



Universiteit Utrecht

Green Office Utrecht

Green Office business plan 2.0

Bright minds, better future

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www.uu.nl/greenoffice

Introduction

Green Office Utrecht (GOU) is the largest platform for students and staff to co-create and drive sustainable development at Utrecht University. In the GOU sustainable ideas take shape from vision to execution. Plans for implementation and project launches are coordinated in an effort to make the University a more sustainable place. Achievements and ambitions of the University are communicated through GOU channels to all stakeholders involved. Additionally, GOU has the ability to provide reasonable financial support for students and staff with impact-driven and feasible ideas.

Sustainable development is a dynamic process and although many initiatives are currently underway at the University, there is always more that needs to be done. Utrecht University developed and founded the Green Office in September 2013 with the help from partnered organization [SOON](#). A pilot period of two years was established by the University to evaluate the effectiveness of the Green Office. Midway through 2015 the University Executive Board made an assessment of the GOU and approved the project for continued support and development. This document was composed in order to delineate organizational strategy for future development and professionalization.

Index

Introduction.....	2
1. Context	3
2. The Green Office Model	3
3. Green Office Utrecht	4
4. Strategy	4
5. Operational structure	5
5.1 Communication (informing)	5
5.2 Activities and campaigns (involving)	7
5.3 Projects, volunteers and Living Lab (empowering)	8
5.4 Manager	9
5.5 Sustainability Program Team.....	9
6. Green Office Space.....	10
7. Finances	10
8. Conclusion	11

1. Context

Our current way of life is deeply unsustainable: Humanity consumes the resources of 1.8 planets. If present trends continue, we will need three planets by 2050. Creating a socially desirable and economically viable human civilization flourishing within planetary boundaries is the primary challenge of our time, the call of action for our generation. The necessary changes will not come easy or through technical fixes alone. On the contrary they require deep transformations in the way we think, live, travel, eat, vote and work.

Amendments outlined during the intergovernmental climate summit (COP21) in Paris 2015 need to take place in the lifetime of students currently studying. In order to meet necessary and ambitious targets, such as the maximum increase of no more than 1.5°C globally, students and youth must fulfil roles in leading the change. Most politicians that were part of this monumental movement will not be in power by 2050, and thus the next generation of climate leaders are the students of today.

It is the responsibility of universities as public institutions to be the engines of local, national and global sustainability transitions: Universities should educate students as sustainability change agents, create new knowledge to inform these transitions, and reduce the ecological and social footprints of running the organisation itself. Creating more sustainable universities requires dedicated change agents.

Students are oftentimes overlooked and side-lined within a university's sustainability efforts. This is a missed opportunity, given the energy and spirit of students, the learning opportunities that sustainability engagement presents and the sheer size of the student body as largest stakeholder group on campus. Yet for a large number of students to unleash their full potential as sustainability change agents, the institutional support, resources and legitimacy of universities and governments are required.

As a student-led and staff-supported sustainability hub, the Green Office Model presents an internationally recognized and open-source model to structurally empower students. The Green Office acts as a platform for students and staff running sustainability initiatives, improves the communication around these initiatives, and provides new impulses to create a buzz around sustainability.

2. The Green Office Model

The Green Office Model is the vision of a student-led and staff-supported sustainability hub that initiates, coordinates, and supports sustainability activities at an institution of higher or further education. The Green Office Model gave a growing movement of students, staff, faculty and organisations across the European Union a tool and source of inspiration to get the necessary resources, mandates and support for grassroots sustainability initiatives. The Green Office movement is decentralized across the European Union with various local chapters and network partners. The model entails six principles:

- 1) **Students & staff:** A dynamic team of student employees, volunteers and university staff form the core of a Green Office. They are directly responsible for running the Green Office operations and activities.
- 2) **Mandate:** The Green Office receives an official mandate to drive sustainability transitions of the University by creating new impulses, connecting and empowering actors, improving communications or developing sustainability strategies.
- 3) **Resources:** The university grants a budget for salaries, training, project expenses and office space. These resources are crucial to guarantee the continuity and commitment of students while enabling them to implement high-impact projects.

4) **Integration:** The Green Office is integrated into the institution's organisational structure, and is supervised by a steering committee. The Green Office team also joins relevant sustainability committees in both advisory and active roles.

5) **Collaboration:** All activities of the team are conducted in close collaboration and partnership with internal and external stakeholders. The Green Office also becomes part of the vibrant network of Green Offices around the European Union.

6) **Training:** The Green Office and its volunteers receive formal training from rootAbility. This training is targeted at building core competencies as sustainability change changes while inspiring and motivating participants.

The Green Office Model was designed by [rootAbility](#) and is rapidly proliferating across Europe. It is a source of inspiration and motivation for those involved to establish and lobby for similar student-led and staff-supported sustainability hubs making organisations, communities and societies more sustainable. The Green Office Model is open-source, freely available to everyone under a Creative Commons License.

GOs run various projects such as reducing food waste, improving the energy efficiency of the IT infrastructure, organizing conferences, workshops and movie screenings, piloting new sustainability educational programmes, and encouraging students to question their behaviours and role in contributing to more sustainable lifestyles.

3. Green Office Utrecht

Green Office Utrecht opened its doors in October 2013. As of then, plenty of activities and campaigns have been organized, student initiatives and staff projects have been supported and overall a large part (though not nearly large enough) of the UU population has been reached. In 2014, together with rootAbility, a vision and mission for the Green Office were formulated as follows:

Vision

Green Office Utrecht is the central hub where fresh minds and hands come together to support Utrecht University's sustainable development.

Mission

Green Office Utrecht achieves its vision by making the university's policy tangible in the everyday reality of its students and staff members by

- *informing them*
- *involving them*
- *empowering them to act*

Initially, each of these three main tasks were appointed to one team member, in a later stadium to a team of two team members. More about task division and operational structure can be found in paragraph 5.

4. Strategy

The Green Office Manager together with various stakeholders concluded in 2015 that the GOU must undergo a transition of professionalization in order to reach the next phase of development. As such, a strategic roadmap utilizing four fundamental themes for innovation has been established. The four themes of innovation are as follows:

1. *Focus* – Improved cohesion between activities, campaigns and communication, as well as integration with the University and the Sustainability Program Team.

2. *Reputation* – Establishment of a professional organizational image and brand. The perception of *student-driven* needs to be replaced with 'Grassroots' or 'Bottom-up' in order to avoid negative associations of unprofessionalism. The Green Office should be a place of inspiration, resources and information.

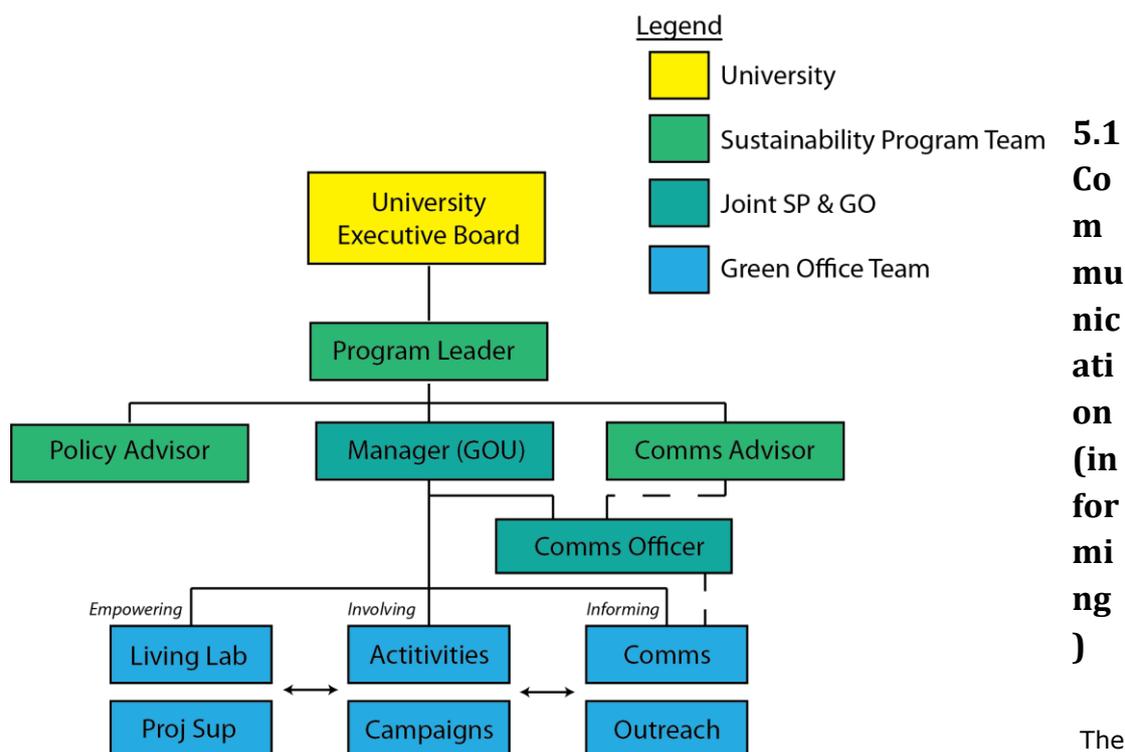
3. *Visibility* – Increased exposure and brand recognition around the university. Our team and information will be continuously and highly interactive with the University community across varied locations including the city centre.

4. *Structure* – Enhanced configuration and accountability of team members with clearer task descriptions to avoid redundancies and improve effectiveness. Individual and team targets, key performance indicators (KPI's) and monitoring will be more clearly established, as well as professional guidance and opportunities for development.

In the next chapter the integration of these four themes into the operational structure and daily state of affairs will be accounted for.

5. Operational structure

One general manager (0.7 fte) and six student team members (0.3 fte each) operate the current state of affairs in the Green Office. However, the need for one, possibly two new employees to oversee and help manage future development including the professionalization transition is strong. There are three teams within the Green Office structure, each consisting of two team members, which actively coordinate with the general manager. These teams are based on the mission and vision of GOU: a communications team (*informing*), campaigns and activities team (*involving*) and a project team (*empowering*). Together the team is responsible for building and engaging a community both on and offline amongst which change agents (both students and staff) who drive the process of sustainable development at Utrecht University are engaged. The Green Office is part of the Sustainability Program of Utrecht University.



communications team is responsible for informing the University population with regards to sustainability initiatives, both within the Green Office and for the University as a whole. The team consists of a team member *Digital Communication* and a *Marketing & Outreach* team member.

The team member Digital Communication is responsible for developing and managing a digital community through promoting all activities regarding sustainability at the University (including GOU), in order to excite and activate students and staff. An enthusiastic community of 'followers' enables the GOU to source volunteers to join activities and support projects. The GOU utilizes social media (Facebook & Twitter), monthly newsletters (MailChimp) and the website (Wordpress) as channels to disseminate information and manage the community. Therefore, it is the responsibility of this student employee to manage these channels and grow the GOU community by optimizing procedures and developing new digital channels.

Within our communication a clear focus will be on internal affairs of Utrecht University. GOU will no longer communicate about all activities that regard sustainability within Utrecht region or surroundings, nor will we be an advertisement channel for external events (with few exceptions), internships, or products. Instead the team member digital communication will actively look for interesting events and news items coming from the various research institutes, faculties or operations. Green Office will work on visibility by extending communication channels through flatscreens. Furthermore, in different communication channels structure will be increased by using more recurring modes of communicating, such as the 'tip of the week' for external events and a weekly 'Duurzaam Dilemma' to get people to discuss sustainability issues on our channels.

The team member Marketing & Outreach is responsible for the external visibility and brand reputation of GOU. This student employee is responsible for all non-digital outreach channels and should target all students and employees regardless of faculty/department to insure a holistic representation within the GOU community. There are several ways GOU plans to do this. Some examples:

- Green Office On Tour: One channel reaching the whole population is the GOU tour with the GOU Bakfiets. The Bakfiets will be used as a pop-up stand / working space for the GOU team and will visit all university buildings, including those in the city centre at strategic times.
- Green Office Workshop: an interactive workshop that can be set up during various events, such as the Education Fair and U-Share. Also the workshop can be booked by teams or departments. The workshop will explain the Green Office context, will give an accounting for what's happening at the UU on the level of sustainability and will challenge the participants to come up with good ideas themselves.

The student employee will also be responsible for outreach experience: physical branding, as well as the evaluation and improvement of user responses to GOU interactions. Thus this team member will manage the physical office space of the Green Office: the furniture and interior design, posters, plants etcetera. The team member makes sure that the Green Office is and/or stays an inspiring meeting spot and hub for all curious and sustainably oriented students and staff. Other tasks this student employee will conduct are organizing lecture talks, coordinating our presence at information markets such as UIT and Orientation Day, and other promotional activities.

Apart from these activities, the team member Marketing & Outreach will also organize social events together with the student employee Project & Volunteer Support, so as to bring all the GOU followers together and thank volunteers.

5.2 Activities and campaigns (involving)

The activities and campaigns team is responsible for involving students and staff in sustainability at the university.

The Activity Coordinator is responsible for the way activities are used to strengthen the links between students, staff and sustainability in the UU. Activities of GOU will be focussed on making sustainability (either in research, education or operations) tangible for students and staff in their daily habits. On the one hand, there are various research institutes within our university (USI, Copernicus Institute, Future Food) doing top-notch research on all kinds of sustainability topics. But what does all of this scientific knowledge mean? Through activities in cooperation with these institutes, Green Office will help explain the implication of current scientific news for the average student or staff member. On the other hand, the university's operations departments work on all kinds of ways to make buildings and services more sustainable. Again through activities in cooperation with these departments Green Office shows the what, where, why and how of these sustainable measures. When needed or desired, we will urge students and staff to take responsibility for their own actions during working or studying hours. Whenever possible activities will be linked to the (inter)national sustainability agenda (Day of Sustainability, Water Day, take your bicycle to work day, Night of the Night, Earth Day, Vegan Challenge etc).

As Green Office Utrecht has missed out on the involvement of employees the first two years, special attention will be paid to organizing activities for employees. Employees require a very different approach compared to students. We will therefore reach out to them by organizing activities that are directly related to their field of work. Two activities that we are planning are Sustainability Cafés and Meet & Greet-sessions. Sustainability Cafés are meant for staff to hear about the sustainable development at UU, to meet colleagues who are also involved in sustainability and to discuss and inspire one another. Meet & Greet-sessions are trips to other universities or companies for specific UU departments, so as to learn from their good practices.

Apart from these activities, the activity coordinator will also organize social events together with the team member Marketing & Outreach, so as to bring all the GOU followers together and thank volunteers.

The Campaign Coordinator is responsible for involving students and employees in the sustainability policy and goals of the university. Via campaigns we attempt to clarify efforts the university is taking regarding sustainability to students and employees and make them aware of what they can do. The student employee will do this by starting creative communication campaigns and organizing fun and engaging actions. Whenever interesting topics pop up in the Living Lab projects that need the awareness of the university population, this team member can also connect the campaigns with these projects, hereby actively pursuing implementation of Living Lab recommendations.

In the past, one of the most successful campaigns has been the one on plastic separation, resulting in waste separation bins slowly being spread around campus. Also, considerable results have been reached in the IT campaign springing from research done in the Living Lab, as was the case for the plastics campaign. In the IT campaign, the Green Office has undertaken several actions getting the university to turn down screen brightness of computers and enable sleep mode. Key in all campaigns is to actively work together with employees involved in the topics the campaign is on and always strive for constructive mode of collaboration with both students and the university. An example of this is the dialogue that sprang from the Meatless Monday campaign that was kicked off by getting students to cook and share more vegetarian dishes, but also resulted in fruitful discussion among different departments of the university.

5.3 Projects, volunteers and Living Lab (empowering)

One of our aims is to facilitate students and staff members with ideas on how to get the campus more sustainable and to turn these ideas into actual projects. We do this by giving guidance, organizing supportive workshops for GOU project groups and by providing financial support.

The team member Project & Volunteer Support is the point of entry to the GOU for students and employees who have ideas about sustainability at the UU. The student employee will support, stimulate and give advice to the project teams. Through a national network of sustainability initiatives led by students, this team member will connect our own projects with similar project teams elsewhere in the country. Therefore, this team member maintains contact with other Green Offices and our partner organisations to maximise knowledge and experience exchange. Also, this student employee is responsible for volunteer coordination. Students who want to volunteer with the Green Office decide together with the Volunteer Coordinator which projects suit their skills best.

The Green Office is designed to be a hub for sustainability initiatives within the university. The team member Project & Volunteer Support facilitates existing movements and directs student and employee energy towards the university's pressing sustainability issues. In doing so, the Green Office sets out to fully harness the potential of the members of the UU community and empowers them to take action on issues they come across on a day-to-day basis. Examples of such projects are the DuKo (DuurzameKortingskaart): started in Utrecht and now being spread into different cities, the Groentetas: a long-standing initiative now becoming a structural part of UU sustainability by integrating into the Green Office as a project group, and the e-waste collection to raise money for Stichting AAP started by one of the UU employees. The focus of the student employee is on starting up projects in a way that they will eventually become self-sustainable. By facilitating projects to become independent as a project group, the Green Office ensures the capacity to keep admitting new groups.

Aside from the project groups, the team member Project Support is responsible for the coordination of volunteers working with the Green Office. People applying to volunteer get registered and are notified when any specific volunteer opportunities come up. Throughout the year there are also more long-term volunteering positions. Good ideas for projects that the Green Office itself does not have the capacity for are put forward for volunteers to take up. One example is UU Talks, evenings on which UU students and staff get to give short talks on their sustainability-related passions in a TEDx-like format. Food market SusTasty is an example of a project carried out by the Green Office, but with a set group of volunteers working together with the Green Office team members every step of the way.

The Living Lab Coordinator is responsible for a large part of a central pillar of Green Office Utrecht, to make use of all the knowledge that is concentrated at Utrecht University regarding sustainability. And the best way to make use of this knowledge and the capacity of students is to integrate their research projects into actual sustainability issues that the UU is facing. Therefore, Green Office Utrecht is further developing the implementation of the Living Lab – a project with the aim of connecting sustainability issues experienced by university staff to students with the enthusiasm and capacity to research sustainability. It creates a platform for practical sustainability issues of university to be tackled and provides students with real-life cases to practice their skills on.

By connecting students wanting to research sustainability within their project-based courses to university staff facing sustainability issues in their jobs, problems get solved without ever leaving the premises. Working on real-life cases greatly enlarges student motivation, which is why most teachers are always on the look-out for interesting problems to solve. By providing them with university sustainability issues, students get to research and advice on their own environment and the client – a UU employee – gets an in-depth advice written by people who care about the situation improving. One of the key

points of the Living Lab is that good results will actually be implemented. Using real problems motivates both staff members and students, especially after seeing their issues and work done can tangibly contribute to a more sustainable campus and university.

End of each academic year, the Living Lab Symposium is organised. Designed to celebrate the outcomes of the past year's research done, the symposium has proved to be a festive ending to a year of UU sustainability research and a good way to thank students, staff and teachers for all work done. At the symposium a representative of the Executive Board gives a response to the presentations by the different groups. The symposium is organised by the Living Lab Coordinator in close collaboration with the Sustainability Program Team and the GOU manager.

5.4 Manager

At the beginning of 2016 the Green Office team is still occupied with only one regular staff member; the Green Office manager. The manager is responsible for the daily functioning of the Green Office, as well as deciding on and warranting of the strategy of GOU. The manager is responsible for the supervision of the student employees and functions as the chain between the Green Office and the department of general affairs of the university. Other than that, the manager is responsible for the GOU budget and decides on sponsoring of student or staff initiatives. In regards to maintaining the long term vision and connection with the university the manager is supported by the other members of the Sustainability Program Team.

To improve the structure of the Green Office, as of January 2016, the Green Office manager will have fortnightly meetings with the individual team members to discuss their wellbeing, planned activities and tasks, expenses, problems faced and other matters which are not suitable to discuss during team meetings.

Due to a growing workload, the Green Office needs more than just one solo staff member. In the first months of 2016, the Sustainability Program Team will write the profile for a Green Office Communication Officer. Also an Assistant Manager will be hired, either temporarily or structural.

5.5 Sustainability Program Team

As of April 2015, the university has installed a Sustainability Program team for the duration of three years minimum. The program team consist of four staff members: a program leader, a policy adviser, a communication adviser en the manager of the Green Office. The aim of the sustainability program is to accelerate sustainability within the university's operations and its internal and external communication. The programme has been established with the mission of the university being a role model in sustainability performance and conduct, by integrating sustainability into all its activities and with a community that is visibly and actively involved in this ambition. The program team has four core themes:

- *Impact of education and research*: increasing the impact of the UU's activities in the area of sustainability
- *Clean environment*: sustainable operations with the aim of reducing our CO2 footprint
- *Perception and visibility*: what makes a student, staff member or visitor recognise the UU as a sustainable university? How can we demonstrate our position as a role model in the area of sustainability?
- *Transparent reporting*: increasing transparency in our reporting and accountability

Green Office Utrecht is especially connected with the third theme: perception and visibility and will therefore work in close collaboration with the Communication Adviser of the Program Team.

6. Green Office Space

A very important asset of the Green Office is the physical office space. Except from being a space for the team to work, the Green Office is also a meeting hub for everyone concerned with sustainability at the UU. People should feel welcome to come in and have a chat with whoever is present. It is an inspiring place where both staff and students can meet others to work on sustainability projects.

As the Van Unnik building will close in the nearby future, Green Office Utrecht is looking for a new location. This move will be the perfect opportunity for us to create our dream Green Office Utrecht location, a place where both students and staff will feel welcome and will come back to again and again. We want to realise this by staying true to the current Green Office image of cosiness and sustainability, but polishing it up a bit. This means no more threadbare chairs, moving boxes on top of closets and walls full of a4 posters and adhesive tape, but a cleaner look and feel with perfectly matched second-hand furniture that is still in mint condition, lots of wood, metal and of course green. To put it all in one sentence: hipster barista bar meets modern office with flexible workspaces. We hope that this new, more open and approachable office space will attract more people, more minds and more ideas to the Green Office than ever before.

7. Finances

Green Office Utrecht depends on the university when it comes to finances. No funding is coming from external sponsors, nor is the Green Office generating any inflow of money. The university attributes 50.000 euro's a year for the Green Office, excluding the salary of the manager, costs for housing, energy and water and costs for office supplies. The budget is divided as follows:

Budget Green Office Utrecht	
Marketing & Outreach	€ 9.000,-
Projects & Living Lab	€ 6.000,-
Campaigns & Activities	€ 6.000,-
Training & development	€ 3.000,-
Office	€ 1.000,-
Student employees	€ 20.000,-
Unforeseen (10%)	€ 5.000,-
Total	€ 50.000,-

Each team of two student employees has €10.000 euro's to spend each year, which comes down to roughly 1.000 euro's a month (as nothing's happening in July and August). Whenever a team is not spending its 1.000 euro's a month, the money automatically falls back to the Green Office as a whole. This means that other teams could make use of the money, or the money is spent on things that benefit the team or the office or suchlike things.

8. Conclusion

In the upcoming months Green Office Utrecht will work on focus, reputation, visibility and structure. This direction has been chosen to ensure the continuous development of the Green Office towards growing impact and increased professionalism.

Focus will be provided by making internal affairs of the UU central to both our communication strategy and activity planning. Digital communication will have a strong focus on internal affairs, showcasing the universities efforts relating to sustainability and promoting events and activities organised by university-related players. Similarly, activity planning will be directed towards informing the UU population on what is being done in research, education and operation in their own environment. This clear internal focus will be complimented by connecting to the (inter)national sustainability agenda and relating this to university students and staff.

Improvement of reputation will be provided by moving towards a cleaner and more professional office space, giving our communication strategy more structure, and organising more activities for employees. The change in communication strategy will help position the Green Office as an integral part of the university and an authority on UU sustainability. Organising more activities for employees will help involve university staff into our endeavours and provide an opportunity to show employees what the Green Office does.

Visibility will be provided by a new location with new interior design, activities at various locations, including the city centre, and – more specifically – the projects Green Office on Tour and Green Office Workshops. Green Office on Tour will provide visibility of the Green Office throughout Utrecht by providing a mobile Green Office-space. Green Office Workshops give information on the Green Office and UU sustainability. Meanwhile, moving to a new space and more central location will increase visibility on campus.

Structure will be provided by embedding the Green Office in the Sustainability Program, having regular meetings between manager and individual team members, and a new staff member to work in the GOU on a regular basis. At the new location, the Green Office team will be seated together with the Sustainability Program Team, in order to increase collaboration and ensure coordination. Regular meetings between the manager and individual student employees provide structure for the team members to regularly reflect on their tasks and activities. A new staff member to be added to the GOU team will relief work pressure for the rest of the team and help facilitate team members to remain open to new projects and on the look-out for exiting initiatives.

Over the coming year improvements in focus, reputation, visibility and structure will help the Green Office to move toward increased impact and professionalism. This plan has attempted to give an insight into the way these four themes are integrated into the Green Office's strategy and how they will improve the status quo.