

Student Committee Recap and Recommendations

For the new school focused on sustainability and climate

July 1st, 2021

Agenda

- **15 min:** Presentation from the student committee
- **35 min:** Discussion and Q&A

Student Committee Members

- Ayoade Balogun (BAS Env. Systems Engineering & African and African American Studies '21; MS Earth Systems)
- Sadie Blancaflor (BA/BS Earth Systems and Anthropology '21)
- Jordan Deasy (BA Urban Studies '22)
- Tanvi Dutta Gupta (BS Biology '23)
- Rachel Hu (BS Atmosphere/Energy '22)
- Jonathan Lu (MD '23)
- Keoni Rodriguez (BA History; MA Earth Systems '22)
- Valeria Rincon (BA Political Science '20; MA Sustainability Science and Practice '21)
- Meghan Shea (PhD, E-IPER)
- Shikha Srinivas (BS Environmental Systems Engineering '21, MS Sustainable Design and Construction '22)

Summary of Student Committee Work: Winter and Spring 2021

Winter:

- Community Focus Groups (Two 1-hr sessions with 22 students)
- Deliberative Polling preparation

Spring:

- Deliberative Polling Event (6-hour deliberation with 184 students)
- Community Center leadership contacts (2 meetings with CC staff; email interactions with all others)
- Centering Justice Through Engaging Frontline Communities gathering of ~20 students, staff, and faculty

Key Insights and Recommendations

- Academic & Curricular Structure
- Student Experience
- Student Feedback and Partnership
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Relationship with External Communities

Academics

*“Centralizing environmental justice efforts would **facilitate and thus incentivize more work to be done on the subject across Stanford.**”*

*“An entire department would have the influence and resources to **unite Stanford and the surrounding community** around environmental justice, [leading to a] **greater ability to work with and benefit the larger community.**”*

– Students at the Deliberative Polling Event

Provide institutional support for **Environmental Justice, Black studies, and Indigenous knowledge** in research, courses, and curricula

- 85% of students in the deliberative polling event supported a dedicated Environmental Justice Department.
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Academics

“Curricula that emphasize intersections between sustainability and Black Studies; curriculum offerings on Indigenous knowledge and land relationships”

– **Community Focus Groups Report**

Provide institutional support for **Environmental Justice, Black studies, and Indigenous knowledge** in research, courses, and curricula

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-

Academics

	T2 (student)	T2 (faculty)
Climate Science	8.5	9.5
Energy	8.3	9.2
Public Policy	8.3	8.3
Cities	8.0	7.6
Human Sustenance	7.9	8.1
Ethics	7.8	7.5
Human Health	7.6	7.1
Social Science	7.3	7.7
Natural World	6.9	8.4
Earth and Planetary Sciences	6.5	8.3

Figure 1. How STRONGLY would you oppose (0) or favor (10) having the New School devote a critical mass of resources on each of the following research topics?

Devote greater resources to **cities** and **public policy**

- Students at the deliberative polling event noted that existing structures don't provide the necessary rigor or support to equip students to tackle major sustainability and climate challenges in these critical areas

Student Experiences

Research Opportunities:

“[Funded undergraduate research with widely available opportunities] is especially important for students coming from...high schools or other areas that don't have these types of programs to develop these skills.”

– Student at the Deliberative Polling Event

Provide resources for community-building, mentorship, research, career support, and other critical activities, and with **consideration of students' actual experiences** within their academic programs.

Student Experiences

Mentorship:

“I feel like for me [the EDGE program has] been really beneficial... just to have a really great mentor who helped me a lot with navigating grad school, life and research.”

– Student at the Deliberative Polling Event

Provide resources for community-building, mentorship, research, career support, and other critical activities, and with **consideration of students’ actual experiences** within their academic programs.

Student Feedback and Partnership

92.3% of students in the deliberative polling event supported forming an enduring structure for student engagement (such as a student committee) during its operation.

Dual committee structure for enduring student involvement in school planning

Student Feedback and Partnership

69.6% of students also agreed that *“student committees give the illusion of accountability and decision-making power where it doesn’t exist.”*

Dual committee structure for enduring student involvement in school planning

Need for accountability assurance, better information flow, and increased support to input processes for more students

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

“Something [worth] considering is not just hiring but...[also] the process for tenure tracks... at least in my experience...[when] even one diverse faculty is brought into the fold, they're not always fully supported in terms of actually actualizing research that is connected to these issues of DEI. And there isn't always the institutional support that they need.”- student at **Deliberative Polling Event** on faculty diversity

Guiding frameworks for the new school should:

- Recognize the disproportionate impact of climate change on marginalized communities and their importance in solving sustainability and climate challenges
- Shift from a colonial science model to investment in local research and community responsibility

Recurring student concerns:

- Faculty diversity
 - Involve students in hiring processes
 - Need for explicit commitment to DEI
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Relationships with External Communities

“...create a meaningful role for frontline leaders in the accelerator... Having frontline leaders at the table [makes] sure that the investments prioritize[s] the needs of those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change...”

- staff member at **Centering Justice Through Engaging Frontline Communities**



Center **local community perspectives** in the work of the sustainability accelerator, academic programs, and overall research agendas and opportunities.



Relationships with External Communities

*“This effort has to think broadly and globally, but **locally people have strong needs and will wonder what the school can do for them...** Give community members **something of benefit** from giving input and participating.”*

- staff member at **Centering Justice Through Engaging Frontline Communities**



Center **local community perspectives** in the work of the sustainability accelerator, academic programs, and overall research agendas and opportunities.



Relationships with External Communities

Concrete steps:

- Accessible workshops and certifications for interested community members
- Grants dedicated to local community work
- Education and research opportunities focused on surrounding areas

Center **local community perspectives** in the work of the sustainability accelerator, academic programs, and overall research agendas and opportunities.

Immediate Asks and Recommendations

Communication and Transparency

- Open email list for those interested in new school updates
- Regular (monthly, quarterly) progress updates on sustainability initiative website, publicized via email list

Immediate Asks and Recommendations

Student Committee Partnership

- More information on school progress at more frequent intervals is needed to do our best work and provide relevant feedback.
 - Presence at Board of Trustees meetings/presentations
 - Involvement in standing meetings

Questions and Discussion

- What are your takeaways from the recommendations in the report and presentation? What recommendations seem actionable in the near-term?
- How do you see the role of students/the student committee in the school's next phase of development? In the next academic year? In the next 3 years?
- In this next phase of development of the New School, who are the key parties to engage with, based on the report and recommendations?
- How can we co-develop a process for local community engagement and feedback, and accountability to that feedback in the development of the new school?