In October 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned the world the planet had twelve years, or until 2030, to limit climate change catastrophe; they argued that urgent and unprecedented changes are required to avoid significantly worse risks of drought, floods, heat and poverty for hundreds of millions. A means to this needed collective action is a sustainability-literate citizenry - informed and engaged individuals who value a vision for human prosperity within ecological functioning, economic stability, and social equity, the three tenets of sustainability.

The Task Force on Sustainability as a General Education Shared Goal will explore the expansion of Indiana University Bloomington’s general education requirements for undergraduates to include sustainability-literacy. The urgent need for this task force is underscored by the IPCC’s warning. It is further motivated by the following: Institutions of higher education, like IUB, are uniquely positioned and arguably responsible for helping to develop an educated citizenry to address the existential crisis of global environmental change. Many of IUB’s peer institutions have implemented general education requirements focused on sustainability literacy - Michigan State, the University of Minnesota, and the University of Nebraska among them. Moreover, there is a grassroots interest at IUB for sustainability education from faculty and students across the disciplines. A 2019 IUB Student Government survey found that 85.6% of IUB students believe their major addresses the three tenets of sustainability. Indeed, the shared goal is attainable given myriad curricular and co-curricular opportunities; 59 departments offer sustainability related coursework according to the University’s sustainability reporting.

The principle objective of the task force is develop a widely-vetted proposal to the Bloomington Faculty Council to amend the BL-ACA-H9 Indiana University Bloomington General Education policy to include Sustainability as a General Education Shared Goal. The task force will develop this proposal over the course of a year in consultation with all Bloomington academic units. In addition to listening and responding to stakeholders’ concerns, the task force will address the following:

- A justification for adding Sustainability to the General Education Shared Goals;
- Whether this proposed Shared Goal should be required or recommended;
- A consensus definition of sustainability principles and related learning outcomes for the proposed Shared Goal;
- Flexible implementation strategies (e.g. co-curricular opportunities and online learning) for the Shared Goal across academic units while meeting the larger goal of ensuring sustainability literacy among all IU graduates;
- Reasonable and flexible means to tracking students’ accomplishment of the Shared Goal.
The Task Force will either have a proposal to amend BL-ACA-H9 or a report and further recommendations by the beginning of the Spring Semester 2021.

Task force membership will include 4-6 members of the BFC and representation from the following groups: the Integrated Program in the Environment (IPE), Sustain IU, IUB Student Government (IUSG) and faculty from multiple schools.