Sustainability Framework

How to create a culture of sustainability for the UWC Costa Rica?
SUSTAINABILITY FOR UWC COSTA RICA

The following framework establishes sustainability in its broadest most holistic sense, as a mindset and ethical guideline for balance and wellbeing. Sustainability of the planet, its ecosystems and our lives within it. This view understands environmental, social and economic sustainability as concentric circles, where nature encompasses everything and all human actions are but one element within a much larger, shared community of life. Sustainability is the ways we care for, adapt to and learn from the limits and gifts of nature.

Moving further, we embrace the concept of reciprocity, as emphasized by Jeff Norris: “The concept of reciprocity is deeply rooted in indigenous ways of knowing, based on experience, observation, experimentation, but also invokes a somewhat spiritual component or kinship. Humans are part of nature.” Reciprocity is therefore an essential component in understanding ourselves as part of an interconnected and diverse whole, where each action has an effect on something else.

Putting sustainability and reciprocity into practice requires re-shifting our perspectives and the very basis on which our cultures are built, towards a deep socio-cultural transformation.

Aligned with the UWC Costa Rica’s mission “to educate a diverse group of young men and women to become happy, healthy, and committed individuals, capable through their leadership and engagement, of fostering positive change in their communities in order to contribute to achieving a more sustainable and peaceful world”, this Framework requires understanding sustainability and reciprocity as transversal to all School’s structures and actions. It advocates for a systemic, socio-ecological and transdisciplinary focus: to foster connections with nature, ourselves and with others, and between different areas of knowledge.

The design of this sustainability framework applies processes of research, listening, participation and collaboration and is fueled by the question: How to create a culture of sustainability for the UWC Costa Rica?

Some points of reference on sustainability

General overview of sustainable development and climate action from global and national agenda perspective.

The term sustainable development, although already recognized internationally since 1972, was popularized in the 1987 United Nations Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development entitled Our common future, also known as the Brundtland Report, and alludes to sustainable development as saying: “Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

This concept of “sustainable development” as explored in Our Common Future launched a series of actions on behalf of the global community, particularly, stemming from the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, commonly known as the Earth Summit, which marked the first international effort to create action plans and strategies for moving towards a more sustainable way of development.

One of the outcomes of the Earth Summit was the consolidation of the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international environmental treaty signed by 154 UN member states (currently made up of 196 states), with the intention to bring the world together towards action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change. (To see actions and advances made by the UNFCCC since its inception and up to the present, [here](#) is a timeline).

The supreme decision-making body of the UNFCCC is the Conference of the Parties (COP), which meets annually in a Climate Change Conference to assess progress in dealing with climate change.

The first implementation of measures under the UNFCCC was the Kyoto Protocol (stemming from COP3 in Kyoto, 1997) which was later replaced by the Paris Accord or Paris Agreement, an international treaty for climate change adopted in the COP21 in Paris in 2015 and aiming to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius (1.5 degrees). 2021 marks the 26th year of the COP, held in Glasgow, Scotland, from October 31st through November 12th (COP26), to which the UWC 18 schools [pledged their commitment](#).

In Costa Rica, the entity in charge of coordinating and managing public policy on climate change is the Dirección de Cambio Climático de Costa Rica (DCC), which is part of the Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía (MINAE). Its actions for climate adaptation and mitigation, as agreed on in the Paris Accord, are found in the 2020 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). The MINAE and Dirección de Cambio Climático de Costa Rica also work in conjunction with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in climate action and policy.

Furthermore, the Costa Rican government, by way of the MINAE and DCC, has also launched the Plan de Descarbonización (Decarbonization Plan) aiming to become a decarbonized economy and with zero net emissions by 2050.

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1This is what’s understood as Climate Change Mitigation, or actions to limit global warming and its related effects, including reductions in human emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) as well as activities that reduce their concentration in the atmosphere.

2Climate Change Adaptation: the process of adjusting to current or expected climate change and its effects. This includes adaptation for humans (to moderate or avoid harm as well as exploit opportunities) and for natural systems, where humans may intervene to help adjustment.
Moving beyond sustainable development...

Although these actions and policies to promote sustainable development are essential to moving towards planetary wellness and balance, the concept and framing of the term is limited, as it continues to view development and progress as economic growth and leaves out structural, root causes that created the problem in the first place, as well as being measured by GDP (Gross Development Product), which does little to indicate or measure progress in the sense of wellbeing.

Also, “sustainability” practices can oftentimes be understood as merely being eco-friendly or environmentally positive practices, (i.e. recycling, organic produce and composting, or substitution of harmful materials and techniques for less harmful ones). These kind of practices are technical applications towards sustainable development and are very important, but it does not comprehend the wider, systemic and holistic view of the world we are wanting to promote; one that emphasizes generating new ways of thinking and action towards living in balance and reciprocity with all communities of life.

...towards regenerative and reciprocal action

As it stands (and defined in the Oxford Dictionary) the term “sustainability” refers to: “the use of natural products and energy in a way that does not harm the environment”, and “the ability to continue or be continued for a long time”. These definitions, however, allude to either wanting things to remain as they are now or to mainly keeping things from depleting further.

In accordance with this view, many of the actions put forth by global and local agendas towards promoting sustainability concentrate on mitigating harm and adapting, as is the intention to reduce carbon emissions into the atmosphere, or preventing the depletion of planetary boundaries. Thus, sustainability has been equated to neutralizing negative effects such as climate change, but not necessarily in generating positive ones.

The term “regeneration” has now come into use as encompassing practices that not only aim to neutralize negative effects inflicted upon the environment and its communities of life, but strive to create positive outputs.

...towards plurality of voices, worldviews and practices

“In giving voice to diversity, we share a conviction that the global crisis is not manageable within existing institutional frameworks. It is historical and structural, demanding a deep cultural awakening and reorganization of relations both within and between societies across the world, as also between humans and the rest of so-called ‘nature’. As humans, our most important lesson is to make peace with the Earth and with each other.”

In addition to visions and perspectives of different stakeholders of the UWC Costa Rica educational community, this framework is fed by many references, which encompass a wide variety of philosophies, ethical frameworks, worldviews, streams of thought and movements, as well as sciences (natural, social and economic sciences), global policy, etc. This diversity of references points to the plurality, complexity and depth of the concept of Sustainability (and Reciprocity) as is being promoted in the Framework for the UWC Costa Rica.

To integrate diverse:

• Ways of thinking (i.e. systemic, complex, creative, critical and transdisciplinary thinking)
• Ways of knowing (i.e. ancestral, indigenous, ecological, spiritual and local wisdom and practices, sciences)
• Ways of caring and empowering (i.e. Ecofeminism and other feminist and social justice movements, agroecology, ecologitry)
• Ways of living (i.e. “Buen vivir”/Sumak Kawsay, Eco Swaraj, Eco Villages, Zero Waste)
• Ways of designing (i.e. permaculture, regenerative architecture and landscaping, circular economy and design, etc.)
This framework proposes guiding principles needed for a culture of sustainability, understanding this as reciprocal and regenerative action. These Sustainability Principles (SPs), aim to encompass all actions needed for the transition towards a school exemplary in its sustainability and inherent values.

Place life at the center of any action, strategy or objective. Care for people and the planet has to coexist harmoniously and sustainably with care linked to economic and social development.

Reframe what wild nature could be, and how we can regain it in our lives and with that, unearth a deeper understanding of what it means to be human.

To develop transformative ways of thinking and futures: construction and sharing of knowledge; preservation of memory; access to information for all; and learning by doing in different contexts in and with nature.

Care, Nature, Education and Community and Diversity

Social Justice and Governance

Reciprocity and Continuity

Impact and Economy

Responsible Use and Resources

Adapt materials to their uses; study the future implications of our infrastructures; consider the second lives and reutilization of resources; use less track materials origins and destinations. Each element, its composition, use and provenance; recycling, re-using and adapting are part of a sustainable model.
1.a
Apply a systemic and transdisciplinary approach to curricular and program design

Ask the question: How can the current academic structure of the UWC Costa Rica adjust to its future educational needs and to a culture of Sustainability?

Action breakdown
1.a.1. Identify existent spaces in the IB and DEM for deepening connections between subjects, areas of work, projects, concepts and interests.
1.a.2. Generate “curricular labs” or spaces for collaborative analysis, reflection and curricular design and programming (with teachers as well as students).
1.a.3. Consider principles and methodologies with a holistic approach towards sustainability and inspired in nature.

Included References
1.a.iii
References to frameworks, methodologies and programs with holistic approaches to sustainability and inspired in nature:

1.b
Be in nature

Foster spaces for wellbeing and learning within nature for UWC Costa Rica educational community and to its extended communities of learning. We plan on carrying out (or deepen):

Action breakdown
1.b.1. Activities and programs in the San Isidro and Santa Ana campuses for UWC Costa Rica students, teachers and staff.
1.b.2. Outreach programs and activities in the San Isidro campus
1.b.3. Service and sustainable tourism education programs

Included References
1.b.1
Forest therapy (Regarding mental and emotional health)

1.c
Pave the way for the future of education

Generate UWC Costa Rica Sustainable Pedagogies (new pedagogies that will emerge in response to the first two courses of action and to its dissemination and continuity). We’ll work towards building:

Action breakdown
1.c.1. “School of Educators”, extended edition
1.c.2. Reciprocal and continuous communities of learning
1.c.3. Ad Astra - UWC CR Education Lab
1.c.4. Open source pedagogical content focused on sustainability and reciprocity

Included References
1.c.3
Ad Astra - UWC CR Education Lab

NATURE-BASED EDUCATION

Nature is our biggest teacher: experiencing it and learning from its processes leads us to understand ourselves as part of a community of life and to take responsibility for its care. It leads us to a holistic and interconnected perception of the world. Our education models must reflect this perception and adopt methodologies that foster systemic thinking and making connections across subjects and areas of knowledge. This implies implementing curriculums and programs that stem from a culture of sustainability and that will lead to alternative ways of thinking and generate cooperative actions.
In order to guide the UWC Costa Rica mission, strategies and areas of work towards Sustainability, there must be teams responsible for pushing these forward. In conjunction to a team in charge of giving continuity to the Sustainability Framework, all areas of work within the School must be implicated in this task. In addition, promoting Sustainability means ensuring better quality of life for those who manage, work at and inhabit the School. Therefore, one of the main Sustainability objectives for the School will be to revise and reorganize its governance and organizational models paying special attention to issues of care, transparency, horizontality and knowledgexchange.

### 2. STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE

#### 2.a Form a Sustainability Team and Committee

**Action breakdown**
- 2.a.i. Hiring of a Sustainability Team
- 2.a.ii. Assure representation from all different areas of the School (Academics, Residential, Co-Curricular, Development, Outreach, Operations, Finance, Kitchen, Maintenance & students, etc.)

#### 2.b Revise governance

**Action breakdown**
- 2.b.i. Revise current structures
- 2.b.ii. Look to different models as references, while considering contextual realities:
  - decision-making structures that involve the best qualified agents
  - active listening and inclusion of different voices
  - balanced distribution of responsibilities
  - respect for hours of rest
  - attention to urgencies, etc.

**Included References**
- 2.b.i. Governance organizational models
  - Sociocracy, Holacracy, Teal Organizations, Agile, U Theory
- 2.b.ii. Innovative organizations in terms of governance structures
  - Impact Hub, TED, CivicWise

More information regarding innovative organizational models
- SPL Research and synthesis for this action line
- Links to articles and documentation related to Governance and Organization:
  - Definition of Impact Hub and its global governance
  - TED: Basic guide of participation and management
  - New management models for new times
  - Sociocracy Manual
  - Governance System for Ecologistas en Acción NGO

#### 2.c Revise and streamline internal and external communication systems

**Action breakdown**
- 2.c.i. Evaluate communication platforms
- 2.c.ii. Prioritize care in communications
- 2.c.iii. Consolidate communication strategy for the San Isidro move
- 2.c.iv. Ensure responsible and inclusive lines of communication: equal & diverse, accessible, co-produced, sustainable, transparent, and auditable, *glocal*.

#### 2.d Trace attainable and realistic goals according to the School and its external stakeholders’ timelines. Measure impact.

**Action breakdown**
- 2.d.i. Plan processes in reference to management and government strategies in medium to long-term
- 2.d.ii. Establish a priority code
- 2.d.iii. Measure impact: recommendation to use a Theory of Change or similar methodology
- 2.d.iv. Consider BCorp Certification (triple balance model: social, environmental, economic)

**Included References**
- 2.d.iii. Theory of Change (ToC) reference
- 2.d.iv. B Impact Assessment Tool
3.a
Build awareness and visibilize our patterns of consumption, use and waste

**Action breakdown**
- **3.a.i.** Study and analyze patterns of consumption and waste in the school.
- **3.a.ii.** Consider lifestyle factors/elements (at an individual and institutional level).
- **3.a.iii.** Empower students to lead these studies in patterns of consumption and waste.
- **3.a.iv.** Understand the environmental impacts of habits and actions through Lifestyle calculators.
- **3.a.v.** Visibilize conducted research on patterns of consumption and waste.

**Included References**
- **3.a.ii.** Framework for Shaping Sustainable Lifestyles (UNEP)
- **3.a.iv.** Lifestyle Calculators: what can they do and measure?

3.b
Define the values for sustainable lifestyle choices: shift perspectives on how we consume

**Recommended values for sustainable lifestyle choices**
- Be more, consume less.
- Think circular, not linear
- Rethink waste: second lives
- Look to the local

**Included References**
- **3.c.i.** Adopt Zero Waste principles: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Compost, Recycle
- **3.c.ii.** Move towards sustainable procurement /suppliers

3.c
Change of habits for a change of culture:

**Action breakdown**
- **3.c.i.** Be conscious and responsible consumers
- **3.c.ii.** Move towards sustainable procurement /suppliers

**Included References**
- **3.c.i.** Changing product model for service model
  - Buy Services not products
  - Service Flip: turning products into service model
- **3.c.ii.** Professional Development on Circular Economy:
  - Ellen McArthur Foundation Courses
  - Cambridge University, Executive Education: “Circular Economy and Sustainability Strategies”
  - Fundecoop, Local Sustainable Procurement: “Why buy locally?”

3.d
Implement projects with students linked to life cycles of food and “things”

**Action breakdown**
- **3.d.i.** Food. Suggested themes
- **3.d.ii.** Organic produce and composting
- **3.d.iii.** Recycling labs
- **3.d.iv.** The life of “stuff”

**Included References**
- **3.d.iv** Projects in product mapping: Product Journey Mapping
- **Projects in consumer best practices:** Smart Material Choices

3.b
Define the values for sustainable lifestyle choices: shift perspectives on how we consume

**Included References**
- **3.E.** Best practices and related resources
  - **3.e.i.** Traceability: TEC-Traceability
  - **3.e.ii.** Localization: Local Futures: Economics of Happiness Workshop Guide
  - **3.e.iii.** Responsible consumption: One Planet - Hub for UNSDG 12: Sustainable Lifestyles and Education, Lifestyle Calculators
  - **3.e.iv.** Socio-ecological impact: Socio-ecological impact Assessment Tool
  - **3.e.v** Doughnut economics: Doughnut economics Action Lab, 7 ways to think like a 21st Century Economist
  - **3.e.vi** Bioeconomy: Estrategia Nacional de Bioeconomia 2020-2030
  - **3.e.vii** Circular economy: Ellen McArthur Foundation, Circular Economy Practitioner Guide
The UWC Costa Rica’s construction of a new campus in San Isidro, must guarantee a reduced impact regarding its ecological footprint (carbon emissions, residues, etc.) and go further as to be regenerative (leaves a positive impact). This implies placing balance and reciprocity with nature and its ecosystems as a priority. Surrounding ecosystems (animals, plants, communities and weather conditions) should therefore be included in the dialogue of what we want to design, use and build. This opens up learning opportunities and conscious understanding of how the landscape is an element from which to learn. The construction project will be Sustainable if it allows for future generations of the UWC Costa Rica to learn new ways in which to relate to the environment.

### 4.a Build less

Minimize the impact of what we build. Consider the amount and impact of resources for construction

#### Action breakdown

- **4.a.i.** Look for strategies to reduce the quantity of building material
- **4.a.ii.** Take into account all phases of infrastructure (planning and construction, useful life and demolition)

#### Included References

- **4.a.i.** Video about the impact of infrastructures: “How Much Does Your Building Weigh Mr Foster?”
  3. Peer Review Gensler
- **4.a.ii.** CR 2020 Nationally Determined Contribution
  3. Rotor Belgium, Strategies for Reutilization of Building Materials

### 4.b Make nature a part of the infrastructure

Action breakdown

- **4.b.i.** Natural materials and techniques
- **4.b.ii.** Include nature as an element in infrastructures

#### Included References

- **4.b.i.** Examples of buildings using natural materials like wood, bambu.
  Reference: La Cotinga in Osa, mud.
- **4.b.ii.** Regenerative architecture references: including using fungus and bacteria, and garden roofs in construction.

### 4.c Reduce and visibilize the consumption and maintenance of infrastructures

Action breakdown

- **4.c.i.** Bioclimatic strategies and passive acclimation
- **4.c.ii.** Water management
- **4.c.iii.** Energy
- **4.c.iv.** Mobility
- **4.c.v.** Waste management and organic production

#### Included References

- **4.c.i.** Life Cycle Methodology (ACV)
- **4.c.ii.** Water management companies and possible allies: Watergen, Hidrogeotecnia, Global Water Partnership, Agua Tica.
- **4.c.iii.** Renewable energy companies and possible or current allies: Ad Astra, Avolta, Yuxta Energy, Green Energy.
- **4.c.iv.** Mobility: consider infrastructure for electric vehicles.

### 4.d Implement infrastructures that learn and teach: learn from local knowledge and context

Action breakdown

- **4.d.i.** Situated knowledge
- **4.d.ii.** Learn from ourselves: critical infrastructures
- **4.d.iii.** Learn from others: Environmental management and certifications

#### Included References

- **4.D.i.** Article by Donna Hathaway on Situated Knowledge
- **4.D.ii.** Article on Case Study of a Campus in Beta “Ciudad Escuela. Un ensayo de pedagogía (urbana) en beta”
- **4.D.iii.** Environmental Management Indicators, tools and software: Susty, ISO, Building Transparency, Sustainability Certifications: Bandera Azul Program, Carbon Neutral, RESET, LEED, BREAM, etc.
5. PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A sustainable future implies working in collaboration with others. The quality of our partnerships, our collaborative work methodologies and our relationships with diverse communities, will determine the type of impact we will have. Also important in reaching greater balance and wellbeing will be to look towards ecological, ancestral, indigenous, feminist and local wisdom as sources for learning.

5.a Establish, synchronize and make transparent partnerships

Ask the question: How can the current academic structure of the UWC Costa Rica adjust to its future educational needs and to a culture of Sustainability?

Action breakdown

5.a.i Define and agree on criteria and categories (or types of collaboration) in a consensual manner

5.a.ii Facilitate accessible and open databases

5.a.iii Strengthen partnerships and exchanges: list of communities, organizations, etc. to consider

5.a.iv Imagine/Think up new alliances

Included References

Important to compliment this line of action with the following documents included as Annexes:

Annex 1
“Matriz de Contactos” (Contacts compilation, stakeholder analysis)

Annex 2
“Miscelánea” (Database of Organizations, Movements & Initiatives of interest)
### Synthesis of proposed next steps:

**May - Sept 2021**
Presentation, feedback and clarifications of Sustainability Framework.

**Sept - Nov 2021**
Recruitment of Sustainability Team

**Nov 2021 - July 2022**
1) Sustainability Team to begin working,
2) Assign work teams for each action line,
3) Revise plan, establish priorities, teams and timelines for teams,
4) Detailed planning for each action line,
5) Parallel implementation of sustainability experiences (programming)

**Aug 2022 - July 2023**
1) Implementation and revision of plans, learning from past experiences,
2) Parallel implementation of sustainability experiences,
3) Programmatic repetition of finetuned experiences

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### Background Information

Refers to the background information on the recruitment and work process of the Sustainability Project Lead (SPL)

Includes links to original proposals from Zuloark (Julia López-Varela and Juan Chacón) and Sofía Quirós.

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### Work Process Information

Summarizes the work process for SPL between November 2020 to May 2021 into 5 different actions:

1) Design of the work process
2) Coordination and work with other teams and experts
3) Pilot program, divided into a prototype (Service Week 2021) + Sustainability guidelines for Master Plan
4) Deliverables: Sustainability Framework. Includes timeline for the work executed.

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### Service Week and Outputs

Synthesizes the objectives, structure, actions and outcomes of the Sustainability pilot program implemented as part of the bigger structure of UWC Costa Rica Service Week 2021

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### Annexes

- **Stakeholder Analysis**
  Includes information relevant to people and organizations worked with or with whom work can be done in regards to implementation of the sustainability framework.

- **Miscellaneous: Database**
  Database for varied information regarding agents, projects and references which have been consulted during the process of developing the Sustainability Framework

- **Google Drive**
  Google Drive files Share: includes all documentation pertaining to the work of the Sustainability Project Lead from November 2020 to May 2021

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### Next Steps

- Stakeholder Analysis
- Miscellaneous: Database
- Google Drive