



Clockwise from left: Sarah Henderson; Jackie Podger; and Leanne Bilodeau

OKANAGAN SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE

“The mission of the Sustainability Office at UBC’s Okanagan campus is to lead and facilitate the advancement of a culture of sustainability at the campus by building and supporting the growth of its social, cultural, ecological and economic sustainability.”

From the beginning, UBC’s Okanagan campus has been dedicated to creating a flexible, adaptable, and sustainable community—a goal articulated in the UBC Okanagan Academic Plan, the campus’ primary guiding document.

“In its organization and processes, UBC Okanagan will strive always for agility, accountability, and sustainability,” the plan says. “At every level, it means monitoring the campus’ ecological, cultural, social and economic footprint—always striving to make the campus as beautiful as it is efficient.”

Setting the over-arching vision for sustainability at UBC has been a recent key priority. Under the leadership of UBC’s President, the President’s Advisory Council on Sustainability (PAC-S) and the UBC Sustainability Academic Strategy (SAS) Working Group have developed UBC’s Sustainability Academic Strategy, from which the Okanagan’s recent sustainability initiatives unfold. These commitments are further reinforced by the campus’ Strategic Research Plan and the Strategic Action Plan.

The institution’s commitment to sustainability compelled the development of a dedicated office on UBC’s Okanagan campus to help advance, lead, and deliver its sustainability vision.

The newly established Sustainability Office operates under the portfolio and guidance of the Associate Vice President, Administration and Finance, Jackie Podger.

“Our team’s approach follows an integrated model that strives to incorporate and advance the environmental, economic, social, and cultural facets of sustainability,” says Podger.

Working closely with Podger to drive the campus’ sustainability mandate forward is Leanne Bilodeau, Director of Sustainability Operations, who leads the new office. Bilodeau has been an integral part of implementing sustainable practices from the start—she was a member of the SAS working group and

worked closely with UBC’s Okanagan Sustainability Working Group to develop the campus’ sustainability baselines across academic and operational sectors.

The office is focused on building and demonstrating institutional practices that promote sustainability, as well as tracking and reporting on the campus’ progress—key functions that will contribute to ensuring the campus meets the provincial government’s mandates for carbon neutral operations in 2010.

Beyond its administrative role, the team is passionate about acting as a facilitator, enabler, and supporter of others in the campus community to help build sustainability initiatives from the ground up.

“We believe sustainability can be advanced through a distributive leadership approach,” says Bilodeau. “We have a lot of expertise on campus and everyone has a leadership role to play in a collective effort to achieve shared goals.”

Bilodeau and her colleagues regularly collaborate with faculty, staff, and students—an essential process, as success in their work depends on stakeholder consultation and support.

“Working with the AVP Administration and Finance, we engaged key groups on campus, including Facilities, Supply Management, IT Services, Health, Safety and Environment, and Finance, early on in the process. They were keen to get involved in projects and they’ve been incredibly supportive. Involving stakeholders and joining efforts is an important step in advancing and achieving our sustainability vision.”

Looking ahead, the office will continue to take a comprehensive and consultative approach in implementing initiatives that bring together sustainability efforts from both the operations and academic perspectives.