

Initial Reflections: Laudato Si' at the University of San Francisco

Introduction

Since USF signed up as a Laudato Si' university, USF's Provost's Office and its Lane Center for Catholic Social Thought & the Ignatian Tradition established a working group, led by three co-chairs from a range of departments. In the Spring of 2022 we gathered information on where we currently stand, described in more detail below. Now, in the Fall of 2022, we have started planning what we want to accomplish during our seven-year journey. We are thinking about what we found in the previous semester and how we can take an integral ecological approach, bringing all the components together in synergy. As an initial act we have adopted the name "One Earth Initiative" for our working group, which we officially launched in the Fall of '22 at a public event and with tabling around the university to receive input from the university community. The working group works towards establishing the seven goals of the journey by first of all envisioning how those goals can be fulfilled at USF and by making a plan of action for our journey.

In the following we reflect on the seven Laudato Si' goals, thinking about where we are as a university and where we can go. This initial reflection includes a range of ideas we have gathered so far, ideas that the working group will assess and integrate into a coherent plan of action for our seven-year journey. The document also includes an appendix with the results of some of our processes so far.

1. Respond to the Cry of the Earth

The Cry of the Earth is the thread that ties our different goals together. One of the main objectives is to tie this to other social justice issues (most importantly, the cry of the poor). Laudato Si' (the encyclical) clearly ties ecological issues to issues of poverty, racism, the greed of capitalism, and so forth. While offering an education that brings awareness to the poor state of our planet, we have to integrate this into the social, economical, and political dimensions of our existence.

This goal is directly connected to USF's Mission: *to care for our common home*.

Objective: we hope to offer at our university opportunities to:

- Hear the cry of the earth as integrally connected to the cry of the poor
- Educate students and accompany them as they advocate for their future
- Support faculty research and facilitate its local, national, and global impact
- Involve students in faculty research
- Create a culture of ecological conversion

Strengths:

- Education (see Goal 5)
- Lifestyle (see Goal 4)
- Research around (integral) ecology, sustainability, climate change, and so forth in all schools of the university.

Areas for further development:

Besides continuing to build on the already existing strengths, landscaping can become more sustainable, we can increase green spaces and move away from carbon offsets.

2. Respond to the Cry of the Poor

The San Francisco Bay Area is a place with a tremendous wealth gap and power imbalance connected with poverty. While California is the fifth largest economy in the world, and the Bay Area houses multinationals in among others technology and biomedical fields, many people experience food, housing, and health care insecurities. USF, as a Jesuit institution, emphasizes the cry of the poor (or those who are marginalized by poverty) already in a variety of ways, such as through Community Engaged Learning and several departments that have “social justice” in their mission statement or department name.

We see the Cry of the Poor as closely tied to the Cry of the Earth, yet we find that still often these issues are seen as separate. We thus hope to see more interdisciplinary teaching and research that can clearly tie issues of poverty, justice, and environmental crises together. Our primary objective is to advance scholarly, creative, community-focused work that generates social action

This goal is connected to USF’s Strategic Goal #2: *Invest in and promote the scholarly, creative, and community-focused endeavors that advance justice and address the pressing challenges of our time.*

Objective: Connect the cry of the poor to the cry of the earth in education, co-curricular activities, research, community engagement, our culture, and our investments as an institution of higher education in the future of our students and the world they live in and seek to change.

Strengths

- Established the USF Food Pantry with free food and toiletry items, open to all enrolled USF students. Sourced donated produce from Star Route Farms and created student-supported distribution system to address food insecurity among USF students.
- Community Engaged Learning (see also goals 5 and 7)
- Research and teaching around Environmental Justice, poverty, racism, etc.
- Annual Human Rights Film Festival on campus and virtually, which is currently not organized any longer. We recommend it is restarted again.
- Establishing a working group on Indigenous engagement at USF
- Star Route Farm grant funding for Black Indigenous, People of Color Students for the Environment Student Club (BIPOC4E) to discuss the intersections of ecological history

and local food systems and explore the history of the Star Route farms, including the indigenous history of the land.

Areas for further development:

USF can further support integral, interdisciplinary research and educational programming on environmental and social security, as well as environmental and social equity. We should encourage more indigenous dialogue around these issues and incorporate the Star Route Farm, owned by USF. We should make sure to support and further expand the existing efforts mentioned above.

3. Foster Ecological Economics

While sustainability does sometimes provide cost savings, in other cases it requires investments that do not provide an immediate return in terms of monetary savings. We recommend further exploring ways in which sustainability can be increasingly prioritized in decision-making strategies. USF has already promised to divest its investments from fossil fuel investments. It should further turn its campus towards a fossil free facility.

This goal is connected to USF's Strategic Goal #1: *Reimagine Jesuit education.*

Objective: Our goal is to make strategic economic decisions informed by the circular design of nature's economy and by the moral imperatives of environmental and social justice.

Strengths:

- Promise to divest
- Environmental awareness and nonviolence in official university mission statement
- Compost and recycling bins: Greater availability of recycling and compost bins in bathrooms and common spaces; hand dryers or compost bins to reduce paper towel waste
- Reduce of water usage through low flow showers
- Implementation of energy auditing and metering systems, to identify opportunities for energy demand reduction in water heating, space heating, electric appliance usage
- Analyze opportunities for boiler efficiency upgrades on Lone Mountain campus (ongoing)
- Analyze opportunities for additional efficiency upgrades in the USF co-generation plant (ongoing)
- Examine the potential for efficiency gains in refrigeration, lighting, cooling of computer clusters, and other commonly used appliances (ongoing)
- Conduct feasibility assessment for other on-site renewable electricity generation: wind, additional photovoltaics (PV), renewable fuel cells (ongoing)
- Develop overall water conservation plan and storm water plan, to manage ongoing impacts of climate change related to water (as part of USF's SFPUC compliance)

Areas for further development:

We believe a dedicated center, institute, or school for sustainability (see goal 5) can help us to synergize our efforts, as it will encourage collaborative work, prioritizing innovative and

interdisciplinary learning and research and engage the campus community to be Green and Gold: Green Offices, Green Classrooms, Green Labs & Studios, Green Dorms, Green Events, Green Commuting.

4. Adopt a Sustainable Lifestyle

USF has upgraded some of its infrastructure, and the Office of Sustainability has placed recycling bins all over the campus, yet we also believe a lot more can be done to assist in establishing a sustainable lifestyle for those who live on campus, those who commute to campus, and those who work, study, and eat on the campus. We can lead by example and practice what we teach, bringing awareness to the choices made in “greening” the campus. Celebrations of particular goals can aid in establishing a culture and spirituality of sustainability. Students can help to maintain and green the USF gardens and landscape. Faculty research can assist in making sustainable and just choices.

This goal is connected to USF’s Strategic Goal #3: *Provide a radically inclusive, international, and welcoming campus experience* and to Strategic Goal #5: *Ensure USF is an equitable and extraordinary place to work.*

Objective: Making the lives of students and employees, of those who live, study, and/or work on campus sustainable in terms of the overall carbon footprint.

Strengths:

- Provided electric charging stations in campus parking areas.
- Backstage Bikes provides bike repair training and tools to the community
- The USF Seed library provides free seeds to the USF community and educates students about the connections between the food we eat, the labor that goes into it and the land where it grows.
- USF Community Garden - a living laboratory for students, faculty, and staff interested in sustainable agriculture, and a space for reflection for anyone in the community
- Increase in remote and hybrid work arrangements, reducing car commuting
- Tax-free public transit subsidies offered to staff who do not purchase parking permits.
- USF’s Wellness Manager leads an ongoing [GoUSF Environmental Justice Committee](#), a team of faculty, librarians and staff. A second annual Environmental Justice Call to Action is planned for April 2023, with activities and speakers for employees to learn, reflect, and take action for environmental justice. .
- Encourage and educate the USF community about sustainable agriculture with support of USF’s urban agriculture program and partnerships with Star Route Farm
- Increase the use of healthy sustainably-grown food in campus food service outlets
- Increase support of the USF Food Pantry so that it can be open more often and offer more food and other items to more students
- Provide more electric charging stations in campus parking areas
- Install light timers and motion-sensitive lighting in campus rooms (ongoing)

Areas for further development:

From campus food services to bicycle and transit commuting, to second-hand fairs (or a campus surplus stuff store) on campus and dorm deposits of unwanted items for incoming students to solar installed for all buildings, USF can keep building on and encourage a further sustainable lifestyle.

5. Offer Ecological Education

A survey of faculty collected in 2019 and earlier efforts to comb through the catalog of courses offered at USF make clear that USF offers a great variety of courses that address climate change, ecology, ecological sustainability, poverty, and environmental justice. The university offers a BA in Environmental Studies, a BS in Environmental Science, an MS in Environmental Management, as well as in Energy Systems Management. We have courses in environmental law, philosophy, sociology, business, literature, health, history, and so forth. We could say we do well, especially considering that the faculty who teach these courses conduct research and publish in these areas.

This goal is connected to USF's Strategic Goal #1: *Reimagine Jesuit education*.

Objective: Revise USF's curricula and co-curricula, and establish a center for integral ecology.

Areas for further development:

What USF could do better is to emphasize integral ecology, as set out in *Laudato Si'*, Chapter Four. Interdisciplinary work and collaboration between colleagues in different disciplines is encouraged by the university, yet rare in practice. To encourage interdisciplinary work in terms of teaching and research and/or the study of integral ecologies, USF could create a Center for Integral Ecology. Such a center would integrate the different aspects of the university such as research, education, transportation, housing, and facilities. It would be either integrated with the university leadership, or would function as a consulting body for all major decisions. The USF Center for Integral Ecology could be the wellspring for a new ecological culture at USF and a center for reimagining education around the connection between people and planet.

6. Develop Ecological Spirituality

This theme is central to *Laudato Si'* and should be central to our initiatives at USF, it is tied to all the other goals, or ideally, it ties those goals together. Community, culture, and a sense of connectedness to one another and the earth is at the heart of our endeavors. Art and rituals, meditation practices and events that can lead us to what Pope Francis calls an ecological conversion, reflecting our values regarding the Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor.

This goal is connected to USF's Strategic Goal #3: *Provide a radically inclusive, international, and welcoming campus experience* and to Strategic Goal #5: *Ensure USF is an equitable and extraordinary place to work.*

Objective: create a campus culture enabling ecological conversion

USF Actions to Date:

- University Ministry has organized events and reading groups around Laudato Si'
- UM recently revealed its Laudato Si' mural
- CTE's summer reading project highlighting Robin Kimmerer's book *Braiding Sweetgrass* thinking about including indigenous voices in our efforts to connect to the earth
- Meditation (from different cultural and spiritual backgrounds) groups exist, (none explicitly ecological)
- Events with speakers from different cultural and spiritual backgrounds
- Immersion trips
- Human Resources annual environmental justice challenge for faculty and staff
- Lane Center's Laudato si reading and discussion group
- Lane Center / UM retreat on the farm inspired by Laudato si

Areas for further development:

In order to connect our university to the sacredness of the natural world we can organize annual guided 'nature walk outings, nature immersions, and provide alternatives to consumerism. We think it is important to provide training for students, faculty, librarians, staff, alumni, and community partners focused on including ecological conversion in the USF experience.

7. Support Local Community

This goal is connected to USF's Strategic Goal #2: *Invest in and promote the scholarly, creative, and community-focused endeavors that advance justice and address the pressing challenges of our time* and to Strategic Goal #4: *Extend our visibility, prominence, and accessibility through strategic partnerships, public programming, and community outreach that extend our reach as people for and with others.*

The main campus of USF is surrounded by a variety of neighborhoods, some wealthy, others struggling. A five-minute walk away is the culturally significant Haight Ashbury. We are minutes away from Golden Gate Park, which provides an opportunity for strolls, runs, or picnics amidst trees, ponds, and the AIDS Memorial Grove. The campus is situated on unceded Raymatush Ohlone land. The neighborhoods surrounding USF also provide a home to many people who do not have a permanent shelter, or who face food insecurities. Our neighborhood, and the greater San Francisco area provide ample opportunities for community engagement and reflections.

USF Actions to Date:

- Community Engaged Learning (used to be Service Learning) is a requirement for all students.
- McCarthy Center organizes events and connects to community partners,

- The sustainability office organizes neighborhood clean ups.
- Before Covid most events on campus were typically open to the public (advertising should be improved)
- Pilot program with driverless cars
- Engaged in a year of discernment to explore USF's historical relationship with Native American peoples, and to research best practices in building relationships between Jesuit universities and Indigenous communities. The outcome of this year-long journey was the August 2022 publication of a white paper titled "[A Year of Discernment: Indigenous Engagement at USF](#)"
- Establishment of a committee to address USF's responsibility for the land on which we sit and build meaningful relationships with tribal leaders

Areas for further development:

We can develop a community coalition to participate in local, regional, and national sustainability policy formation. We can tie into transportation infrastructure (better bicycle lanes, public transportation, etc) and be involved and connected to housing issues.

Appendix 1

Reflections on the Laudato Si' Goals, USF's Mission, and USF's Strategic Plan

One of the subgroups in the Spring of 2022 did an elaborate analysis of the Mission, Strategic Plan and the Laudato Si' Goals. Here are, first of all, a table with the main results of those comparisons

Strategic Plan Goal	Objectives	Actions	Laudato Si Action	Laudato Si Goal
#1 REIMAGINE JESUIT EDUCATION	Revise USF's curricula and co-curricula	Revise the undergraduate core, majors, and graduate degree programs to enhance transdisciplinary , global, experiential, and civically-engaged learning	Develop a concentration, major and/or minor in environmental studies/science , sustainability;	#5 - ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION - rethink and reform our university's pedagogical structures and processes from the perspective of an integral ecology
		Strengthen curricular and co-curricular programming in order to develop students as ethical leaders, change agents, and movement builders seeking solutions to the environmental, social, and public health crises facing our planet.	Design courses linked to on-campus environmental problem-solving	#5 - ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION - rethink and reform our university's pedagogical structures and processes from the perspective of an integral ecology
	Transform and leverage physical and digital	Leverage physical and digital work spaces at our	Build a dedicated center, institute, or school for	#3 - FOSTER ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS - make strategic








	technology spaces to support collaborative work, prioritizing innovative and interdisciplinary learning and research	Hilltop and other campus locations to launch centers focused on (1) science for justice, health equity, and environmental sustainability	environmental sustainability.	economic decisions informed by both the circular design of nature's economy and the moral imperatives of environmental and social justice: equity
#2 - INVEST IN AND PROMOTE THE SCHOLARLY, CREATIVE, AND COMMUNITY-FOCUSED ENDEAVORS	Advance scholarly, creative, community-focused work that generates social action	Convene an annual dialogue in which community members can discuss social, economic, and environmental justice issues	Enable partnerships between the university and communities conducting participatory action research; organize public events; Develop a community coalition to participate in local, regional, and national policy formation	#7 - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTICIPATORY ACTION - acts of solidarity within and between universities and community-based partners
			support integral, interdisciplinary research on environmental and social security, as well as environmental and social equity; Create curricula and programming that honors the contributions of Indigenous People; seek Indigenous dialogue partners on	#2 - RESPOND TO THE CRY OF THE POOR - strengthen existing or new programs that highlight social injustices so commonly rooted in environmental degradation

			biodiversity, water, and climate protection	
#3 - PROVIDE A RADICALLY INCLUSIVE, INTERNATIONAL, AND WELCOMING CAMPUS EXPERIENCE	Address our students' housing, food security, and holistic mental health needs	Extend support for the mental health and holistic wellness of our students	Make free bicycles available for campus community use; Incentivize community members to reduce cell phone/social media use; Incentivize the reduction of meat consumption/all campus events catered vegetarian;	#4 - ADOPT SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES - the personal transformations needed to live a sustainable lifestyle
#4 - EXTEND OUR VISIBILITY, PROMINENCE, AND ACCESSIBILITY	Become a leading destination for career acceleration, lifelong learning, and both virtual and on-campus programming related to social justice, sustainability	support cross-university collaboration and resource-sharing for certificates, badges, and other career acceleration programs		
#5 ENSURE USF IS AN EQUITABLE AND EXTRAORDINARY PLACE TO WORK	Extend cura personalis by fostering holistic wellness and the mental and spiritual health of USF	Provide training for students, faculty, librarians, staff, alumni, and community partners focused on timely mental and spiritual health topics (e.g., trauma...)	Organize annual guided 'nature walk outings'; Participate in community environmental restoration projects	#6 - ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY - connects our universities to the sacredness of the natural world, rooted in God's love for creation

			Bar commercial advertising on campus; reduce campus give-away promotional items; Develop a protocol for community members to eliminate single use	#4 - ADOPT SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES - the personal transformations needed to live a sustainable lifestyle
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1. USF Climate Action Plan Summary of USF Energy and Carbon Saving Strategies





A summary of USF Energy and Carbon Saving Strategies from the CAP is reproduced below, with the Laudato Si' goals addressed by each action/strategy indicated by their corresponding icon from the Laudato Si' Action Platform website, followed by additional recommendations for Laudato Si' actions.

						
Response to the Cry of the Earth	Response to the Cry of the Poor	Ecological Economics	Adoption of Sustainable Lifestyles	Ecological Education	Ecological Spirituality	Community Resilience and Empowerment




Educate and Engage

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|--|---|
| 1. Establish an Office of Sustainability and University Sustainability Coordinator to coordinate climate action and sustainability efforts. |  |
| 2. Enhance climate and sustainability education and research across the university, in keeping with USF mission as a socially responsible learning community. |  |
| 3. Engage the campus community to be Green and Gold: Green Offices, Green Classrooms, Green Labs & Studios, Green Dorms, Green Events, Green Commuting. |  |
| 4. Engage the surrounding community, alumni, and prospective students: develop climate and sustainability partnerships with City of San Francisco, Bay Area organizations, California agencies (CARB) and national organizations (AASHE); feature sustainability in external communications. |  |





Conserve Energy in Buildings

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|---|---|
| 1. Implement energy auditing and metering systems, to identify opportunities for energy demand reduction in water heating, space heating, electric appliance usage. |  |
| 2. Implement energy management systems, |  |
| 3. Require extensive use of passive energy systems in all new construction and upgrades (solar gain, shading, daylighting, ventilation). |  |
| 4. Work with the City of San Francisco toward net-zero energy (and carbon) in all new construction and major retro-fits. |  |














Enhance Efficiency

1. Analyze opportunities for boiler efficiency upgrades on Lone Mountain campus. 
 2. Analyze opportunities for additional efficiency upgrades in the USF co-generation plant. 
 3. Examine the potential for efficiency gains in refrigeration, lighting, cooling of computer clusters, and other commonly used appliances. 
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De-carbonize Energy Supply

1. Conduct feasibility assessment for low carbon space heating and water heating: geothermal heating, additional solar water heating, bio-gas use in boilers, renewable electric heating. 
 2. Conduct feasibility assessment for use of bio-gas in the USF co-generation plant. 
 3. Conduct feasibility assessment for other on-site renewable electricity generation: wind, additional photovoltaics (PV), renewable fuel cells. 
 4. Explore additional Power Purchasing Agreements, Renewable Energy Credits, and other purchase options for renewably-generated electricity and heat. 
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Transport Sustainably

1. Enhance communication, website, comprehensive marketing about sustainable transportation for USF.  
2. Secure more housing on-campus or near campus, to reduce the need for commuting.  
3. Enhance infrastructure and support for bicycles and walking: increase bike racks and lockers, bike sharing (USF or San Francisco program), discounts at local bike shops, walking and biking route maps with local businesses & secure/covered bike storage.  
4. Greater support for mass transit: display departure times in campus buildings, examine shuttle option, expand transit subsidy, collaborate with City to achieve mutual goals.   
5. Encourage fewer vehicles overall, support low-carbon vehicles: expand car share and ride share programs; increase parking prices and street timer restrictions, consider charging stations and preferential parking for low-carbon vehicles.  
6. Lighten up on air travel; offset remaining travel emissions.  








Minimize Waste, Recycle, and Compost

1. Conduct waste characterization study and analyze emissions avoided from waste minimization, recycling and composting. Target future actions based on the studies. 
 2. Analyze and implement options: greater availability of recycling and compost bins in bathrooms and common spaces; hand dryers or compost bins to reduce paper towel waste; green purchasing program to reduce life--cycle waste of common products.  
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Conserve Water

1. Analyze and target reductions in hot water usage, to save heating energy and carbon, as well as water. Consider shower timers in dorms and gyms.  
 2. Develop overall water conservation plan and storm water plan, to manage ongoing impacts of climate change related to water.  
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Manage Food and Land

1. Analyze life--cycle emissions related to food and land management, to include in the carbon inventory and further guide sustainability efforts.  
 2. Enhance efforts to support: local food, community food production, low--carbon food choices, reduction of food waste, food recovery, composting.   
 3. Enhance efforts to incorporate drought--tolerant, ecologically beneficial land management on campus and in local partnerships.  
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Offset Remaining Carbon

1. Use carbon offsets as a last resort strategy to achieve carbon neutrality, for indirect emissions such as air travel emissions.  
 2. Develop offset purchasing guidelines to ensure the University is making quality investments in off--site carbon reduction. 
 3. Prioritize locally focused projects in offset purchasing decisions.  
 4. Connect responsibility for offset payments, such as air travel offsets, with the group sponsoring the activity.  
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Appendix 3. USF Community Input

Input we received from OEI Launch panel on October 20th, 2022

- Work on communications!! So people are aware of the initiative. Need to spread the call to action.
- Work on developing awareness of what individuals can do – so people are less focused on themselves, and less wasteful
- Work toward a non-extractive future. Message to students: – speak loudly and share your voices
- Consider USF's impact on San Francisco – can we influence/contribute? Our impact/our voice? Eg, how much people drive
- Internal – USF fleet – electrify/chargers – eg at Star Route Farms
- Cafeteria – vegan food – issues of land use
- Link to housing and homelessness – access to shelter – privilege that many don't have. And housing is linked to transportation. Talk about the right to housing.
- How do we link to global efforts – have connections w/ very new Jesuit universities in Africa and elsewhere
- We need to think globally – and do so responsibly: work on global experiences

Community Art Input: October 2022

At Climate Action Week Tabling event in mid-October, input was solicited from the community in response to the prompt: "To me, One Earth means:". Community members shared input through words and imagery, some written as talking points, others in poetic/aesthetic form. Responses were then strung together and hung as a paper quilt.

Responses:

- Introducing more native species, like insects/plants
- Don't know if possible- habitat corridors, greenery on roofs, less packaged food and if using packages, use recyclables.
- (Imagery only: garden to cyclists to watershed to students studying outside)
- Clear Air + Water + Land for everyone! (imagery of clouds, water and trees)
- Better heat isolation in classes
- When the flowers bloom and the brown returns to green the Earth will be ours.
- One Earth means: 1 chance. 1 chance to fix what we did. 1. Chance and 1 chance only to do better
- Love (imagery of flowers and hearts)
- Earth. Fire. Water & Air. The land protects us so we should care.(imagery of handprints in different colors overlapping)
- Respecting ALL Life. (imagery of flowers in 4 corners of page)
- Spreading change to those in reach (imagery of flowers, insects, trees all interconnected)

- More Love (imagery of people of different skin color holding hands, plants, hearts and rain)
- Garden More! Visit the USF Garden!
- Why are we cutting down trees to dry our hands?!?!)
- More Native Plants! (abstract imagery of plants)
- There is no “away” (imagery of garbage truck unloading at a landfill)
- Use less water (imagery of a tree, stick figures and batman?)