

Pitzer College's Definition of Sustainability

This definition of sustainability articulates principles that shall guide policies and practices at Pitzer College. The United Nations' Brundtland Commission framed the concept of sustainable development as "meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Poverty is not only an evil in itself, but sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of all and extending to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life. A world in which poverty is endemic will always be prone to ecological and other catastrophes."¹ The Pitzer College community embraces this definition of sustainability and also recognizes that sustainability is measured along three interrelated dimensions of impact: environmental, social, and economic. Thus, in order to achieve sustainability a system must be environmentally sound, socially just, and economically viable. Pitzer College works to achieve sustainability by reducing the negative impacts and increasing the positive impacts associated with its actions across all three of these dimensions and by incorporating them into curricular and co-curricular education. In addition to these dimensions, Pitzer considers effective and participatory governance to be a vital component of sustainability.

This commitment to sustainability requires the college to engage in both long-term planning and short-term decision-making to promote sustainability. Accordingly, the Pitzer community recognizes the important roles of both resilience and adaptability in the pursuit of sustainability.

Environment

The environmental dimension of sustainability concerns the college's immediate and long-term impacts on living and non-living natural systems, including land, air, water, flora, and fauna within our ecosystem.

- Fossil fuel and natural resources consumption and management
- Transportation on and off campus
- Built and natural environment
 - Achieve and exceed LEED and other green building standards
 - Prioritize preservation and efficient use (including retrofitting and repairs) of existing buildings
 - Maintain healthy living and working environments
 - Support and maintain native and drought-tolerant plants and landscaping
- Materials - Select materials and products with (environmentally, economically, and socially) preferable life-cycle impacts

¹ For the full Report of the Brundtland Commission, see <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-ov.htm>

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- Food systems - Maintain robust waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting programs

Social

The social dimension of sustainability concerns the impacts the college has on the social systems within which it operates. Practices of sustainability must address root causes of inequality and build resilient communities. Without democratic representation, equal rights, and equal access to resources, we will not have the capacity to sustain vibrant, respectful, and equitable social, cultural, and environmental systems.

- Education
 - Equity in admissions and access
 - Diversity in students, staff, and faculty
 - Curricular and co-curricular teaching and learning that promotes intercultural understanding and social justice
- Student, staff, faculty, and alumni engagement with sustainability
- Labor practices
 - Diversity and equal opportunity in hiring, retention, and promotion
 - Payscale which reflect community values

Economic

The economic dimension of sustainability concerns the college's impacts on the economic conditions of its stakeholders, and on economic systems at local, national, and global levels.

- Sustainable infrastructure
- Funding mechanism for sustainability initiatives (such as a Green Revolving Fund)
- Endowment management that supports the values and policies of sustainability
- Purchasing policies that are environmentally and socially responsible
- Affordable health benefits for all employees

Governance

Effective and participatory governance structures contribute to sustainability through the involvement of relevant stakeholders in decision-making. Such structures must also be coupled with an institutional commitment to advancing sustainability.

- Transparent decision-making and communication among constituencies
- Student, staff, and faculty participation in governance
- Collaboration across the 7Cs