



# Engagement Strategies for Faculty and Staff Who Teach and Advise Sustainability Activists

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## I INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, members of the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) and of the Sustainability Knowledge Community (SKC) analyze and reflect upon the ways sustainability activism intersects with higher education sustainability practices, policies, and governance. The authors summarize relevant research about campus activism, the interests of college students, and student development across the college

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experience in order to be able to provide tangible recommendations for faculty and staff who advise and teach student sustainability activists.

The challenges of social equity, the environment, and economics often intersect with those of free speech, expression, and politics. Although these topics have recently been impacted by rapidly evolving social movements and the COVID-19 pandemic, they are not new to higher education institutions. Many higher education institutions are acting to address a variety of interconnected environmental, social, and economic issues that have been referred to as “code red for humanity” by the United Nations’ (UN) Secretary-General (Alvarez, 2021; Secretary General, 2021). The UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently analyzed 14,000 scientific publications and cited irrefutable evidence that people are causing climate change. These changes will have a dramatic impact on human and natural ecosystems (United Nations, 2021).

In order to effectively support student learning and be able to implement sustainable practices, sustainability educators need to educate themselves regarding the issues affecting campus culture. For this to be possible, staff and faculty can draw upon case studies and research-based best practices to effectively negotiate their roles as professionals, educators, and advocates. College students report that dealing with climate change and other social challenges can negatively affect their mental health (Hiser & Lynch, 2021). How does this affect the abilities of students to impact change and influence the trajectory of higher education sustainability initiatives?

The authors discuss a variety of recent conflicts between staff, faculty, students, and higher education institutions that were complicated by personal activism. Examples include initiatives related to environmental and social governance, divestment, policy and hiring decisions, and strategic planning. This chapter analyzes recent high profile cases, like the tenure decisions between Nikole Hannah-Jones and the University of North Carolina, as well as differences over pedagogical practices between Cornel West and Harvard University. Amongst other personal activism cases, making the national news is that of the Supreme Court backing payments to N.C.A.A. student-athletes of color who sought equity and recognition.

These conflicts have been well documented and discussed among faculty and student affairs staff alike. They may contribute to the wavering confidence of higher education professionals who choose to support the political journeys of students or disclose their own personal ideologies on controversial topics. A lack of professional training or a fear of institutional

backlash for expressing personal beliefs can compromise the effectiveness of educators when they are teaching and advising students who participate in curricular and co-curricular political activities.

This chapter concludes with a toolkit, resources, and recommendations for further study. The authors highlight relevant professional organizations, training topics, mitigation responses, and tips for collaborating with campus and student organizations. These resources can help higher education professionals to build rapport and trust with their students while remaining protected from negative professional consequences. This chapter is designed to equip higher education professionals with the skills and resources needed to overcome potential barriers while supporting politically active students and supporting the implementation of higher education sustainability initiatives.

## 2 TRENDS IN STUDENT ACTIVISM AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

Seventy-five percent of students consider prospective colleges' environmental commitments to be a factor when selecting their majors and colleges of choice (Princeton Review, 2021), and a 2018 report from students and staff in the United Kingdom showed that 93% of respondents felt that sustainability was an important component of university education (Sustainability in Education, 2019). Student participation in sustainability activities has increased in recent years. This involvement intersects with students' emotional responses to sustainability issues (Devereaux, 2013). Recent research completed by the University of Hawaii (UH) System's Office of Sustainability focused on how UH students feel about climate change issues. Researchers found that the most common feeling among surveyed students was fear (selected by 37% of respondents), followed by hope (28%), anger (16%), sadness (15%), and shame (4.5%) (Hiser & Lynch, 2021).

Contemporary approaches to student activism can be analyzed within the context of the civic engagement, political interests, and social and emotional well-being of learners. Activism is defined as "engaging in direct, vigorous action to support or oppose one side of a controversial issue" (Allen, 2017). College student sustainability activism may focus on environmental and social governance (ESG); divestment; social justice and equity; service learning; and many other topics. While participating in

activism, the experiences of participants often connect with free speech, expression, politics, and conflicting views. Approaches to activism may also be impacted by factors such as social media, a plethora of information, and the interaction of users with online platforms. These interactions may vary as a result of factors such as age, ethnicity, race, and political affiliation (Auxier, 2020).

Students undergo personal and social development throughout their college experience (Tenant & Pogson, 2002). The involvement of learners in intentionally designed curricular and co-curricular sustainability activities can contribute to these growth processes. Students' evolving stages of development affect their interactions with other individuals, institutions, and authority and impact their level of cognitive complexity when analyzing systemic sustainability issues. Each of these factors requires effective strategies for advising and teaching college students who participate in activism. The wide range of sustainability topics provides a variety of opportunities for transformative learning through partnerships at the university, community, regional, national, and global level (United Nations, 2021).

Sustainability activism has been impacted by rapidly evolving social movements and COVID-19, but the topic is not new to higher education institutions. In recent years, a variety of sustainability-related policies and practices have fostered deeper student engagement in higher education. For example, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) provides guidance, resources, and assessment tools for higher education institutions around the world through the comprehensive Sustainability Tracking and Rating System (STARS). STARS is described as "a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance" (AASHE, 2021). By participating in STARS, universities report on institutional changes within the categories of curriculum; engagement; operations; planning and administration; and innovation and leadership.

STARS campus engagement reporting allows universities to highlight peer-to-peer education activities found across the university governance structure. Many student activism initiatives take place within these learning activities. These programs may be led by students and supported by staff, or they may be managed by staff with participation by students. Examples of campus sustainability activism include, but are not limited to, student organizations and clubs, student government, organized protests, residence life activities, service-learning programs, student employment,

class group projects with a service component, and activism that is not affiliated with any specific campus organizations. Activism may also involve community members who have roles other than those of university-affiliated individuals.

Staff, faculty, and students who are involved in sustainability engagement programs may be unclear about their roles, the relative level of authority, goals, strategies, and relationships to the university administration. Balancing ambiguous identities with personal values on environmental justice topics can be a challenging task for professionals who feel the need to remain neutral even in the face of controversy. Later in the chapter, the authors provide clarity for those seeking to protect their livelihoods and professional careers while also advocating for their students and causes that are important to them. When considering the competencies of leaders within any role (student, faculty, staff, or community member), it is important to recognize that sustainability and environmental justice are multifaceted topics that provide a variety of ways to demonstrate commitment. Since sustainability competencies are founded upon systems thinking, anticipatory, cultural, normative, strategic, interpersonal, and integrated problem-solving competencies, it is helpful when a leader of sustainability activists understands how these knowledge bases work together (UNESCO, 2017; Wiek et al., 2011). Each competency is a “functionally linked complex of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable successful task performance and problem solving with respect to real-world sustainability problems, challenges, and opportunities” (p. 204). Indeed, the sustainability competencies that support student success are often the same skills most needed by faculty and staff who teach and advise those students.

3. The Role of Faculty and Staff Advisors

By understanding the ways in which students develop throughout college, faculty and staff can effectively lead sustainability activists by using a variety of approaches. The understanding of student development can be valuable when advising a group as diverse as students who are passionate about sustainability. In some situations, teaching someone about sustainable mindsets is not as impactful as being able to demonstrate how the passions and interests of students are connected to sustainability. For example, members of a student food pantry organization may reflect on how local food insecurity is inextricably connected to city planning, food deserts, equitable housing, and other topics. Moreover, articulating to students how environmental consciousness can improve and enhance their lives can foster motivation for students to actively engage in sustainability

activism. Subsequent to sharing a series of case study examples of student activism, this chapter presents a toolkit of tangible strategies that can be used to support student activists' development of core sustainability competencies and leadership skills.

In order to be effective, sustainability educators need to be informed about the issues affecting campus culture. Staff and faculty can draw upon cases and research-based best practices to sharpen the sometimes-blurry lines between their roles as professionals, educators, and advocates. A variety of conflicts between staff, faculty, students, and higher education institutions have been complicated by acts of personal activism. Lack of professional training or fear of backlash can compromise educators' effectiveness when they are teaching and advising students.

Understanding the motivations of student activists can be a crucial component of the work of educators. When seeking to understand the reasons behind student activism, educators can learn more about them—their stressors, their passions, and their desired impact on the world. With this knowledge comes a deeper capacity to relate to students and provide more opportunities to develop rapport. This understanding also allows educators to more effectively support their students' learning journey.

### 3 EXAMPLES OF DIVESTMENT ACTIVISM

While some student activists may seek symbolic victories that do not result in tangible institutional changes, many students often seek to create specific changes to university policies and practices. One important example is the worldwide push from students demanding that their universities divest from fossil fuels. Recent institutional divestment trends provide valuable insights about how student activism intersects with politics, free speech, and university administration. According to a study completed by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO), 19% of institutions include Environmental, Social, and Corporate Governance (ESG) in their investment decisions. The list of universities who have made divestment commitments continues to grow each year. According to Georges Dyer, Executive Director of the Intentional Endowments Network, divestment will continue to gain traction, even at institutions with a historical dependence on fossil fuels (Whitford, 2021).

The journey of each higher education institution to decide whether they will divest has been unique. The Global Fossil Fuel Divestment

Commitments Database reports that 1500 institutions are divesting with an approximate value of \$39.88 trillion (2021). With the largest university endowment in the United States, Harvard University began their divestment process in September 2021, after years of advocacy that included the student-led Fossil Fuel Divest Harvard (FFDH) initiative. At times, FFDH had been at odds with the administration and had even initiated a lawsuit in the Massachusetts Appeals Court (which was eventually rejected). The lawsuit claimed that the Harvard Corporation violated the requirements of non-profit institutions by making investments that ignored social responsibility (Jaschik, 2016). During a 2019 football game between Harvard and Yale, student protestors from FFDH and Fossil Free Yale ran onto the field with signs and banners. Activists demanded that the two universities divest from their current financial holdings that were supporting the fossil fuel industry. One of the organizing groups stated that the two universities had “no right to profit off the destruction of the planet and land” (Burke, 2019). Their protest also included a call to cancel investments that generate profit from Puerto Rican debt. Fans joined the protestors on the field, and dozens of Yale and Harvard students were cited for disorderly conduct (Gringlas, 2019).

In another example of divestment-related student activism, the student-led Divest Portland State campaign at Portland State University (PSU) shifted political goals over multiple years as student leadership changed. The group was originally focused specifically on divesting the university endowment fund from fossil fuels and was led by a group of students affiliated with a student engagement program. The initiative later became embroiled in controversy after the Student Senate passed a resolution to divest from companies working with the Israeli military. The resolution made strong political claims about the conflict between Israel and Palestine. PSU’s President authored a statement calling the resolution “divisive and ill-informed,” and a variety of news outlets covered the story (JTA, 2016).

Protests that call for university divestment from fossil fuels represent a continuation of activism dating from as far back as the 1980s. One of the biggest differences between then and now, however, is that contemporary protests have proven to be very effective, resulting in public statements by many universities to begin the long process of fossil fuel divestment (Melia, 2020; Treisman, 2021). The impacts of these divestments are often difficult to measure, due to the complex nature of financial investment funds; however, the movement itself serves to both weaken the value of financial holdings in fossil fuels and to strengthen the negative social perception of

those institutions who remain invested. Divestment can also catalyze a strong social call for investment in a cleaner economy that prioritizes renewable energy and, at the same time, presents long-term strategic advantages for universities (Richardson, 2016).

Divestment-related protests have occurred at universities across the nation, as students recognize that their collective voices can begin to influence emerging policies surrounding carbon emissions and fossil fuel utilization (Melia, 2020). How do these and other current trends in higher education influence the structure and function of sustainability engagement programs? The experiences, perspectives, and development of students both impact and are impacted by involvement in activism in college life. By understanding student experience across the educational spectrum, higher education professionals are better equipped to support student learning, growth, and their development as effective sustainability leaders.

The recommendations that follow are designed to equip higher education professionals with the skills and resources needed to overcome barriers, while supporting politically active students and the strategic implementation of higher education sustainability initiatives. The authors have provided a toolkit containing resources, recommendations, and lessons for engaging with protests and sustainability initiatives. Sustainability activism will inevitably intersect with other campus activism. By connecting with and supporting student activism, professionals in higher education have the opportunity to strengthen relationships with students and more deeply embed sustainability within the fabric and culture of their institutions.

#### 4 TOOLKIT FOR FACULTY AND STAFF WHO ADVISE SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVISTS

For as long as there have been students at universities, there have been student movements. Campus life is where many activists first find their voices and develop leadership skills. Campuses have a responsibility to support students in their developmental processes throughout their educational journey. This toolkit offers a list of resources, recommendations for engagement, and lessons that universities can consider when teaching and advising sustainability activists.



### *Develop Professional Competencies*

Faculty and staff can begin their work to more effectively engage student sustainability activists by reviewing and practicing professional competencies. NASPA provides a robust set of competencies that can be utilized by student affairs practitioners as well as educators from other university departments. The Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) lists the following sets of competencies: values; personal and ethical foundations; law, policy, and governance; social justice and inclusion; leadership; and advising, among others. Each area includes descriptions of foundational, intermediate, and advanced competencies so that educators can reflect on their own growth (Cole, 2021). In tandem with the recommendations below, these competencies may be most helpful to university professionals as they consider their roles and boundaries while teaching and advising student sustainability activists.

As sustainability engagement occurs across all departments and academic disciplines, educators should consider relevant professional competencies in their own educational focus area. Sustainability engagement can occur across all departments and academic disciplines. An understanding of developments in one's own functional area, as well as current trends in sustainability activism, can provide context for engaging with students and colleagues.

Question to process:

1. Does your campus and profession have established professional competencies?
2. What are your professional strengths, and what skills would support your effectiveness while working with sustainability activism?
3. What trainings and resources are available for you to improve these skills?

### *Create a Plan for Responding Efficiently and Quickly if Activism Escalates*

It is no surprise that universities can be slow to respond to time-sensitive situations, as many layers of leadership need to approve the final response to actions of activists. When a crisis occurs, it is vital that the university responds with accurate information and policies that have been researched

and vetted. A delayed, disorganized, or hasty response can quickly become a communication and image issue for the university. Campus leadership should develop a communication playbook for responding to crises in a timely manner. The response playbook should have drafted communication, talking points, and an action plan based on the most impactful situations that have occurred in the past five years as a guide to future crises. By creating a communication playbook, universities will be better prepared to respond quickly and more efficiently. Each campus should define an appropriate response timeline with a statement and action plan, which should include next steps.

Questions to process:

1. How quickly did your campus respond after the most recent public demonstration? Was the response effective? Could the response be improved for similar future situations?
2. Does your campus have a communication playbook?
  - (a) If not, what core issues should this playbook address? Who needs to be involved in creating this playbook? Which administrators would need to approve the playbook before implementation?

### *Train Faculty and Staff to Effectively Engage with Activism*

Freedom of expression is a right that is only restricted by time, place, and manner for all students. College campuses should support and encourage activism, protests, and acts of free speech. Luke Martell, professor of political sociology at the University of Sussex, says that student protests should be encouraged and that “how management responds to it is about the sort of university you have in the first place” (Shaw, 2018).

Decisions made by some campuses to limit student activism have created backlash. In 2019, Brandeis University in Massachusetts changed their policy on student demonstrations to require that student activists seek approval from the university before holding protests. Activists criticized the new policy for “restricting freedom of speech and making peaceful demonstration more difficult” (Daily Orange, 2020). The administration was perceived to be suppressing protests, and the administration was perceived to be suppressing protests.

Activism is always changing and evolving, from street protests to online engagement. Staff should be given opportunities to participate in ongoing

professional training and education about best practices, historical events, and campus case studies that relate to campus activism (Staff et al., 2020; Schussman & Soule, 2005; Padilla, 2013; Ellsworth & Burns, 1970; Cho, 2020; Carlton, 2020). Consider inviting an expert guest speaker, hosting a staff and faculty training, or creating a website about topics such as free speech; time, place, and manner; and relevant campus activism topics. Lay the groundwork for the group by sharing policies and laws so that participants have the foundational knowledge necessary to understand which policies are non-negotiable. Provide opportunities for participants to discuss case studies and how they might best respond in specific situations. Individual and group reflection allows staff and faculty to work through “what if” scenarios together and share their experiences and expertise. Student affairs units often have experience working with student activists. They may already offer relevant training on free speech, university policies, and student development. Partnerships with student affairs can also create a networked approach to addressing student concerns and minimizing escalation of conflicts (Spalding & Wise, 2016).

If faculty and staff are planning to meet to speak about controversial issues, ensure that facts, and not commentary, are the driving force. Original fact reporting can be a foundation for dialogue on a controversial topic. Vetted resources can be used to uncover the truth and allow others to decide what it means and how it should be applied. According to the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), one of the professional responsibilities of environmental educators is to emphasize education rather than advocacy (2019). John Hug recommends that educators focus on providing “value free” space for dialogue, debate, and education rather than taking specific positions in the context of their educator role. He sees the role of the environmental educator as a “developer of skills and an information analyst who prepares the people (from any segment of the population) who will participate in environmental decision-making” (Hug, 2010, p. 24).

While an educator may not be able to march or protest alongside students given their assigned role, a primary responsibility of higher education professionals is to ensure the safety of their students. Actions to support students may include: coaching students about how to stay safe during active protests, providing water to protestors, educating students about the laws and approved spaces for free speech, and liaising with law enforcement to ensure that acts of activism do not yield legal ramifications that can jeopardize the blossoming careers of students, faculty, and staff.

Statements can also be taken out of context by media outlets and on social media, which may carry a significant risk for both students and educators. It is common practice for higher education administrators to include a statement in their biographies or profiles that reads something such as “These opinions are my own and not necessarily the stance of ‘x’ institution.” This clarification does not remove the author from all responsibility, but it does create a level of separation by suggesting that statements are made as a private citizen rather than as a representative of the institution.

Questions to process:

1. Which faculty or staff on campus can speak formally or informally about controversial issues?
2. What training and expertise can you draw from your professional life in order to better understand your role as an educator of sustainability activists?
3. What free speech policies does your campus already have to support and respond to protests and activism?
4. Does your campus have a time, place, and manner clause?

### *Create an Inclusive Environment*

Faculty and staff are the backbone of any college campus; as such, they have a responsibility to set the tone for campus culture. To fully understand this environment, faculty and staff must examine campus culture from the perspective of all stakeholders (faculty, staff, undergraduate, graduate, professional, alumni, and community). Though stakeholder views, goals, and strategies will not always align, understanding these different positions will help faculty and staff to create a more inclusive and informed institution. NASPA’s Policy and Practice Series document recommends that “student affairs professionals better understand safe and brave spaces and challenges these individuals and their campuses to prioritize the use of these spaces to ensure educational access and success for the entire campus community” (Ali, 2017).

Educators should provide a variety of ways for students to access and meaningfully participate in university decision-making and governance. It is important to design fair, transparent, and accessible candidate selection processes when choosing students for leadership positions, so that each

individual understands how to participate and has equal opportunity. Educators can also select student leaders from diverse backgrounds, interests, and approaches to serve as role models to the student body.

Questions to process:

1. How is your campus cultivating an inclusive environment?
2. How do staff, faculty, and administration provide safe and brave spaces to challenge students?

## 5 CREATING TRANSFORMATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

Sustainability educators can draw upon a wide range of resources to provide recommendations, best practices, and standards for programs and activities. Students are able to learn and practice sustainability and leadership, build teams and coalitions, navigate the university system, develop a nuanced understanding of strategies and changes that will lead to a sustainable world, and to reflect on their experiences.

Educators can review and implement sustainability program standards developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), the NASPA Sustainability Knowledge Community, and the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). The CAS Standards provide a comprehensive set of guidelines for sustainability programs that include mission and goals; program design; student learning, development, and success; learning outcomes and assessment; access, equity, diversity, and inclusion; leadership management, and supervision; human resources; collaboration and communication; ethics, law, and policy; financial resources; and technology (CAS, 2019).

Educators should also educate themselves about core student development theories and the ways in which this process will impact the way students approach activism during their college experience (Astin et al., 2011; Chickering, 1993; Keeling, 2006; Tenant & Pogson, 2002). With this context, educators can use sustainability-focused pedagogical practices to design curricular and co-curricular learning experiences (Burns et al., 2019; Filho, 2002) and learning outcomes that support sustainability competencies (Archambault et al., 2016; Wiek et al., 2011). Student

leadership and development theories offer students opportunities to identify and grow as leaders while participating in activism with their peers (Komives et al., 2011).

Question to process:

1. What opportunities does your campus offer around transformative development and sustainability leadership? 2. What opportunities can be created to better serve students' development and interests?

### *Create Mutually Beneficial Relationships*

Rather than responding only after situations escalate, faculty and staff can proactively focus on building strong, mutually beneficial relationships with campus and community stakeholders year-round. By developing trust and communication, faculty and staff will find support and allies when campus politics become difficult. They may also be better able to provide resources and support for students. As a result, everyone can ask for help when needed, get and give support, be honest, have difficult conversations, provide insight, be vulnerable, and communicate openly. It is important for faculty and staff to build learning communities with and among students, campus leadership, and alumni, as well as internal and external organizations. Alignment with local and global stakeholders help educators learn from other initiatives' successes and challenges (AASHE, 2021; UNESCO, 2014). Attending higher education sustainability conferences inspires students and staff to connect with other initiatives and peer programs.

Building relationships depends on strong communication; two-way dialogue is vital between campus leadership and campus stakeholders, especially in the midst of controversy. The Association of American Colleges & Universities underlines the importance of sharing official statements from senior campus leaders and engaging students, faculty, and staff proactively in discussions about free speech:

Tensions often run high when campus free speech controversies emerge. Productive conversations about free speech and inclusion among students, faculty, and staff before a controversy occurs can position a campus to navigate such situations, especially if the stakeholders are able to come to a consensus around the institution's values and related policies. Free speech, academic freedom, and inclusion are at the core of the modern university's

mission. Students, faculty, and staff deserve ready access to their institution's positions regarding these values and the policies that bring these values to life. (Free Speech on Campus: How Universities Can Communicate Our Policies, 2021)

It is also important for the student body to hear faculty and staff praise their activism even as they are supported in building their strategic thinking and cognitive development. Students need to know that they are permitted to assemble peacefully and make their voices heard. The Harvard Graduate School of Education states that “helping students develop their analytical skills, rather than simply their ability to memorize facts and processes, is a tricky project—something that separates an exemplary teacher from a good one. Among the avenues for encouraging those deeper-thinking tools: positive, public reinforcement of the strong thinking you hear and observe in your classroom” (Usable Knowledge, 2017).

Questions to process:

1. How can your campus improve relationships with stakeholders?
2. Which sustainability-related community organizations could connect with your campus?

### *Strategically Align with Campus Safety and Police*

In 2020, “defund the police” became a slogan on many US college campuses after increased media attention highlighted multiple murders of people of color by police. Tensions began to rise on campuses across the nation, often with calls to remove police presence altogether. It is beyond the scope of this article to debate the pros and cons of police presence on college campuses. In relation to student sustainability activism, the authors do recommend that universities create strategies and plans to work with police around demonstrations and protests. The university should have a clear understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of both their campus safety office as well as local police. Campus safety staff may or may not be sworn officers. Their designation will impact how they interact with and are perceived by students.

As well, faculty and staff should be aware of how social factors impact student experiences at college. Data has shown that students of color are negatively impacted by campus police relative to white students. According

to the ACLU, “if historical trends in the data hold true, law enforcement in schools will continue to disproportionately target students of color, students with disabilities, and students of color with disabilities” (*ACLU News & Commentary*, Resendes, 2020). One example comes directly from Northwestern University. According to the Washington Post, “Northwestern University faculty members in the Department of African American Studies noted that Black students are only 6 percent of the student body but Black people accounted for up to 40 percent of officer-initiated police stops on campus” (Cole, 2021). The perceptions of student activists regarding police may affect the way they interact with school administration and the strategies they utilize to accomplish their goals. Senior leadership must have a plan with defined roles and responsibilities for police at campus protests. Campuses across the country must learn from the many lessons learned by past police responses.

Questions to process:

1. Does your campus have a plan for how campus safety and municipal police will respond during a protest or escalation of conflict?
2. Do municipal police need to be called when protests occur on campus? In which situations? If not, who is responsible for deciding the appropriate university response if escalation occurs?

## 6 CONCLUSION

Improving the sustainability of college campuses is a complex process. Environmental justice, divestment, sustainable policies, practices, and strategies are becoming increasingly important to students. Institutions would be wise to maintain a public and proactive organizational approach that reflects higher education and professional values. Faculty and staff play an important role in coaching students to move the needle on social, economic, and environmental change in society, and students have greater power for social change on their campuses than they may realize. It is imperative that students are able to call on their leadership to invest in the health of our planet now and for the sake of future generations. Sustainability leaders can make an impact by embodying qualities of tact, diplomacy, passion, critical thought, and persuasion. Current sustainability activism topics, from fossil fuels to fair trade, present challenging issues that demonstrate levels of commitment on the part of educational



institutions to create comprehensive environmental justice. Remaining neutral in the face of social injustice allows oppressive systems to endure. Educators must find ways to safely express their opinions and support the causes about which they are passionate. The comprehensive toolkits presented in the chapter are offered as a way for educators to better understand how they can safely and authentically support sustainability activists while maintaining their professional roles.

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