

University of Southern California ITS Learning Environments Department Gets SAVE Certified



SAVE co-founders Christina De Bono and Joe Perez kick off the workshop at USC.

Photo: Lorenzo Bernardi and the University of Southern California

Embracing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at USC

Adding to its stature as one of the world's leading private research universities, the University of Southern California enjoys international recognition for its leading-edge classroom educational technology, managed by USC's ITS Learning Environments Department.

In the winter of 2023, under the leadership of director Joe Way, the Learning Environments Department became the first university entity in America to achieve SAVE Certification, a designation granted by Sustainability in AV (SAVE), the nation's first US-based industrywide organization to bring stakeholders in the audio visual (AV) field together to take concerted action to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



The Learning Environments Department's embrace of SAVE Certification goes hand-in-hand with a university-wide commitment to advancing sustainability, as evidenced by Assignment: Earth, USC's sustainability framework for a greener campus and planet. The sweeping program was authored by the USC Presidential Working Group on Sustainability in Education, Research and Operations with input from teams across the university. USC has also established The Center for Sustainability Solutions, an academic catalyst for the development of policy, technological and behavioral solutions to the most pressing sustainability problems of the Southern California region and the world.

The SAVE Certification process

"It's not enough to raise awareness. If we're to make real progress in achieving the 2030 Sustainability Goals (SDGs), the AV industry has to take concerted, meaningful, measurable action to address the issues, that threaten not just our sustainability, but our very survival," says SAVE co-founder Christina De Bono.

But where to start? What can individual organizations do to develop a plan of action that is in itself sustainable across their company and over time?

This is where SAVE Certification comes in. A program for companies in the AV industry, SAVE Certification provides a framework for organizations to develop and execute a plan to help achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

The Certification process begins with an assessment, moderated by a SAVE facilitator and attended by company leadership and staff. Over the course of two half-day sessions, participants identify which of the 2030 SDGs – and specific sustainability targets under each goal – most align with their organization's business model.

The second phase of SAVE Certification involves the development of specific strategies to achieve the targets and to measure the organization's progress against those targets.

Upon completion of the assessment and development of a sustainability plan, the organization becomes SAVE Certified. This is an earned credential that can be used to inform clients, vendors, staff and other stakeholders of an organization's active commitment to achieving the 2030 SDGs. SAVE Certified organizations also have access to all the resources SAVE provides to advance sustainability in the AV industry.



SAVE Certification at USC

In the Fall of 2022, SAVE Co-Founders Christina De Bono, Thuy To and Joe Perez conducted a SAVE Certification assessment in the ITS Learning Environments Department at the University of Southern California (USC).

The ITS Learning Environments Department oversees the design, installation, and support for the 500+ AV-enabled classrooms, conference rooms, auditoriums, computer labs, and study spaces across the USC enterprise. Its mission is to create a highly available and intuitive teaching-and-learning educational technology experience for the campus community through sustainable, accessible, and safe user-centered environments.

One of the world's leading private research universities with an enrollment of 44,000 students, USC is an anchor institution in Los Angeles and a global center for arts, technology and international business. Its diverse curricular offerings provide extensive opportunities for interdisciplinary study and collaboration with leading researchers in highly advanced learning environments.



Christina De Bono and Joe Perez of SAVE present to members of USC's ITS Learning Environments Department.

Photo: Lorenzo Bernardi and the University of Southern California



USC's Save Certification assessment consisted of a 3-part workshop held over a day and a half. Thirteen members of the 14-person department were able to attend both sessions.

FIRST – ALL-STAFF WORKSHOP

Part 1 - 45 minutes

- Attendees were briefed on the day's objectives and introduced to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals via a short video.
- Attendees were randomly assigned cards listing two Sustainable Development Goals, and partnered with others who had drawn the same cards.

Part 2 - 45 minutes

- Participants brainstormed with their group on how to align their workflows with their assigned SDGs, or what they could do personally to advance their SDGs.
- Ideas were posted throughout the room on large Post-It notes.

Part 3 - 45 minutes

- Each group assigned a team lead who presented their ideas to the larger group.

SECOND – LEADERSHIP-TEAM WORKSHOP

In the second part of the SAVE Certification process, members of the leadership team met to review the results from Day 1 of the workshop and decide which areas held the most promise for progress.

Part 1 - 60 minutes

- The leadership-team discussed how their organization can align with the SDGs.
- The team chose the SDGs that align most closely with their business model.

Part 2 - 60 minutes

- The team broke into smaller groups, each of which was assigned an SDG that the organization would like to focus on.
- Team members brainstormed ideas on actions that could be taken to address the SDGs, and recorded them on a SAVE Certification worksheet.



THIRD – LEADERSHIP-TEAM SDG PLAN FORMULATION

In the final part of the SAVE Certification process, members of the leadership team reconvened to create an actionable plan.

Part 3 - 90 minutes

- Leadership chose the actions they wished to implement, and entered them on their worksheet as a team.
- For each action chosen, the team began to formalize steps to achieve, sustain and measure progress. This formed the foundation for a complete action plan.

Results of the ITS Learning Environments Department SAVE Certification

At the conclusion of the SAVE Certification workshop, the ITS Learning Environments Department team identified a long list of tactics to be incorporated into an SDG action plan. Among them:

SDG GOAL 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

- Create an educational program for USC, providing a campus-wide introduction/overview of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals
- Plan & design a “Lunch ‘n Learn” for a Power Consumption Campaign with the intent of spreading awareness, building knowledge, and adopting better power-consumption practices
 - Spread/share Power Consumption Campaign lesson plan with SAVE and HETMA (the 600 colleges and universities that are members of the Higher Education Technology Managers Association)
- Develop a “Train the Trainer” program to enable SAVE Certification on a larger scale
- Develop a SAVE Certification Program, including documents and videos, to scale up SAVE Certification to make it more accessible for the Higher Ed & AV Industry
- Develop an InfoComm SAVE Certified course for AVIXA members
- Develop an EduCause SAVE Certified document for member organizations
- Hold an EduCause-SAVE Panel Discussion with SAVE, HETMA, EduCause, and SAVE Certified Higher Ed organizations to bring stakeholders in Higher Ed together to take collective action to achieve the SDGs
- Develop an ITS Trojan Learn SAVE Certification course for the USC Trojan Family





SDG GOAL 12: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

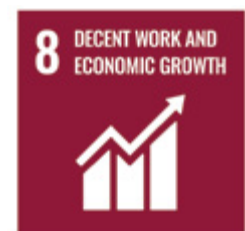
- Update RFPs for architects, engineers and others bidding on educational technology projects, reflecting USC's goal of advancing the SDGs and leading to a standardized RFP for the entire USC campus
- Develop educational practices to enable USC departments to incorporate sustainability into RFPs, with the goal of progressing on the path of USC's 2030 Net Zero Classroom goals
- Adopt new power management practices/standards for the USC campus
- Develop time schedules and OCC equipment to achieve better power management in accord with USC goals
- Specify metric-capable equipment capable of tracking certification goals
- Develop metric analysis practices to track performance of technology inventory
- Analyze technology inventory and current equipment to determine what can be recycled and reused
- Use SAVE-approved technology recyclers to ensure the proper recycling and disposal of equipment that has reached the end of its useful life



SDG GOAL 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

- Utilize work-study to advance the 2030 SDGs
 - Partner with the work-study program hiring committee to widen the pool of candidates and structure wage processes for improved equity
 - Partner with student supervisors to find sustainable methods and processes, and identify and measure non-subjective performance-based merit increases with the goal of increasing retention, student performance and morale





What happened next at USC

USC's ITS Learning Environments Department formalized its SDG plan with actionable steps, aligning the department's workflows and strategic objectives with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Upon completion of this step, it reconnected with SAVE to present its SDG action plan. At that time, the ITS Learning Environments Department received its SAVE Certification.

Once organizations become SAVE Certified, they receive digital and print assets that can be used to alert clients, partners and other stakeholders to the organization's commitment to achieving sustainability in the AV industry. USC also gains full access to SAVE's library of training and educational tools, and is provided an opportunity to receive ongoing training and guidance to sustain its efforts.

SAVE Certification is renewed on an annual basis, dependent upon each SAVE-Certified organization's commitment to monitor, measure and report on its progress toward achieving the SDGs.

USC staff testimonials about SAVE Certification

Upon completing the SAVE Certification workshop, attendees were asked to provide feedback on the experience. Their comments reflected the university's focus on immediate action and sustainable impact:

The SAVE Certification Workshop Experience:

"The most amazing part of the SAVE Certification experience was watching my team come together with one common goal: to create change and leverage our platform to do so. The tangible ideas they came away with, and the empowerment they felt, cannot be understated."

*Joe Way, Director – ITS Learning Environments Department, USC;
Chair – Higher Education Technology Managers Association (HETMA).*

"The SAVE experience brought a lot of aspects of our normal daily operations into a closer review. It was really great to see that the SAVE team is working diligently to spread awareness about our industry's impact on the environment and the world, and to find creative solutions to upcycle and provide a means to lessen the negative impacts on the ecosystem via a second-life program or donation program(s)."

Anton Zeiher, Operations Manager – ITS Learning Environments Department, USC



“The SAVE experience was really educational for me and brought to light a number of previously unknown topics and features such as the global goals for sustainable development by 2030. The information provided insight and knowledge that would have a greater influence on my life, career in the areas of education and customer relations.”

Adaline Tatum, Faculty Support Analyst – ITS Learning Environments Department, USC

The Importance of Taking Action:

“When I first heard about SAVE, I knew that HETMA (Higher Education Technology Managers Alliance), which I chair, needed to be involved. As an influential vertical within the AV industry, we could leverage that to create real change. But I also knew I couldn’t just form a partnership in name without action. This is why USC has decided to become the first SAVE Certified campus and help launch the initiatives throughout the rest of Higher Ed through programs like a “train the trainer” and “SAVE: A second life.”

Joe Way, Director – ITS Learning Environments Department, USC; Chair – Higher Education Technology Managers Association (HETMA).

“First, assisting our industry in lessening our negative impact on the global environment and Southern California region. Secondly, potentially exerting influence on manufacturers to change their production practices and production design. Manufacturers need to take seriously the environmental impacts of their production methodology and make changes to their products preplanned obsolescence and non-reusable business model. With collective voices, we have a real opportunity to not only improve our immediate impact on the environment but to bring about long-lasting changes to improve manufacturer practices as well.”

Anton Zeiher, Operations Manager – ITS Learning Environments Department, USC

“We will spread awareness among our student workers, staff, faculty, schools, and departments here at USC by facilitating workshops/trainings to encourage ALL to support our Power Consumption Campaign by shutting off all office and classroom equipment at the end of each day. The long-term goal is to partner with international universities in Central America to promote the above Power Consumption Campaign within their educational systems.”

Adaline Tatum, Faculty Support Analyst – ITS Learning Environments Department, USC

Help bring SAVE Certification to your organization

[Contact SAVE](#) to learn more about the SAVE Certification program and how you, as an individual, can advance the SDGs by becoming a SAVE volunteer.



saveav.org