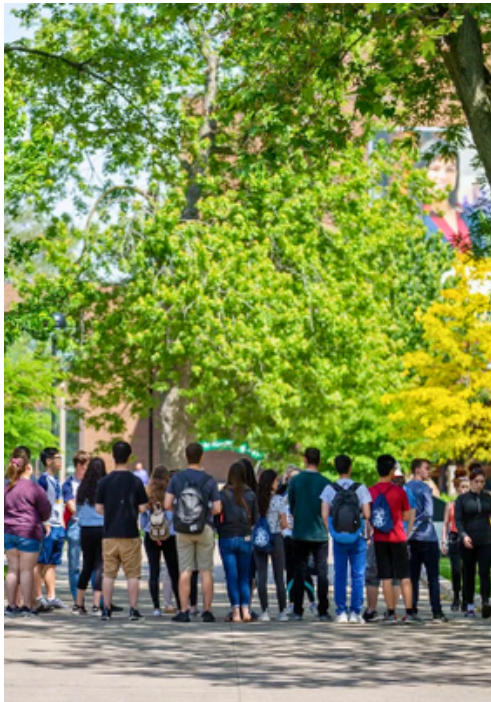
Gillian Heisz  
Vice-President, Finance and Operations





# SUSTAINABILITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

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## Understanding Sustainability

Sustainability refers to “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, as defined by the Brundtland Report, 1987. As we continue to build truth and reconciliation into the fabric of campus life, the University understands its need to care for the land on which we reside along with the people that pass through our open doors.

Sustainability in the context of higher education involves integrating environmental, social and economic considerations into decision-making processes and actively working towards a more equitable, resilient and environmentally responsible future. As a higher education institution, we have a responsibility to guide the next generation of innovative agents of change towards creating a sustainable and just future. Through leadership and innovation, we will establish a solution-driven mindset where students will learn and understand about the interconnectedness of environmental, social and economic issues to both local and global challenges.

Sustainability, in the context of treasury and investing practices are more commonly referred to as Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors. For the purpose of this Sustainability Framework, sustainability and ESG factors will be used interchangeably, and will include the concept of responsible investing.

As sustainability has been identified as a core value in *Aspire*, the University strives to achieve the highest possible standards in all aspects of campus life, including teaching, research and operational activities, while fostering a culture of inclusivity and belonging for our diverse campus community. This value statement applies to both the natural and built environments along with outreach and engagement activities, as we teach, learn, and advocate in a socially and economically just manner. This Sustainability Framework demonstrates how our commitment will evolve into meaningful action.



## Benchmarking Methodologies

Using the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) self-reporting framework, Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS), the University will track progress and measure key performance indicators to integrate sustainability into all aspects of campus life. This process will strive to achieve a formal STARS rating.

Frameworks established by the United Nations (UN), including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations Principles of Responsible Investing (UN PRI) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) will also guide the University's efforts to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all, through mutual respect and understanding. An Indigenous Strategic Plan is in development to further address the commitment to action towards truth and reconciliation, another *Aspire* strategic priority.

The University has positioned itself as a solution provider. Through research, creative activity, innovation and collaboration, the campus community is dedicated to resolving current issues locally and globally.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, outlining 17 interconnected global goals.

These goals and principles address challenges that we face globally including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.

The University of Windsor priority areas outlined within this document will be connected with related SDG icons.





## Progress To Date

The University of Windsor is already leading scholarship and research in sustainability, with faculty members engaged in a wide range of projects spanning areas such as renewable energy, climate change adaptation, water quality, environmental conservation, social equity and sustainable development.

Research, innovation and academic excellence can be found across campus, specifically in the aquatic system research led by Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research (GLIER) and Healthy Headwater Lab, along with the launch of the University of Windsor [National Urban Park Hub](#) in 2023. The School of the Environment offers comprehensive undergraduate Environmental Science and Environmental Studies degrees, and graduate programming in Earth Sciences. The Faculty of Engineering has research, teaching and service covering all of the 17 UN SDG's. To name only a few examples, the Faculty of Engineering is exploring leading-edge technology to reduce energy costs while increasing production in greenhouses in remote locations and is a leader in affordable and sustainable 3D printed multi-unit homes, made-at-UWindsor innovation recently featured in the Government of Canada's National Housing Strategy (2024). The Centre for Hybrid Automotive Research and Green Energy ("CHARGE") lab leads research in battery storage and electric vehicle technology in the region.

The [Incubator Art Lab](#), a bioart studio and community engagement lab, within the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (FAHSS) is bridging the gap between art, science and technology, fostering creative and innovative practices. FAHSS has also introduced an interdisciplinary minor in Indigenous Studies offering students the ability to expand their knowledge of Aboriginal history and Indigenous literature.



The University recently (December 2023) released the Campus Carbon Neutral Masterplan, committing to carbon neutrality by 2050 with the interim target of 45% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Scope 1 and 2) by 2030, based on 2019 baseline levels; and has made significant improvements in global sustainability rankings.

The University's efforts to embed sustainability into financial investing are also well underway with the Endowment Fund becoming a signatory to the UN PRI and the University receiving its first rating in 2022. The University continues to maintain a [Responsible Investing Policy](#) that integrates ESG considerations into investment decisions and is part of an asset owner's strategy to incorporate these factors into investment analysis and decision making.

We see partnerships as key to our success in meeting the University's sustainability vision. A critical partnership between the University of Windsor and Wayne State University has been designed by the United Nations as a Regional Centre of Expertise on Education of Sustainable Development (2022). The University's partnership with community agency YMCA of Southwestern Ontario allows unique opportunities to advance social sustainability and equity for all (2024).

As articulated in *Aspire*, the University remains committed to providing a welcoming and accommodating environment for all, as we recognize that the diversity of our campus is a source of strength that promotes a culture of excellence, innovation, flexibility and adaptability as we achieve objectives outlined in this Framework. Through these efforts, the next generation of leaders will graduate from the University of Windsor with the knowledge and skills to develop innovative solutions to complex local and global sustainability challenges while achieving the SDGs and working towards reconciliation.



# STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

The Campus Sustainability Steering Committee and its three working groups (Appendix A) were established in 2023 to provide oversight, expertise, and guidance for the University Sustainability Program including all projects, initiatives, and related activities. Members of the working group and committee supported the strategy development process.

The following provides a high-level overview of the strategy development process:



## 1. Goal Development

Strategy development was grounded on the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System (STARS) and the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Data used to formulate goals were gathered through the *Aspire* Strategic planning consultations, *Employee Engagement Survey* (2022), as well as campus sustainability surveys, workshops, consultations and strategy sessions.

## 2. Identify Gaps, Needs & Opportunities

Information gathered was reviewed to identify areas of strength, gaps, needs, and opportunities. This analysis provided details used to establish areas of priority.

## 3. Formulate Areas of Priority & Establish Performance Metrics

Preliminary targets and corresponding metrics have been identified to measure and track progress towards program objectives.

All values within the *Aspire* Strategic Plan contribute to a sustainable campus; many are led or co-led by various groups across the institution:

- Academic Excellence
- Action on Indigenization, Truth, and Reconciliation
- Community Impact
- Engagement with Students
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Openness to Change
- Prioritizing People
- Trustworthiness

*"We are committed to working with on- and off-campus communities to ensure that climate action and environmental sustainability are integral to decision making. We are on a journey to greater sustainability through innovation, reciprocal partnership, collaborative action, and shared learning and knowledge." (Aspire)*



# PURPOSE & VISION

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The Campus Sustainability Committee, comprised of student, staff, faculty, and community representatives, established the sustainability **Purpose and Vision statements** to guide the overarching approach to sustainability within academics, operations, governance, and campus life at the University of Windsor. Through an iterative process, these statements will help to establish a path to integrate and embed sustainability into all aspects of campus life.

## Purpose

To embed sustainability in research, teaching, services, and operations while fostering a culture of sustainability, and to empower positive change - both on and off campus.

## Vision

We aspire to be a university where sustainability is a way of life; where academic pursuits, research and innovation, operational practices, governance decisions and campus culture synergistically promote environmental responsibility, social equity and economic vitality.





# PRIORITY AREAS & KEY OBJECTIVES

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The following five (5) priority areas have been identified to build a campus culture of sustainability, minimize our carbon footprint, and maintain a healthy and safe environment where students, faculty, and staff can flourish. Priority areas are not listed in order of importance, as all areas are essential to creating a sustainable campus.



## **Integrate sustainability in academics and research**

Champion innovation and collaboration to advance core education, research, and engagement activities in support of institutional leadership



## **Reduce our environmental impact**

Strategically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create a low carbon campus



## **Protect and conserve natural resources**

Maximize use of resources and minimize waste through efficiency, conservation, reuse, recycling, and related activities



## **Embed sustainability in policy, governance and accountability**

Develop a structure for embedding sustainability in decision making for all elements of campus life, including treasury



## **Foster a culture of sustainability**

Foster a supportive, healthy, and sustainable campus culture through day-to-day practices and actions that align with guiding principles and improve literacy





## Area of Priority



### **Integrate sustainability in academics and research**

**Champion innovation and collaboration to advance core education, research, and engagement activities in support of institutional leadership**

### **Key Objectives**

- 1.1** Encourage the integration of Indigeneity and sustainability issues into the wider curriculum, with particular attention to access to environmental justice, transnational environmental issues, and Indigenous perspectives on wholistic health.
- 1.2** Create an inventory of sustainability-related and sustainability-focused courses and programs across all disciplines and faculty units to determine a benchmark of offerings along with opportunities for enhancement.
- 1.3** Develop interdisciplinary academic programs specifically geared towards sustainability embedded careers or micro credentials for sustainability.
- 1.4** Launch hands-on learning experiences including experiential learning and cooperative education opportunities as well as research or fieldwork at all levels of study to allow students to apply sustainability principles in real-world contexts.
- 1.5** Advance sustainability-focused research and connections with the SDGs, aligning with related objectives within the Research and Academic Strategic Plan.
- 1.6** Become a hub of sustainability knowledge sharing, research, and expertise in the region with community and cross-border partners through our designation as a UN Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development, jointly with Wayne State University.





# 2



## Area of Priority

### Reduce our environmental footprint

Strategically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create a low carbon campus

### Key Objectives

- 2.1** Meet the campus' 2030 target of 45% GHG reductions, as outlined in the Carbon Neutral Masterplan through comprehensive tracking of low carbon capital and renewal projects.
- 2.2** Measure and disclose the emissions from the University's investment portfolio (tons CO2e/\$M invested) and establish long-term reduction targets as per the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and UN PRI requirements.
- 2.3** Implement the campus's first renewable energy generation project.
- 2.4** Utilize our campus as a living laboratory to pilot and implement cross-disciplinary research and innovation activities focused on sustainability through capstone courses and other projects.
- 2.5** Establish Sustainability Procurement Standards for key goods and services and Accessible and Green Building Standards for new and renovated spaces on campus.
- 2.6** Support the creation of an active and viable transportation system that creates a campus accessible by sustainable (low- or zero-carbon) modes.
- 2.7** Adopt sustainable food system best practices and establish targets for plant-based, and sustainably or ethically produced items (including third-party certified products).
- 2.8** Achieve and maintain a Fair Trade Campus designation and educate the campus on related offerings and benefits.
- 2.9** Improve food literacy, and access to affordable, healthy, and nutritious food through targeted programming led by the Food Security Action Plan Working Group, and in collaboration with student unions.





# 3

## Area of Priority



### Protect and conserve natural resources

Maximize use of resources and minimize waste through efficiency, conservation, reuse, recycling, and related activities

### Key Objectives

**3.1** Establish sustainable land management practices and ensure the University's grounds are maintained according to documented standards.

**3.2** Foster a bird-friendly campus environment by establishing bird friendly window standards for all new and renovated windows.

**3.3** Foster environmental stewardship through planting and preserving pollinator friendly habitats on campus and embed Indigenous and native species where appropriate.

**3.4** Develop water and stormwater management systems to evaluate the campus' water footprint, and improve water infrastructure (i.e. water filling stations, low-flow water features in new and renovation projects) to support water reduction initiatives.

**3.5** Utilize circular economy principles and create standardized collection infrastructure to encourage zero-waste practices (e.g. single use plastic reduction), ensure responsible resource utilization and establish targets and metrics for these items.



# 4

## Area of Priority



### **Embed sustainability in policy, governance, and accountability**

Enhance leadership, decision-making processes, and accountability of controls in compliance with applicable laws and regulations

### **Key Objectives**

- 4.1** Determine which Board and Senate Committees are responsible for oversight of sustainability, including defining the role of the Investment Committee as the body for responsible investing. Create regular reporting structures from administration to those charged with governance and build Board and Senate literacy on sustainability matters.
- 4.2** Evaluate whether Senate templates, processes and policies should be reviewed and/or revised to incorporate sustainability principles.
- 4.3** Conduct a review of sustainability related risks and opportunities within the University's enterprise risk management structure and framework. Regularly update the risk assessment and monitor risk mitigation actions.
- 4.4** Continue the implementation of the Responsible Investment policy, strengthening the University's incorporation of ESG issues into investment analysis decision-making processes, and enhancing stewardship activities as active owners.
- 4.5** Build key performance indicators for sustainability related objectives, including third-party independent rating systems where available. Establish targets and benchmarks, and internal control and reporting systems to track progress.
- 4.6** Prepare an annual Sustainability Report, including elements of the IFRS sustainability disclosure standards, and track the progress of each strategic priority area and related actions.
- 4.7** Maintain oversight of institutional investments to ensure a sustainable investment portfolio.





# 5

## Area of Priority

### Foster a culture of sustainability

Foster a supportive, healthy, and sustainable campus culture through day-to-day practices and actions that align with guiding principles and improve literacy

### Key Objectives

- 5.1** Establish processes to track and document sustainability (social, economical, and environmental) initiatives, research, programs, and events, and expand efforts of sustainability awareness and promotion.
- 5.2** Establish a comprehensive knowledge and skills development program for staff, students, and faculty to enhance awareness and understanding of sustainability in a global and local context.
- 5.3** Expand sustainability related grant applications (internal, external) for leading sustainability-related research initiatives and programs, furthering actions within this Framework.
- 5.4** In alignment with *Aspire*, foster strong community partnerships, particularly with Indigenous and other marginalized communities, that support and inspire regional participation in sustainable practices and address issues, barriers, and challenges.
- 5.5** Empower students to take an active role in promoting sustainability on campus by supporting student-led sustainability initiatives and sustainability related clubs and student groups.
- 5.6** Celebrate our victories through annual awards while proudly telling our stories through both internal and external communications, awards, and rankings.





# FROM STRATEGY TO ACTION

The University of Windsor's Executive Leadership Team is accountable for the delivery of this five-year strategy and related actions.

To keep the community informed, an annual Sustainability Report will be created to highlight progress, achievements, and success stories in alignment with the priority areas and objectives in the Framework.

The University will report on its responsible investment activities each year as a UN PRI signatory and will participate in STARS reporting in 2024 to evaluate and benchmark its sustainability initiatives and performance. Additionally, the University will maintain its annual participation in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Ranking.





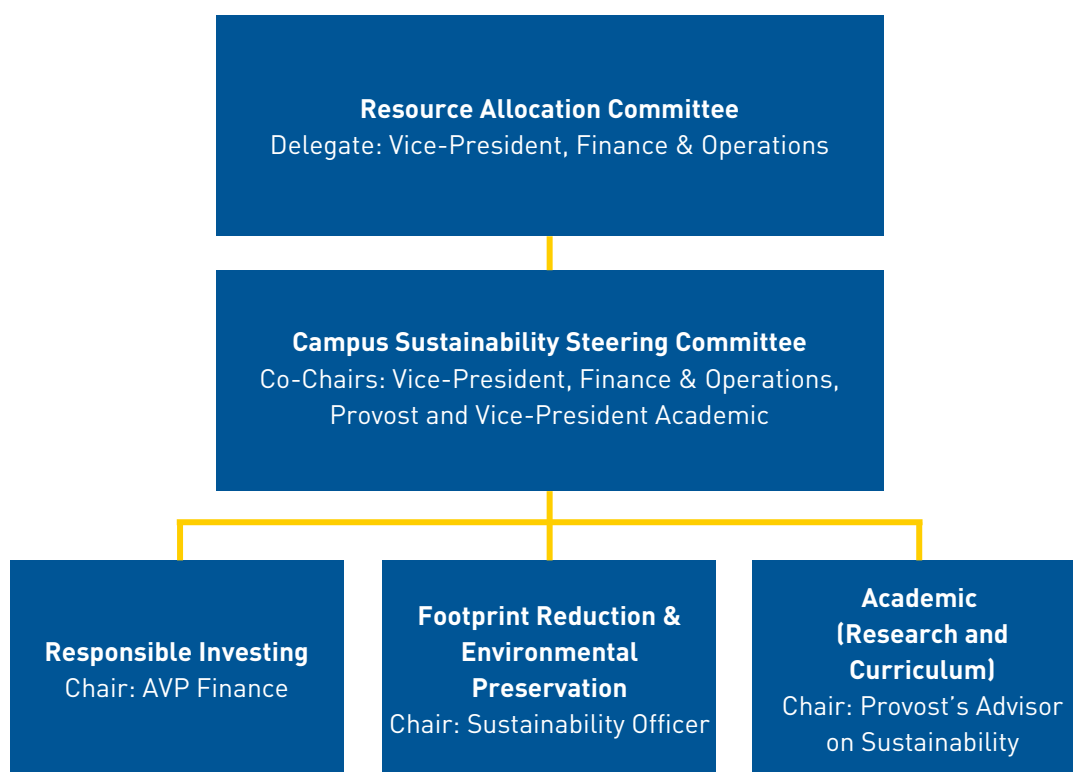
# APPENDIX A

## SUSTAINABILITY STEERING COMMITTEE

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The Resource Allocation Committee of the Board of Governors, with operational delegation to the Vice-President, Finance & Operations, is responsible for providing oversight, expertise and guidance for the University Sustainability Program including all projects, initiatives, and related activities. This Committee, via the Co-Chairs, will report to the Executive Leadership Team and are responsible for providing relevant updates and recommendations.

The governance framework for this Committee is as follows:



The Investment Committee of the Board of Governors is responsible for the development, approval and oversight of the Responsible Investing Policy and the University Senate maintains approval responsibility for academic programs.





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[uwindsor.ca/sustainability](http://uwindsor.ca/sustainability)