



POLICY:	Environmental Sustainability Policy
Effective Date:	May 10, 2004
Revised Date:	May 2024
Review Date:	May 2027
Approving Body:	Board of Governors
Authority:	Act establishing St. Thomas University
Implementation:	President delegated to the Vice President Finance & Administration
Sponsor/Contact:	Vice President Finance & Administration
Applies to:	The University Community

1.0 Purpose and Scope

1.1 Statement of Purpose

St. Thomas University, in alignment with its mission to provide a high-quality liberal education, recognizes the critical role that higher education institutions play in addressing global environmental challenges, such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, and believes that environmental sustainability should be a core value that guides the University's operations and decision-making. This Policy outlines the University's commitment to nurturing environmental awareness and operating in an environmentally sustainable manner as an integral part of its educational and operational activities. The Policy also serves as a foundation for the institution's sustainability strategic planning and action.

1.2 Scope

This Policy applies to all students, faculty, and staff across academic practices, facilities, and operations. The University will also take steps to raise awareness of and enforce the Policy among users of university services, related entities, and organizations with a presence on campus.

2.0 Policy Statement

2.1 Vision Statement

St. Thomas University envisions a commitment to environmental sustainability that permeates every facet of our institution. By pursuing a low-carbon, resilient, and just future for the next generations, the University endeavors to minimize harm, create positive environmental and social outcomes, and acknowledge a profound

interconnectedness among all beings and the natural environment. The University recognizes that these principles are situated in Indigenous knowledge systems and aims to honour local Indigenous histories, nations, and values in the pursuit of environmental sustainability.

2.2 Guiding Principles

This commitment is guided by the following principles:

(a) Responsible Stewardship: The University will continue to provide high-quality education and services while ensuring that our actions today do not compromise the well-being of future generations.

(b) Collaboration and Engagement: The University recognizes that environmental sustainability is a collective effort and responsibility. We will actively engage our students, staff, faculty, and the broader community in sustainability initiatives on campus and beyond campus boundaries.

(c) Commitment to Education: The University believes in the power of education to create a sustainable future and will actively engage in promoting sustainability education and awareness throughout our community. We are committed to the integration of operational and academic efforts in environmental sustainability, including the fostering of our campus as a living laboratory to test sustainable solutions.

(d) Innovation: The University will continuously strive to adopt innovative approaches and practices and share information and resources with peer organizations.

(e) Transparency and Accountability: The University will maintain transparency in its sustainability efforts, report on progress, and hold itself accountable for the goals and targets set forth in the action plan.

(f) Compliance: The University will ensure and seek to exceed compliance with all applicable legislation, regulations, and standards related to environmental sustainability as well as our sustainability commitments as international signatories of the Talloires Declaration, the first official statement made by university leaders of a commitment to environmental sustainability in higher education.

3.0 Areas of focus

The University's commitment to sustainability encompasses the following areas:

3.1 Academic Programs: The University will integrate environmental sustainability principles into academic programs to educate and develop change-agents and holistic thinkers.

3.2 Research: The University will support interdisciplinary research into environmental issues and encourage innovation to address these sustainability challenges.

3.3 Resource Use: The University will optimize its daily operations and procedures for purchasing goods and services to minimize the consumption of resources, such as energy, water, food, and office materials and reduce overall waste.

3.4 Built Environment: The University will design, construct, and renovate facilities with a focus on energy efficiency and sustainable building principles.

3.5 Natural Environment: The University will maintain green spaces, promote landscaping methods that prioritize ecological health, and foster natural areas on campus.

3.6 Transportation: The University will promote less carbon-intensive means of travel for institution-related activities and commuting to minimize energy consumption.

4.0 Policy Implementation

4.1 Action Planning

The office of the Vice-President Finance and Administration (VPFA) will propose an institutional environmental sustainability action plan that sets time-bound, measurable goals and targets aligned with the guiding principles and areas of focus outlined in the Policy, placing responsibility on each university department to comply with and progress towards the set standards. Mechanisms for feedback and collaboration from the campus community will be incorporated in the planning and implementation processes. The Board of Governors will approve the plan and it will be communicated to the whole campus community.

4.2 Auditing & Reporting

The office of the Vice-President Finance and Administration, namely the Sustainability Coordinator, will monitor the environmental sustainability plan and will coordinate an annual report to the university community and the Board of Governors on key sustainability performance indicators and progress on the plan.

The Sustainability Coordinator will lead the coordination of a sustainability audit every three years using the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), a standardized assessment tool from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), to evaluate how well the University is meeting its sustainability goals and targets.

5.0 Administration

The President's Advisory Committee on Environmental Issues will be responsible for communication, administration, and interpretation of the Policy.

The President's Advisory Committee will advocate that the Policy be incorporated in the University's strategic planning and that the appropriate human, material, and financial resources be provided for the effective implementation of the Policy.

6.0 Review

The President's Advisory Committee on Environmental Issues will review the Policy every three (3) years.