Motion:

The Liberal Education recommends that the one-credit sustainability requirement for Goal Area 10 be discontinued as of December 31, 2015. Students completing either a companion course or a team-taught People and the Environment course will be deemed to have completed the requirement for Goal Area 10 for BSU and for MnTC transfer purposes.

Rationale:

For several years, the only way BSU students could meet the requirement for Goal Area 10 People and the Environment was to take one of the team-taught sections of the People and the Environment course (2925 or 2926). It was designed so that teams of faculty from different colleges would provide different disciplinary perspectives in the teaching of the course. With recalibration and with Minnesota Transfer curriculum rules that specifically exclude certain department prefixes from participating in Liberal Education, it became more difficult to find faculty able to teach one of the team-taught sections on load. To the best of our knowledge, there was no semester in which the team-taught course was taught on or in load by all faculty, and most semesters it was common for many sections of the course to be taught by adjunct professors or as overload. In some semesters the cost to deliver this one goal area exceeded $20,000. It also became more difficult to provide a robust complement of disciplinary perspectives that would provide an expansive understanding of approaches to this topic.

Over time and with increasing budget challenges, the administration expressed growing reluctance to pay overload and adjunct dollars to deliver goal area 10. In their minds, solely relying on the team-taught course to meet the needs of this goal area was not sustainable.

Faced with budget concerns, Liberal Education Committee members joined with interested faculty to develop a less costly option to deliver Goal Area 10 content. What resulted was a compromise. Departments were allowed to modify existing courses or create courses that met 51% of the student learning outcomes for goal area 10. Math, Biology, Environmental Studies, and Geology have all done so. These courses came to be known as companion courses. Since it was not known whether these courses covered the topic of sustainability, students who completed one of these companion courses were also required to complete a one-credit course on sustainability. As this course was not a part of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, all departments were allowed and encouraged to develop one-credit sustainability courses.

Implementation of this policy took effect fall 2014. Since its implementation, the Liberal Education Committee has noted the following:

- In fall 2014 there were 4 companion courses for which 278 students registered. During this same semester, five sustainability sections were available and 151 seats were filled. All of the sustainability courses were offered by Environmental Studies.
- This semester, spring 2015, there are four companion courses in which 248 students are registered. During this same semester, there are 7 sustainability sections in which 153 students are registered.
- For summer 2015, there is one companion course offered in which 7 students (so far) are registered, and there are no sustainability sections offered.
- For fall 2015 there are 4 companion courses offering seats for 260 students. I have five sustainability sections offered totaling 155 seats. (3 online from Accounting and 2 on campus from Biology.

In sum, issues continue to plague the delivery of this goal area. First, there are challenges in fielding enough sustainability sections/seats (on load or on top of load) to meet the FTE student need as determined by seats in companion courses. Second, the hoped for response for departments to develop and offer sustainability courses has not panned out. To date, only four disciplines, Environmental Studies, Chemistry, Biology, and Accounting have developed sustainability courses. Finally, significant extra dollars are still expended in the delivery of the sustainability course. Of the 17 sections that have been offered so far, eight have been delivered either by an adjunct professor or as overload, and one additional section was taught by an administrator at no charge.