

## Departmental Sustainability Action Plan

**Department/Unit: Libraries**

**Adopted (date): Fall 2024**

**Time Period covered: 2024-2028**

### Introduction

*In 2021 Williams adopted its first-ever Strategic Plan. It specified sustainability as one of two cross-cutting commitments alongside diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility and outlined ambitious goals in six sustainability priority areas. Among them, Accountability and Transparency, calls for the creation of department-level sustainability plans. This goal led to the launch of the Sustainability Action Planning Group (SAPG) by the Zilkha Center, composed of volunteers from a wide range of administrative and operational departments as well as several faculty members.*

*The goals of SAPG are:*

- *Fulfill the Strategic Plan sustainability goal of creating departmental sustainability action plans (dSAPs);*
- *Foster greater interdepartmental coordination to solve problems at a systems level; and*
- *Support coordination among departments vis-a-vis information sharing, goal alignment, and joint implementation.*

*Facilitated by the Zilkha Center, the group developed this template for Departmental Sustainability Action Plans (dSAPs) with the aim to provide a simple yet effective format for specifying departmental goals and the steps to achieve them. We recognized that many sustainability goals require coordination among departments as well as financial and human capital to be achieved. Aside from departmental actions, the template enables departments to indicate their interest in participating in existing sustainability programs and initiatives run by the Zilkha Center and/or another department, to specify if and where cross-departmental dependencies exist with respect to their own departmental actions and what resources would be needed to implement them.*

### Development and Implementation Process (SAPG facilitators can assist)

The libraries' dSAP began during the later stages of the libraries' [Strategic Plan](#) 2023/2024 revision process. During the course of revising the Plan, individual staff members proposed sustainability action items and we have included sustainability oriented action items that were included in the final draft of the Strategic Plan.

We created a library staff-wide survey and received 29 responses. Participants were asked to identify which of the action areas most resonated with their daily work in the libraries, how the libraries already contribute to the environmental sustainability targets of the college, what

actions the staff desired to opt-into, and what of the colleges' projects the libraries supported. Results suggested that waste management and procurement were the most relevant and important sustainability areas in the staff's everyday work. We added action items to mitigate our environmental impact based on waste management and procurement to the dSAP. The draft dSAP was reviewed by the library dept heads, with Tath Haver and Jonathan Miller. The survey results and dSAP will be presented to the full staff in Summer 2024. Progress on the libraries' dSAP will be reviewed in January 2026, the midway point in our strategic plan. Implementation progress will be reported then with status reports for each project.

## **Sustainability Framework**

*Sustainability is generally defined as finding a harmonious, lasting balance between economic, social and environmental objectives. Also known as the three-legged stool framework, sustainability here does not privilege any of these three dimensions but rather sees them as equally important and highlights that without all three being sufficiently supported, the stool would be wobbly or even tip over.*

*An alternative perspective nests the three domains: the economy is a part of society and society exists within the greater natural environment. This frame also gives the environmental sphere the greatest weight by arguing that some environmental services such as a stable climate, clean air and water are critical for sustaining life and cannot be replaced or substituted with man-made creations.*

*Both perspectives share that the protection, conservation, and maintenance of environmental services is key for our long-term prosperity. Like the sustainability goals in the 2021 Strategic Plan, the dSAPs focus on the integration of environmental protection, conservation and maintenance into the college's operations and, therefore, focus on the following sustainability action areas:*

- [Energy and Climate](#)
- [Waste Management and Circularity](#)
- [Procurement](#)
- [Food and Other Natural Resources Use](#)
- [Travel and Transportation](#)

## **College Goals & Actions and Collective Actions**

Each sustainability action area includes the relevant institution-wide goals, programs, and initiatives that the department should be aware of, participate in if relevant and practical, and that departmental actions should refer to and/or align with. Opportunities for departments to join forces and/or issues to advocate for are also identified.

## Sustainability Actions Areas

### Sustainability Action Area 1: Energy and Climate

*Overarching commitment in this area, e.g., we commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by using energy more efficiently in our offices and promoting the procurement of clean, renewable energy at the college level.*

Applicable College-wide Energy & Climate Goals and Actions:

- [Climate Action Plan](#)
- [Sustainable Building Policy](#)
- [Williams College Air Travel Greenhouse Gas Emissions Information & Reduction Program](#)
- [High Efficiency Vehicles & Electric Vehicle Charging Stations](#)
- [Farmington & RECs](#)
- [Digital Signage Policy](#)
- [Community Climate Fund](#) for community-level investments in energy efficiency and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reductions

We already positively impact the college's sustainability goals on Climate and Energy in the following ways:

- Our public and working spaces include motion-sensitive LED lights to minimize electricity use for lighting.
- Temperature and humidity set points in Special Collections favor energy efficiency over strict care for collections.

We opt to participate in ...

- Demand-Response events when the electric grid is at capacity and we are notified to curtail electric consumption (e.g., by having agreed to additional adjustments to indoor temperature settings to reduce energy load)
- Zero-waste event planning and execution (this has positive climate, waste management and resource conservation impacts)

We support the college's stretch goals in this area:

- creating zero-waste buildings (this has positive climate, waste management, and resource conservation impacts)
- adopting a tree planting and carbon sequestration project to rejuvenate and sustain our campus forest (this has positive climate and natural resource use impacts)

- developing and participating in green procurement policies (this has positive climate and resource conservation impacts)
- developing a cleaner transportation plan for employee business travel and commuting, student athletic and educational travel
- striving to increase plant-rich food (this has positive climate and natural resource impacts)
- developing a college-fleet electrification plan

We commit to the following new actions:

<b>Action</b>	Adjust our climate set-points in non-preservation spaces to use less energy.
<b>Impact</b>	Adjusting our climate set points to be less cooled in the summer, and less heated in the winter, would eliminate a meaningful percentage of our energy usage.
<b>Alignment</b>	College Action Plan's 1 <sup>st</sup> Action: Sharply reduce emissions from campus combustion through energy conservation measures and shifting to renewable energy sources.
<b>Outcome</b>	To lower the amount of energy expended for each Sawyer patron visit compared to 2022's numbers.
<b>Responsible parties</b>	Libraries Administrative Coordinator and relevant Facilities staff.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Before 2028.
<b>Additional resources</b>	Continued assessment of our energy use, particularly steam, would require regular energy use data from Facilities and door counts from access services. It would also require the regular (monthly, or quarterly) data entry to a sheet tracking our energy use and patron count.

<b>Action</b>	Engage with the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) information literacy framework through the lens of sustainability creating synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities for our primary user base to learn about energy use and scholarly communication, archives/preservation, and research.
<b>Impact</b>	Libraries have a unique place in implicitly and explicitly educating users.

<b>Alignment</b>	
<b>Outcome</b>	Increased student awareness of the environmental impact of information storage and use
<b>Responsible parties</b>	Instruction and outreach librarians
<b>Timeframe</b>	Before 2028.
<b>Additional resources</b>	The College has recognized that its primary contribution to sustainability will come through its education mission. The Libraries instructional program will play its part in sustainability education

*Add or delete rows as needed.*

### Sustainability Action Area 2: Waste Management and Circularity

*Broad commitment in this area, e.g., we commit to reducing waste generated in our department/unit and diverting more waste from landfills and incinerators through reusing, repurposing, recycling and/or composting more waste.*

Applicable College-wide Waste Management and Circularity Goals & Actions:

- [Zero Waste Action Plan](#) (ZWAP)
- [Campus Recycling Guide](#)
- [Sustainable Building Policy](#)
- [Give It Up!](#) Program (CLiA-led sustainable move-out donation program for students)
- [GreenUp](#) Program (OIT-led electronic equipment recycling program)
- [WRAPS](#) (Williams Recovery of All Perishable Surplus: food recovery program / student org)
- [GenCo](#) (a sustainable laundry program currently primarily available for students)

We already positively impact the college's sustainability goals on Waste Management and Circularity in the following ways:

- Compost bins in public spaces.
- Exclusion of single-use plastic water bottles in vending.

We opt to participate in ...

- the [Single Use Plastic Water Bottle](#) policy
- Zero-waste event planning and execution (this has positive climate, waste management and resource conservation impacts)
- Coffee grounds collection program in departmental office spaces

We support the college's stretch goals in this area:

- creating zero-waste buildings (this has positive climate, waste management, and resource conservation impacts)
- [Break Free From Plastic Pledge](#)
- the development and operation of a hardgoods surplus storage and management program and facility (has positive impacts on waste management and circularity and procurement)

We commit to the following new actions:

<b>Action</b>	Reduce our internal (library staff) paper use by 20% over the next 5 years.
<b>Impact</b>	Library staff are prolific paper users, often creating redundant single-use copies for administrative work. By reducing our paper usage by 20% we are creating significantly less waste, reducing delivery transportation emissions, and using less energy.
<b>Alignment</b>	Zero Waste Action Plan (ZWAP) Goals 1 and 3; to limit operational waste and decrease waste from packaging and shipping for operational purchases.
<b>Outcome</b>	20% less paper usage for staff as measurable by cumulative PaperCut printing data.
<b>Responsible parties</b>	Every staff member in the libraries would be responsible for printing less and adapting new workflows to reduce paper use.
<b>Timeframe</b>	A 20% reduction of paper user in 2025's numbers by 2028
<b>Additional resources</b>	To achieve the goal, we would need a libraries- wide PaperCut portal to track anonymized staff paper use, as well as an audit for departments' paper consumption. Zilkha and OIT collaboration for a paper audit would be very useful. This audit could be performed by Zilkha Interns who have undergone ATLAS training and have that

	expertise.
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<b>Action</b>	Commit to zero-waste library events.
<b>Impact</b>	Library events are important for engaging our primary users and extending the libraries' mission. Lessening our waste at events will allow us to minimize our impact.
<b>Alignment</b>	ZWAP Goal 6, Action 24: Establish event policies and infrastructure logistics for zero waste events
<b>Outcome</b>	To have Zero-waste Event Planning training for relevant staff, documentation for the libraries written.
<b>Responsible parties</b>	Organizers of library events (Outreach, Administration, and Special Collections) Zilkha Center as collaborators for ZW training.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Training for new staff members on going. Documentation completed by June 2028.
<b>Additional resources</b>	Organizers of events (department heads, administrative assistants, librarians who do outreach) need zero-waste event planning training. From that point on, we would have a better idea of other needs. Catering support from Dining Services would also greatly benefit us and allow us to better control waste produced to support our events. Without dining catering support, a portion of the outreach budget would need to be adjusted and used to account for the increased cost of purchasing reusable and/or zero-waste friendly products.

Sustainability Action Area 3: Procurement

*Broad commitment in this area, e.g., we commit to purchasing only products that are needed, promoting more efficient bulk purchases to reduce packaging and transportation impacts, and to giving preference to products with known lower environmental footprints when such options exist.*

Applicable College-wide Procurement Goals and Actions:

- Pilot fleet electrification program (supported by Sustainability Capital Improvement Request (CIR) project funds to cover the premium in purchase price of electric versus combustion engine vehicles)

We already positively impact the college’s sustainability goals in the area of Procurement in the following ways:

- Prioritize local vendors to limit transportation emissions and keep capital within the local economy
- Swag options (highlighter/pen and post-it-notes) are the most sustainable option available and the Zilkha Center’s swag guidelines.

We opt to participate in ...

- N/A

We support the college’s stretch goals in this area:

- developing and participating in green procurement policies (this has positive climate and resource conservation impacts)
- development of “green tags” in the new ERP software (WorkDay) to enable better information sharing on environmentally preferred products and improved tracking of environmental and sustainability spending
- the development and operation of a hardgoods surplus storage and management program and facility (has positive impacts on waste management and circularity and procurement)

We commit to the following new actions:

<b>Action</b>	Assess our continued use of plastic-backed security strips on physical items in the general collection. Consider discontinuing their use.
<b>Impact</b>	Magnetic security strips are placed in virtually every physical volume we buy. By removing this security strip,we’d be purchasing less plastic products.
<b>Alignment</b>	ZWAP Goal 4, Action 18: Eliminating non-essential, non-compostable, single-use disposable plastics from campus.
<b>Outcome</b>	To assess the feasibility of discontinuing our purchase and use of plastic-backed security strips.
<b>Responsible parties</b>	Stacks Coordinator, Head of Access Services, Conservation and Physical Processing Specialist, Head of Access Services and Head of Collections and Systems. Possibly, vendors who physically process books.
<b>Timeframe</b>	An assessment of our continued use of plastic-backed security strips completed by June 2028

## Sustainability Action Area 4: Food and Other Natural Resources Use

*Broad commitment in this area, e.g., we commit to saving valuable natural resources and protecting ecosystem and climate health by reducing food waste, promoting plant-rich food options, reducing freshwater consumption and synthetic fertilizer and pesticide application.*

Applicable College-wide Food and Other Natural Resources Goals and Actions:

- [Cool Food Pledge](#) (achieving a 25% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from food purchases by 2030 from 2018 baseline)
- [Treekeeper platform](#) for the campus tree and forest management

We already positively impact the college's sustainability goals in the area of Food and Other Natural Resource use in the following ways:

- A collaboration with Dining Services for collection of student food trays and composting.

We opt to participate in ...

- Periodically reminding departmental staff to print only when needed, use double-sided and black & white printing setting whenever possible and to track printing using the PaperCut software on their computers
- Treating our campus trees and landscapes with care and enjoying its many benefits responsibly

We support the college's stretch goals in this area:

- becoming a certified [Tree Campus Higher Education](#)
- adopting a tree planting and carbon sequestration project to rejuvenate and sustain our campus forest (this has positive climate and natural resource use impacts)
- becoming a certified [Bee Campus USA](#)
- Striving to increase local food purchases
- Striving to increase plant-rich food (this has positive climate and natural resource impacts)

We commit to the following new actions:

<b>Action</b>	Increase proportion of plant-based foods at events.
<b>Impact</b>	Increasing plant-based food options at events will have positive climate and natural resource impacts– it also creates a more inclusive environment for people with dietary needs.
<b>Alignment</b>	<a href="#">Coolfood Pledge.</a>
<b>Outcome</b>	90% vegetarian catering by the year 2027. 50% dairy and egg free catering by 2028 (e.g. on average over the course of the year nine out of ten food choices at events will be vegetarian , and half will be dairy and egg free.)
<b>Responsible parties</b>	Organizers of events.
<b>Timeframe</b>	100% vegetarian catering by June 2027. 50% dairy and egg free catering by June 2028.
<b>Additional resources</b>	Little external resources are needed to accomplish this at minimum. However, Campus Dining resuming catering services would be the most economic and sustainable options

<b>Action</b>	Requesting decreased mowing frequency and increasing grass length from grounds and plantings of native plants and trees outside buildings occupied by the libraries (Stetson/Sawyer, Science Center, and LSF.)
<b>Impact</b>	Reduce gas use and noise pollution, increased environment for pollinators and birds.
<b>Alignment</b>	CAP's 10th goal: Reduce GHG from landscape maintenance.
<b>Outcome</b>	Reduce gas use and noise pollution, increased environment for pollinators and birds.
<b>Responsible parties</b>	Director of Libraries, Grounds and Facilities.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Preliminary request and conversation regarding a decreased mowing schedule with Grounds by June 2028.
<b>Additional</b>	While requesting a decreased mowing schedule requires little, actually executing a reduced mowing schedule

<b>resources</b>	could require more labor from grounds.
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### Sustainability Action Area 5: Travel and Transportation

*Broad commitment in this area, e.g., we commit to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and air pollutants by traveling using more sustainable modes and reducing any unnecessary travel miles for ourselves and invited guests.*

Applicable College-wide Travel and Transportation Goals and Actions:

- [High Efficiency Vehicles & Electric Vehicle Charging Stations](#)
- [Williams College Air Travel Greenhouse Gas Emissions Information & Reduction Program](#)
- Pilot fleet electrification program (supported by Sustainability CIR project funds to cover the premium in purchase price of electric versus combustion engine vehicles)

We already positively impact the college's sustainability goals in the area of Travel and Transportation in the following ways:

- Considerable online-conference attendance limits our air-travel related greenhouse gas emissions.
- Regular commuting emissions are mitigated by remote work agreements.

We opt to participate in ...

- Reserving fleet vehicles in accordance with environmental criteria such as right-sizing vehicle based on number of travelers, using cleaner modes of transportation, including car pooling whenever possible
- Considering replacing aging vehicles used by your department with electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles

We support the college's stretch goals in this area:

- becoming a certified [Bicycle Friendly University](#)
- developing a cleaner transportation plan for employee business travel and commuting, EV charging on campus, student athletic and educational travel
- developing a college-fleet electrification plan

We commit to the following new actions:

<b>Action</b>	Consult the library's <a href="#">GHG travel emissions document</a> when choosing options for professional travel. Taking the least GHG intensive mode of travel when financially and logistically possible.
<b>Impact</b>	Travel is an important part of professional development and maintaining our programs' integrity and relevance within the field. Choosing the least GHG intensive transportation when possible will minimize our environmental impact on a necessary part of our work.
<b>Alignment</b>	CAP 3rd action: Reducing miles traveled.
<b>Outcome</b>	Reduced GHG from travel to conferences
<b>Responsible parties</b>	Libraries staff who travel for work.
<b>Timeframe</b>	Documentation for sustainable travel for professional development created by June 2028.
<b>Additional resources</b>	

## People

Bringing people into the conversation and providing them with meaningful, rewarding ways to engage with sustainability is one of the most impactful things a department and organization can do. Consider here, how your department might incorporate sustainability into its culture and individual and collective mindsets.

We commit to:

- working towards including sustainability in job descriptions and performance evaluations;
- including sustainability trainings, seminars, field trips and other educational opportunities into the department's professional development;
- recognizing and rewarding sustainability champions in the department

## **Accountability**

Please outline your plan for reviewing progress made on your departmental sustainability action plan (dSAP) goals.

This will be integrated into our strategic planning review currently scheduled for early 2026 and led by the LSPG.

Review Timeframe: The department will review its dSAP on a biennial timeframe.

### **Responsibility**

For each action item, a project lead needs to be created for reporting.

Overall reporting responsibility will reside with the Libraries Strategic Planning Group. The LSPG recruits a 'point person' for each objective.

Date of next review: January 2026