

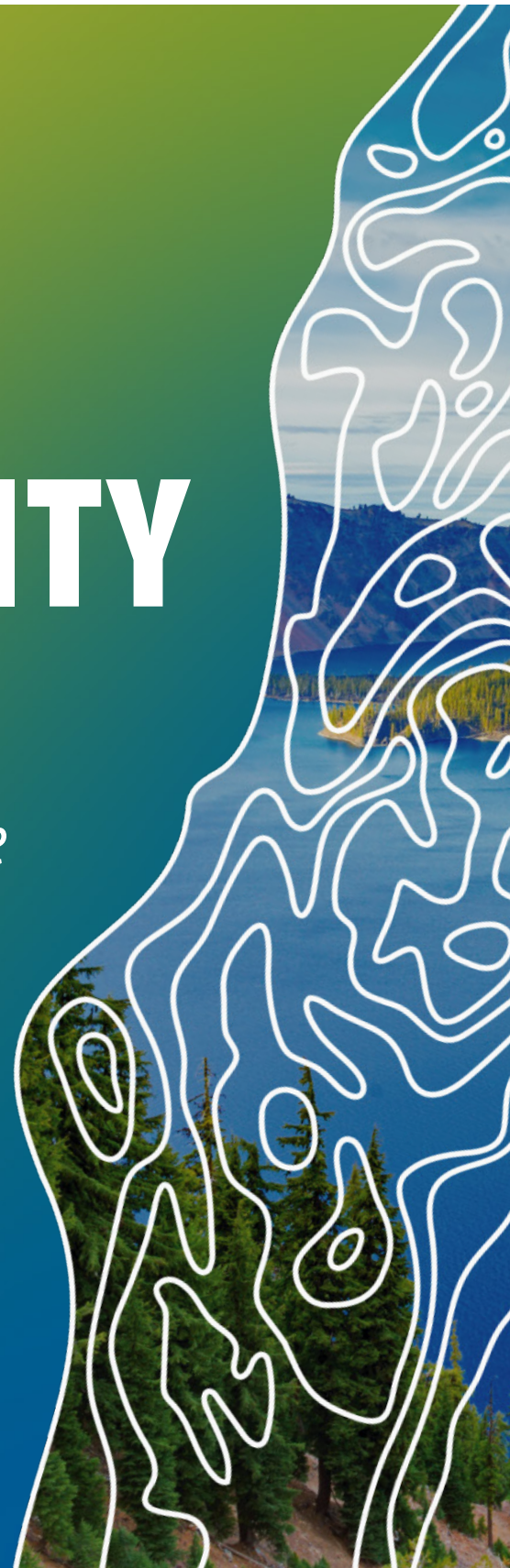


INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED SUSTAINABILITY

AT  **Southern OREGON
UNIVERSITY**

Leading towards a more beautiful future

2025 – 2027
**STRATEGIC
PLAN**





AT IAS, OUR MISSION IS TO:

Bring together faculty, students, and staff to foster a culture of sustainability across disciplines to support research, further education, and empower learners.

Engage with communities, corporations, and other organizations to drive change and amplify voices.

Catalyze sustainable innovation through established programs and dynamic collaborations.

Envision new possibilities for regenerating communities, environments, and economies.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

● Southern Oregon University has long been committed to sustainable practices, environmental stewardship, and applied research. Located in the stunning Rogue Valley between the Cascade and Siskiyou Mountains in one of the most biodiverse locations in the United States, our values have mirrored the region's historical value for environmental stewardship.

Two decades ago, SOU launched a sustainability council to lead efforts to establish sustainability as a pillar of excellence. Since inception, SOU has launched multiple curricular programs focused on sustainability, modeled efforts to address climate change and water scarcity in our operations, institutionalized sustainability as a value in our mission, vision, and strategic directions, and partnered in scholarship to advance environmental stewardship throughout our bioregion. Our efforts have been nationally recognized by The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, The American Association of Colleges and Universities, Sierra Club, and many other organizations.

In 2022, SOU was recognized for its sustainability leadership by Lithia Motors, Driveway, and Greencars. Through a significant gift, we created a formal Institute for Applied Sustainability (IAS). The Institute provides additional institutional capacity for advancing collaboration, curriculum, scholarship, and leadership both on and off-campus. Our leadership team consists of professional sustainability scholars representing student engagement, campus operations, community outreach, academic scholarship, and university curriculum.

The Institute exists to lead toward a more beautiful future. While we are located at Southern

Oregon University, our mission and strategic directions focus on both campus and regional capacity building and collaboration. Through a growing network of professionals, leaders, change makers, scholars, and students stretching from Roseburg to Redding, Coos Bay to Klamath Falls, we are making a global difference. We view our campus and our region as a living laboratory in which we are imagining a resilient, just, and sustainable future through applied teaching, scholarship, and service. Our students know they can make a difference in the world when they graduate because they already have made a difference working collaboratively with our networks.

We invite students, staff, faculty, community members, organizations, and institutions to join us in our work. Over the past two years, we have raised over \$5 million dollars to advance sustainability efforts. With your help we can do much more! Whether it is collaboration on community projects, internship opportunities, policy development, student scholarship, faculty research, or infrastructure, we believe we can be more effective together. Our 2025-2027 strategic plan is ambitious. We cannot do it alone. Please take the opportunity today to learn more about what we do, and to consider ways you can join our network of change agents leading towards a more beautiful future for all.



Sincerely,
Vincent M. Smith

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'V. Smith', written over a white background.

Executive Director,
Institute for Applied
Sustainability



● We express sincere gratitude to the many students, staff, faculty, and partners whose outstanding contributions guided this initial strategic plan and whose support has helped us answer a multitude of administrative first-time questions. They have included colleagues in business services, advancement, purchasing and contracts, facilities management and planning, and sustainability professionals at Lithia Motors. We offer a special thank you to each of the following who have contributed numerous hours of their expertise to the ideas and values that underpin our strategic plan:

Fletcher Beaudoin
Jenny Chynoweth
Dee Fretwell
Charlotte Hyde
Daniel Kreiman
Chris Lucas
Cherstin Lyon
Karen Mager
Pavlina McGrady

Eric Monroe
Bridgette O'Brien
Jessica Piekielek
Anne Sebanc
David Stork
Jamie Trammell
Chhaya Werner
Precious Yamaguchi



***OUR STORY THUS FAR:* GAINING MOMENTUM**

● The Institute for Applied Sustainability (IAS) located at Southern Oregon University was formed in 2022 as a result of a significant gift from Lithia Motors, Driveway, and GreenCars. Their gift was and still is the largest single donation in the history of SOU. The gift agreement outlined several initial directions that included: a faculty fellowship program, corporate sustainability curriculum, networking suggestions, and an offer to partner with Lithia professionals on development.

We selected initial faculty fellows from four distinct disciplines to contribute to the development of IAS. They included: Dr. Bret

Anderson (Economics), Dr. Pavlina McGrady (Business), Dr. Jessica Piekielek (Anthropology), and Dr. Chris Lucas (Communication). Fellows joined Betsy Walker (SOU Director of Sustainability), Dr. Vincent Smith (SOU Dean of Science and Business), and Eric Monroe (Lithia Motors), in over a year of capacity building, mission development, regional needs assessments, and infrastructure development. The results of that work include the IAS organizational structure, core values, and the strategic plan that follows. Further, capacity building efforts have resulted in an additional \$5.8 million in grants and gifts in the first two years of operations.

OUR STORY THUS FAR: GAINING MOMENTUM

● In addition, we launched a series of initial projects and structures that have included:

1. Creation of a robust faculty fellow research program that has now included 8 research projects from across disciplines
2. An Innovation Fund to kickstart faculty, staff, and student support in sustainability
3. Student scholarships to participate in professional development
4. Hiring of two full-time IAS staff members: Kira Welch and Daniel Kreiman
5. Hiring a Student Engagement Director: Sierra Garrett
6. Appointing Dr. Bret Anderson as Director of Faculty Research and Scholarship
7. Holding our first regional conference for sustainability
8. Development of the Global Innovation Scholars program to engage students in sustainable development goals across international boundaries and cultures.
9. Investments in campus infrastructure including solar energy generation, electrification of equipment, lighting efficiency, and local food production.
10. Continued integration of sustainability across the curriculum and development of sustainability-specific academic programs.



While we are proud of what we have accomplished, we look forward to a future guided by strategic directions, built on collaboration, and central to the curriculum of our students. The strategic plan that follows extends our reach beyond the campus and beyond our areas of expertise. It will require professional development, personnel recruitment, and a great deal of partnership. We believe it will transform SOU and our region in ways that promote economic, environmental and social sustainability. We believe that with you, we can lead towards a more beautiful future.

The Institute for Applied Sustainability Leadership Team

Bret Anderson
Sierra Garrett
Vincent Smith
Becs Walker
Kira Welch

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'APPLIED' SUSTAINABILITY?

● At the Institute for Applied Sustainability, 'applied' reflects our drive to make a real, measurable difference. Our vision – to lead toward a more beautiful future – requires decisive action on Southern Oregon University's environmental impact while providing regional leadership in innovative sustainability practices. Unlike traditional research institutes, we go beyond studying sustainability by advancing and demonstrating solutions that create meaningful change on campus and throughout our region.

To that end, we are guided by three interconnected commitments:



**Develop programs
that elevate the
next generation of
leaders, partners,
and supporters**



**Provide leadership
that drives change
on campus and
throughout the
region**



**Take decisive action
on our own impact**

OUR CORE COMMITMENTS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES

The goals and strategies below build on our three core commitments. Each commitment strengthens the others, with goals and strategies working together to amplify their combined effect. For example, efforts to reduce our own impact (Core Commitment Three) align with initiatives that position SOU as a regional leader in sustainability (Core Commitment Two), while investments in education and student empowerment (Core Commitment One) set the institute up for lasting success.



CORE COMMITMENT I: DEVELOP PROGRAMS THAT ELEVATE THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS, PARTNERS, AND SUPPORTERS.

Goal 1: IAS will position SOU as a nationally recognized leader in sustainability education by offering programs that create meaningful impacts for students and the world around them.

Strategy 1.1: Develop flagship curricular programs

Lead the creation of programs like the Climate Action and Leadership Summer Intensive to engage students in sustainability leadership.

Strategy 1.2: Support and improve existing sustainability-centered curricular programs

Promote and support continuous improvement of existing programs like the Sustainability Curriculum Initiative and the Global Innovation Scholars.



Strategy 1.3: Create a sustainability curriculum master plan

Support the development of a master plan for sustainability in the curriculum, regularly updated and published for internal and external review.

Goal 2: Empower student sustainability leaders and cultivate a culture of sustainability and inclusion

Strategy 2.1: Support an increase in student leadership roles

Retain the Student Director position on the IAS leadership team to amplify student voices. Expand efforts to elevate student leadership through meaningful engagement in initiatives across campus.



Strategy 2.2: Provide resources for students and student-led initiatives

Offer funding and resources for co-curricular opportunities and student-led initiatives while creating clear pathways for participation through transparent communication across campus and community networks.

Goal 3: IAS will establish a sustainable funding model to ensure the institute's long-term success and impact

Strategy 3.1: Develop strategic partnerships

Build relationships with corporate, nonprofit, and community partners to co-fund, develop, and manage sustainability initiatives and amplify IAS's mission.

Strategy 3.2: Establish a grant-writing and donor engagement framework

Establish a grant-writing and donor engagement framework to secure funding, manage proposals, and showcase IAS's impact to strengthen relationships with funders and stakeholders.



CORE COMMITMENT II: TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP THAT DRIVES CHANGE ON CAMPUS AND THROUGHOUT THE REGION



Goal 4: Expand the capacity and fundability of SOU scholars.

Strategy 4.1: Increase visibility of scholarship initiatives

Promote existing scholarship initiatives through networking events, partnerships, and IAS promotional support.

Strategy 4.2: Free up faculty time for research

Unlock scholarship potential by freeing up time and providing financial support through the Faculty Fellows program.

Strategy 4.3: Enhance grant-writing and post-award support

Expand IAS's support for mission-aligned proposals by improving grant-writing assistance and post-award processes.

Goal 5: SOU will become a leader and demonstration site for sustainability and resilience.

Strategy 5.1: Expand bi-directional charging infrastructure

Lead grant-writing and support research to expand SOU's bi-directional charging infrastructure that enhances energy and community resilience.

Strategy 5.2: Explore energy and community resilience partnerships

Explore partnership opportunities that bridge energy and community resilience efforts.

Goal 6: IAS will lead efforts in the development of The Klamath-Siskiyou Bioregion in becoming an internationally recognized destination for sustainability-focused tourism, education, and demonstration.



Photo Credit: Dr. Chhaya Werner

Strategy 6.1: Foster a regional sustainability network

The Institute for Applied Sustainability will continue to bring together sustainability leaders in the region, forming a network of support and shared innovation.

Strategy 6.2: Strengthen ecological restoration partnerships and networks

Build ecological restoration partnerships and networks, a high-impact focus area in the region. This effort will deliver conservation benefits, enhance community and forest resilience, and address identified regional needs while leveraging existing scholarly strengths.



CORE COMMITMENT III: TO TAKE DECISIVE ACTION ON OUR OWN IMPACT

Goal 7: Our holistic, integrative, and innovative approach to sustainability will achieve national recognition.

Strategy 7.1: Lead the STARS Platinum effort

IAS will lead a collective effort towards SOU achieving a STARS Platinum rating, improving and integrating sustainability across the campus operations, academic programs, community engagement, governance, planning.

Strategy 7.2: Pursue integrated grant opportunities

IAS will actively pursue grant opportunities that combine energy infrastructure, scholarly pursuits, and student and workforce curricular programs.

Strategy 7.3: Contribute to the campus electrification program

Through grant-writing, advocacy, partnership building, generation of revenue, utilizing incentive programs and seeking funding opportunities, IAS will lead in the development of an equitable, resilient and financially sustainable electrification program on campus. This includes contributing to SOU's goal of being the first public university to generate 100% of its daytime electricity use on campus through renewable energy.



Goal 8: IAS is a catalyst for staff- and faculty-led innovations that have the potential to regenerate communities, environments, and economies.

Strategy 8.1: Support innovation through funding and collaboration

IAS will continue to offer funding opportunities and administrative support through the Faculty Fellows Program and The Innovation Fund to support staff- and faculty-led projects aligned with IAS's core commitments.

Strategy 8.2: Advance sustainability as a core campus value through integrated practices

IAS will advocate for embedding sustainability in onboarding, hiring, and retention strategies, in addition to fostering engagement through events and resources that empower campus-wide participation and shared responsibility in sustainability initiatives.



Goal 9: IAS will cultivate a culture of innovation by encouraging risk-taking and developing and testing sustainable solutions, systems, and processes.

Strategy 9.1: Strengthen marketing and collaboration

Build effective marketing and communication strategies to promote initiatives, coordinate the IAS team, and drive awareness and engagement around campus sustainability.

Strategy 9.2: Provide guidance on campus-wide procedures

Develop and advocate for process improvements in grant funding and administration to better leverage resources, foster innovation, and ensure sustainability principles are integrated in campus operations.

Strategy 9.3: Advocate for transparent and socially responsible investment strategies

Support and provide guidance on sustainable and ethical financial practices by encouraging procurement and investments that are aligned with environmental, social, and governance principles.

THE WORK AHEAD

● We are committed to maintaining transparency and accountability in the implementation of this strategic plan. An integral value of this plan is our recognition that we will have to adapt to address evolving regional needs and sustainability challenges. We will continue to share updates on progress, challenges, and opportunities through annual reports and engagement with our partners.

To stay involved and learn more about our work, please explore the following opportunities to support our mission and connect with us directly. Community participation is essential to the success of this plan.

LEARN MORE

- Check out our website: sustainability.sou.edu/institute
- Attend an IAS event

SUPPORT

Please consider:

- Making a monetary donation at giving.sou.edu/opportunities/give
- Offering your expertise or mentorship
- Sharing the IAS mission
- Offering sponsorship for IAS events

CONNECT

● Please reach out to a member of our team if you have any ideas for collaboration, long-term partnerships, or ways to contribute to our sustainability efforts. We welcome your input and look forward to working together.

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