

# **Sustainable Development Student Intern (SDSI) Final Report and Recommendations**

**2020**

**Presented by: Bishop Carasquero**

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Bishop's University took a big step in the realm of sustainability this year with the redaction of its sustainable development plan. Although this isn't our first step, the plan comes at a time when youth world wide demand that their peers be more ambitious in the fight against climate change. Through the determination of a few dedicated individuals and the growing support of the Bishop's community, our university is slowly approaching its goal of being a role model and setting a standard for sustainable development amongst higher education institutions. We seek such status because we have assumed responsibility for the stewardship of the beautiful lands on which the university resides and that our tight-knit community desires to invoke change for the health and wellbeing of the planet. Although this year took an unexpected turn, we must continue to challenge ourselves to continue our path towards a more sustainable future.

# SDSI Final Report and Recommendations 2020:

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## **Section 1: Overview**

### **Overview of activities during the 2020 winter semester**

The Sustainable Development Student Intern (SDSI) position is defined by its mandate to aid the collaboration between Bishop's students and faculty/administration in order to promote and pursue sustainable initiatives. During my short period as the SDSI, I learned what it took to assume this position. I performed a variety of given tasks to the best of my abilities for the benefit of the Bishop's community.

It should be mentioned that this report will be significantly shorter than past reports for two reasons; my start date and the COVID-19 pandemic. Normally, the SDSI position begins at the start of the academic year. I was hired in late December and only started working in January 2020. Because of time constraints and learning the ins and outs of the position, I was unable to organise a sustainable development project of my own. One of the main reasons for this was the self-isolation measures that were implemented by the Quebec government due to the progression of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Regardless of this unprecedented situation, I was able to accomplish a number of tasks that were given to me during my short period of activity. Some of my larger tasks included attempting to improve the current composting system in the library learning commons (LLC), helping review the newly developed sustainable development plan as well as the sustainable development survey and coordinating two SDAG meetings. I also tended to other minor tasks such as consulting the environmental club during its planning of Eco-week and managing various social media accounts. The following pages detail what I was able to perform during this shortened semester. I have also included recommendations and planning for my next year as SDSI.

## **Section 2: Composting in the library learning commons**

Bishop's university is committed to reducing its produced waste, however we have much room for improvement. Recycling and garbage receptacles can easily be found inside all campus buildings. We also have a select few composting receptacles at the Bus Stop Café, the LLC, the Dewhurst Dining Hall and a few others. Last year, a group of students proposed a green levy project that expanded our reduction efforts by making composting receptacles more widely available for students and faculty. This project was not reviewed by the SDAG as it was decided that it was the university's responsibility to coordinate the expansion of our waste management system. As a result, the university added a number of brown composting bins in various locations in the LLC. Unfortunately, these bins were not being used properly by students or staff for a number of reasons. The main reason was awareness. Considering there are not nearly enough composting receptacles on campus, many students and staff are unaware that there are designated bins for compost. I discussed this problem with both the Manager of Custodial Services, Jean Vaillancourt and the Manager of Procurement and Sustainable Development, Josee Lamoureux. Both agreed that more awareness and better signage are needed. Mr. Vaillancourt and myself also discussed how the current disposal system in the library isn't the most effective as the bins are currently spread across the library instead of being concentrated in specific locations. Another problem that I attempted to address was the usage of black garbage bags. The janitorial staff have fallen into the habit of putting black garbage bags into the composting bins thus rendering them useless as plastic garbage bags are not compostable. I discussed this problem with Mr. Vaillancourt at our meeting in February, but it had yet to be addressed even as I returned from winter reading week.

One evident area of improvement is needed in our outdoor spaces. At the moment, we only have a few lonely garbage bins in the quad and in a few other outdoor spaces. Having only garbage bins results in recyclables and compostables being thrown into the incorrect receptacle as students and staff see no other options. It is a must that we make garbage, recycling and composting bins readily available outside across our campus as soon as possible.

Waste reduction is an area in which Bishop's needs to improve. A consultant was called in to do an assessment of the waste management system at Bishop's in February. We will be using the suggestions compiled in the report to better the waste management system inside and outside Bishop's. I hope to involve the environmental club, among others that are willing to volunteer, in an awareness/education campaign for waste disposal at Bishop's University.

### **Section 3: Sustainable Development Action Group (SDAG) & Green Levy**

As SDSI one of my main tasks is organising and leading the sustainable development action group meetings. Myself, the SRC General Manager, the Manager of Procurement and Sustainable Development, the SRC President, the SRC Environmental Representative and the Environmental Club President decide on approving funds for submitted sustainable development projects. During my two months, only two meetings took place. In the first meeting we approved three projects. Two were submitted by The Gait and the other by the SRC. The first Gait project was for the purchase of reusable plexiglass cups to reduce the number of disposable cups used during events. The second was for the investment in biodegradable cups that would replace the plastic water cups and shot glasses. The SRC project submitted by the finance director was to cover the costs of metal water bottles, metal straws, and seeded wristbands used during orientation week.

During the second meeting we approved projects submitted by the competitive women's club volleyball team, the Gait and UBERG. The project submitted by the volleyball team was to cover expense for a sustainable tipsy paint night. The Gait project was another application to cover another purchase of biodegradable water cups and shot glasses. During the approval of this project, the group discussed the nature of this reoccurring application. The purchase of biodegradable cups is a solution to the loss of the plexiglass cups but is not sustainable in the long term. Next year, we plan to ask the Gait team to find an alternative solution for use of biodegradable cups. For the UBERG project, we had to discuss the specific guidelines in which levy funds could be used as the initial proposition stated that the funds would be used off campus to support a research trip. After agreeing that the fund can only be used for on-campus projects that are available to all students, the project was resubmitted with remediations that the SDAG could agree upon. The second proposal was for a drone that was used on the research trip. The drone is also available for future SRC and student led projects.

As you can see, the number of sustainable development projects that were submitted by students this year was very low. It has come to my attention through this and the results of the sustainable development survey that the Green Levy is unknown to a large population of the school. I believe that the Green Levy is very unique in the sense that it provides funds and support for student led projects. This is something that I know I must advertise more. Moving into next year, I hope to increase the student population's awareness of this unique opportunity our school provides. I hope to do this with promotion through project features and the use of available social media outlets.

#### **Section 4: Sustainable Development Plan & Survey**

Last year Bishop's University adopted a five-year strategic framework outlining plans for the future of our university and its wider community. Sustainable development is one of the integral values within this new framework. The University decided to go ahead with a sustainable development plan that would allow for a consolidation and further communication of ongoing efforts. This plan is a living document that allows for new initiatives and reviews on an annual basis.

The Manager of Procurement and Sustainable Development, Josee Lamoureux, was tasked with the writing of this new plan. As SDSI, I aided with reviewing the plan while also offering some potential additions. During the winter semester, I reviewed the plan a total of three times with a few minor additions. An example of an addition I made is getting the Smart about Salt certification. This certification will require that anyone with the Buildings and Grounds department that is part of the winter salting operations take a course that teaches techniques that will promote efficient salt use and lowered environmental impacts.

I very much enjoyed being part of this process as I would like to take part in the implementation of the various stages of the plan in the near future.

Along with actively participating in the review process of the SD plan, I also helped with reviewing the SD survey that was circulated in February. Though my contribution to the survey itself was fairly minor, I was tasked with making graphics to display the results of the collected data. An excel spreadsheet was made comparing the number of responses per student, staff, management and faculty for a given question in the survey. This survey enabled us to see where a portion of the BU community stands in its consciousness on sustainable initiatives around campus. For example, if we were to extrapolate from the results of the survey, the majority of the school

strongly believes in the importance of Bishop's commitment to sustainability. A similar percentage of people are aware of the Bishop's Bees club and know that our campus is water bottle free. Unfortunately, we also discovered many people don't know much of what has been done in the realm of sustainability at Bishop's. A large percentage of people aren't aware of the La Tasse Project, the Green Levy or the Geothermal heating system.

As next years SDSI, I intend to use this data to focus on the areas that need improved awareness and understanding through our various social media outlets.

## **Section 6: Awareness building**

After completing my two months in this position, I have come to believe that awareness building is likely the single most important aspect of being the SDSI. I am required to engage the wider Bishop's community in sustainability. If students or faculty do not know how to participate or have never heard of one of the school's various initiatives, overall support for future projects will decrease and result in implementation difficulties. This is something that I will be working on intensely going into next semester as I believe there is much room for improvement.

Regardless, I managed to achieve minor increases in awareness about sustainability and other related topics through Eco-week and some social media works this semester.

The best time to increase awareness about sustainable development initiatives and opportunities the school provides is during Eco-Week. Though I am I tasked with being a co-organiser alongside the environmental club for Eco-Week, my late hiring date prevented me from being an active part of the event planning process. When I was finally able to meet with the club, the bulk of the work had already been done and the majority of the events had already been

planned. The week was almost entirely organised by the environmental club lead, treasurer and other active members. Regardless of my minor involvement in planning Eco-week, it was deemed a success. Each day a different theme was touched upon such as food consumption and a circular economy. Many took part in our eco-friendly giveaways and the Bishop's Fashion Show clothing swap. Overall, the attendance of events throughout the week remained constant. Next year I hope to be more involved with the planning of the week while providing more access to social media outlets to promote the events.

In the beginning of my position, I did not understand the importance of awareness building. I had made a DISH posting promoting the Green Levy and designed a graphic that could be used on social media platforms but other than that, I had not done much. This was clearly evident when we received the results from the sustainable development survey. Many people did not know that the school offers funding for student led sustainable projects. I believe that it will be key that I have a more concrete social media plan for the entirety of next year. This will likely include using every available social media platform. I hope to do features on past projects, provide more detail on the green levy and educate our community on ways that they can reduce their overall impact on the environment. I hope to also coordinate with other clubs such as ENACTUS Bishop's or the outdoor adventure club

## **Section 6: Moving forward**

There is a lot of work to be done in moving forward. I have gained insight as to what it takes to fulfill the position as SDSI. I aim to use this knowledge to ensure that I accomplish my goals next year. These goals include pursuing my own sustainable development project, increasing awareness and teaching proper usage of our waste management system, specifically the usage of

composting receptacles, heighten the awareness of the green levy and aiding in the implementation of the first steps of the sustainable development plan.

I feel it necessary to mention that I still believe that Bishop's needs to push harder to meet its sustainable development goals. One area that I believe needs much improvement is our monitoring process. It has been brought to my attention that we have been attempting to start using the STARS rating system for some time now. I hope that gathering the data that will enable us to use the system will be at the forefront of the committee moving into next year. I understand that this virus has effect us all on a scale we never believed possible but we must remind ourselves and others that we still have a duty to the environment that houses us.