

## How Sustainability Expands and Elevates YCISL

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### INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is a perfect platform for divergent and creative thinking. One of the main differentiators of the YCISL program to other youth leadership programs is the use of sustainability as an application platform. Sustainability is a universal cause that people instinctively understand but find difficult to regulate. Crop rotation is one of the earliest sustainability lessons I can remember learning; the idea of choosing what seeds to sow based on soil health or leaving fields fallow to rest was intriguing to me. Newer agricultural strategies such as planting a cover crop, integrated pest management and drip irrigation have advanced sustainability in this area. This document will describe how sustainability fits into the YCISL program and the benefits we hope to derive.

### YCISL SCOPE OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is multidisciplinary and appears in many areas of our lives. Perhaps the area that we appreciate the most is **sustainable health**. We routinely try to keep ourselves healthy, and we also do what we can for other close to us. Sometimes, we become concerned about community and population health and participate in preventative measures (eg, vaccinations) or take exposure prevention steps. Most of us also feel an impulse for **sustainable life** including our own life, the human race, or natural species. The popular topic in recent decades is **environmental sustainability** where increased awareness of environmental shifts due to growing human populations and consumption has raised concern on the international scale. This issue has drawn attention on the geopolitical as well as environmental activism levels. The practice of crop rotation mentioned earlier is connected to **sustainable food supply** which is highly interconnected across disciplines. Spates of economic instability have given rise to efforts to foster **economic sustainability** in trade, financial and banking sectors. This complex topic seeks both protection and growth of employment, wages and labor force amidst global competition. We can also apply sustainability practices to **physical spaces and materials**. For example, we would like to make our homes sustainably comfortable and functional. We can use renewable materials or install energy efficient systems or optimize design layouts. We also often pursue **emotional sustainability** namely in the areas of happiness, motivation and relationships – all critical factors to our positive mindset. An area with immense value is **sustainable learning** where we find growth mindsets and acceleration in opportunities for this through information technology. A

lagging companion to learning is **sustainable education** which would ensure quality material and methodology. So for the purpose of YCISL, we embrace this broad sustainability spectrum as our readily accessible platform for practicing our creativity, problem-solving and leadership.

#### SUSTAINABILITY BY DESIGN

In the YCISL program, we use sustainability as a platform for generating and realizing creative ideas. Our workshop focus topics of positive mindset, growth mindset, emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivation are key to the development and promotion of sustainability solutions. We introduce students to sustainability in a design context where our guest speaker, Glenn Katz, outlines functional and modal opportunities for improved sustainability. Our home building at Stanford, the Y2E2, serves as a model for sustainability experimentation where numerous prototypical design ideas were tested for changes in resource efficiency. Prototyping of these designs and variable success rate demonstrates the complex relationship between design, architecture and usability.

#### SUSTAINABILITY AS A COMPETITIVE FEATURE

Can a sustainability feature raise the user perception of a product? What products do you choose to use because of a sustainability feature? Sustainability can be positioned as a competitive feature because multiple benefits can usually be derived. For example, if we consume organics foods, we benefit our bodies as well as the environment.

#### SUSTAINABILITY MINDSET

Promoting sustainability has two stages including behavioral change and habit formation. Both involve developing a sustainability mindset and being mindful. The behavioral change part connects to the growth mindset where one has a willingness to try new ways of thinking and doing, and accepting the decisions and outcomes that arise from that change. The mindful part connects to the positive mindset where one acts proactively in the present with the belief that outcomes can only be beneficial. As an example, if we want to conserve water then we need to realize behavioral change where less water is used or wasted. Someone can know (KI) how to conserve water, but the objective will not be reached unless there is action. And reaching a sustainability goal is much easier if the action becomes habitual based on a positive emotional impulse (EI). We therefore need to promote intrinsic motivation in order to sustain a sustainability mindset.

#### SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Our program views the outcome of creative thinking and innovative actions as leadership. We also believe that attaining leadership intelligence requires coupled strengths in knowledge intelligence (KI) and emotional intelligence (EQ). We can examine this leadership model in a sustainability context, identifying successes and failures, as well as strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, we are particularly interested in youth leadership and the advantages of a youth mindset in this area.

#### THE SUSTAINABILITY POSITIVE-FRAME MINDSET

Sustainability is often associated with pain, loss or inconvenience. Cognitive Science tells us that these negatives automatically mute any gain from sustainable practice. Greater care is therefore needed in framing sustainability issues. A small gain frame has more influential impact than a massive loss frame. For example, should you inform the public that smoking can cause lung cancer and shorten your life, or should you say that not smoking extends your life expectancy? The former certainly has greater shock value but it is less likely to change behavior. So we recommend that sustainability messaging focus on positives and benefits.

#### SUSTAINABILITY LIFE LESSONS

In the YCISL program, the mission for our students is to develop personal and social sustainability awareness. Through management of our goals and tasks based on this awareness, we can build a list of action items that identifies a course and characterizes the cause. From this, we find life lessons on leadership, passion and purpose.