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# SUSTAINABLE LABS WORKING GROUP (SLWG)

Notes from meeting October 20, 2016 2:00-3:30 pm, 3610 McTavish, Room 430

**Present:** Christian Bouchard (Acting Chair), Graham Currie, Anne-Marie Durocher, Caitlin Knowles\*, Stephanie Leclerc, Teodor Mocanu, Kathleen Ng, Amanda Slaymaker\*, Sean Taylor

\*from Sustainability in Engineering at McGill (SEAM) for Alexander Dow, EUS Senator

## ITEM 1. REVIEW AGENDA AND NOTES FROM PAST MEETING

No changes were made.

## ITEM 2. BUSINESS ARISING

### ULSC UPDATE

At the last University Lab Safety Committee (ULSC) meeting, Christian had requested that the recognition of the SLWG as one of its working groups be added to the minutes where this had been discussed but not mentioned in the associated documentation.

### WORKING GROUP REPORTS

#### SUSTAINABLE LABS IN EHS CHECKLIST/GUIDE FOR (NEW) RESEARCHERS

**Re. sustainability section in EHS checklist.** The ULSC had been sent the draft EHS checklist and provided a few changes, which were added to the document by Christian. The checklist was now considered to be complete and would be used for EHS inspections moving forward. Again, the objective for the moment was to obtain a benchmark on sustainable labs practices rather to fail those who did not pass the sustainability section of the inspection checklist. A few existing items that were also related to sustainability would still be counted as part of the regular inspection as pass/fail (ex. cluttered space) while also appearing on the sustainability section.

**Re. sustainable labs guide for researchers.** The guide had been updated by Christian and Paolo, with an additional section drafted to specifically address the six sustainability items on the EHS checklist. This would be circulated for review to members of the SLWG and ULSC, with the understanding that it could be further expanded pending the experiences of the EHS inspectors. As a clarification for those new to the group, the idea of the guide had been supported by the Office of the Vice-Principal (Research & Innovation); Alvin Shrier, was Chair of the ULSC, representing the Office of the VPR&I.

Some concerns about operationalizing the checklist and guide:

- Green chemistry. may not always be applicable to all labs; EHS inspectors may not be experts and should be able to rely on researcher's expertise as to whether or not they were using green chemistry practices/principles.

## VISION FOR SUSTAINABLE LABS AT MCGILL

Engage the University community; promote and recognize efforts to reduce material, water, and energy consumption while maximizing cost savings; improve safety and accessibility through optimizing operations, training and awareness.

Approved by the SLWG 30 January 2015

- Resource efficiency: researchers should not be penalized if they demonstrate that effort was made to rectify a known issue (i.e. a work order number)
- Energy efficiency: the need to differentiate between egregious cases of excessive energy consumption (ex. running old equipment nonstop) and situations out of the researcher's control (ex. using an inefficient fume hood owned by the university vs. the researcher; the appropriate response to which should be that the fume hood be identified as a potential for eventual replacement)
- Sharing: issues included
  - the need to differentiate between those who would need a small quantity of an item on a one-off basis vs. taking advantage of those who had known amounts of inventory of certain products.
  - Some PIs would also be sensitive to others knowing their inventory as this provides clues to the work they are doing. Currently, only Chemistry was sharing resources because this was imposed by the department.

On the topic of energy efficiency and sharing, an extended discussion arose around the issue of freezer cleaning/efficiency:

- The idea of using the Infrastructure Operating Funds (IOFs, which are taken from CFI grants) to fund a taskforce for cleaning freezers had been floated, but IOFs cannot be shared across projects.
- There were potential challenges of convincing researchers to clean their -80 freezers since these take up to two days to resume their intended function after being unplugged.
- There was a group buy initiative for freezers by the GACEQ (*Groupe d'approvisionnement en commun de l'Est du Québec*) but the model selected for -80C was not as energy efficient as requested in the sustainability/energy criteria provided by McGill to the group as guidance.
  - This highlighted weaknesses in the process that should be addressed; in the interim, Procurement Services was exploring opportunities to ensure that fridges and freezers would meet our performance standards.
  - The McGill Marketplace already shows the community a selection of fridges and freezers restricted to those deemed acceptable according to our energy efficiency standards, and associated costs are those to be reflected in researchers' grant requests.
- There was a lack of knowledge around the availability of a -40 freezer for loan to those wishing to clean their own machines.

**Re. integrating sustainability items in checklist into MyLab.** Teo reported that all labs had access to the MyLab module, which was in the Quality Assurance stage where questions were being addressed. As the new inspection cycle has been started (Engineering), part of the inspections would be processed by the old system and part of them by the new.

#### ACTIONS:

- GRAHAM would draft a blurb for the SLWG website that could promote the availability of the -40C freezer for fridge cleaning.
- EVERYONE should send comments on the additional section to the guide to Christian no later than October 27; CHRISTIAN would have the revisions integrated two weeks thereafter.
- CHRISTIAN and TEO would follow up with PARISA PARANG about the status of the Business Needs Assessment for integration of the sustainability items into the new MyLab module.
- CHRISTIAN would speak to JOSEPH VINCELLI about using the new sustainability items in their inspections.

#### STUDENT TRAINING IN SUSTAINABLE LAB MANAGEMENT

This item – peer to peer training of students (as opposed to existing lab safety training already given by the university) - risked being removed from the list of standing items for the SLWG due to a lack of movement forward. Discussion ensued about the challenge of institutionalization of student projects, which required documentation and succession planning.

#### ACTIONS:

- CHRISTIAN would connect SEAN to PATRICK JULIEN about this project.
- CAITLIN and AMARA would discuss with the SEAM VP Academic and provide follow-up.
- SEAN would determine the possibility of striking a working group of student society representatives.

#### LAB WASTE MANAGEMENT

Stephanie had visited a few areas (including the Goodman Cancer Research Center and Dentistry) that had uncontaminated plastic waste (packaging, empty bottles, jars, wrappers, boxes, etc.), taking samples to help inform future waste management planning. As a reminder from the previous meeting, Procurement Services had a consultant review existing waste management at McGill, and 15-person task force\* on waste was now in place to develop of a Notice of Information (NOI) that would better inform the drafting of call(s) for tender (CFT) for waste management services in the spring, while looking at waste management from a holistic perspective.

\*the task force includes Stephanie, Christian, Maxime Gagnon from Campus and Space Planning, Denis Mondou from Macdonald Campus, our Energy Manager, François Miller from MOOS, and student representatives (PGSS, MCSS, SSMU). Others (ex. building director, district supervisor, professors) could be considered if necessary, bearing in mind the size of the group already in place.

### ITEM 3. NEW BUSINESS

#### VISION2020 UPDATE

Kathleen reported that the first Action Team Meetings had been held; some ideas that could relate to this group included asset/equipment sharing, travel, and teleconferencing.

#### ACTION:

- EVERYONE was invited to contact AMELIA BRINKERHOFF or use the [online form](#) to submit their ideas.

#### CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

Elements of the capital asset management project – that would first target grant-funded assets as per tri-agency requirements - would involve McGill working on forms, policies and procedures to assist in tracking equipment. An asset coordinator would be established in Financial Services reporting to Christine Butler. A software tool had been identified but there were outstanding questions around security and cloud storage that still needed to be resolved. The project had been presented to and positively received by the Research Advisory Council, of which Anne-Marie was a member.

### ITEM 4. OTHER BUSINESS

Christian presented two items on behalf of Jerome Conraud in absentia: Sustainable Labs Canada (below) and the launch of a **lab ventilation program task force**:

- The idea was to review ventilation levels in labs on campus following ASHRAE's new lab design guide's recommendations in collaboration with stakeholders (ex. EHS, building operations, key lab

users/representatives, etc.) and assisted by UEM (Utility and Energy Management)'s interns. More about this project will come in the following weeks.

- The ultimate goal is to make sure labs are ventilated adequately; i.e. to meet user needs in the most optimal way.

**ACTION:**

- EVERYONE interested in this project should contact JEROME.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Sustainable Labs Canada: The Montreal chapter of Sustainable Labs Canada (SLCan) would be holding an event on [November 2nd about ASHRAE's new lab design guide](#) (in French).
- Sustainability Friday: the next event would be on October 28<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-6:00 pm at the Faculty Club.