

Auburn University and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

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Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) comprise 17 goals addressing global issues related to poverty, climate, inequality, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.¹ In 2015, 193 countries adopted these goals, aiming to improve the quality of life for people worldwide.

As a land-grant institution, Auburn University's mission is to improve quality of life for people across the state of Alabama, the nation, and the world. The Auburn University strategic plan outlines Auburn University's commitment to lead change, shape the future, and become a world-renowned institution.² As a leader within its community, state, nation, and world, and as an institution built upon the mission of improving quality of life for all people, Auburn University is an essential player in the movement to achieve the UN SDGs by 2030.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to describe Auburn University's engagement with the United Nations SDGs through metrics of teaching, research, and outreach from 2016 to 2018.

Methods

The Academic Sustainability Program, Hunger Solutions Institute, and Office of Sustainability collaborated to collect and analyze data regarding Auburn University's engagement with the SDGs. Leaders from Academic Sustainability Program developed an inventory of SDG-related teaching, research, and outreach within every college, school, and department. Categories included in the inventory were courses, majors, minors, graduate programs, departmental research, centers and institutes, and student organizations. These data were originally collected by Academic Sustainability Programs for use in the 2019 Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, & Rating System (AASHE STARS) report. Research assistants with Hunger Solutions Institute coded inventory entries for the SDG with which it was most closely related.

Results

In descending order beginning with the SDG with which Auburn University is most engaged, the six SDGs with which Auburn University was most highly engaged from 2016 to 2018 were 3, 12, 15, 10, 9, and 11. In ascending order beginning with the SDG with which Auburn University is least engaged, the four SDGs with which Auburn University engaged to a lesser degree from 2016 to 2018 were 17, 1, 4 and, 5. The remaining SDGs not listed above are the SDGs with which Auburn University engaged moderately from 2016 to 2018. These are SDGs 2, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, and 16.

Figure 1: Teaching

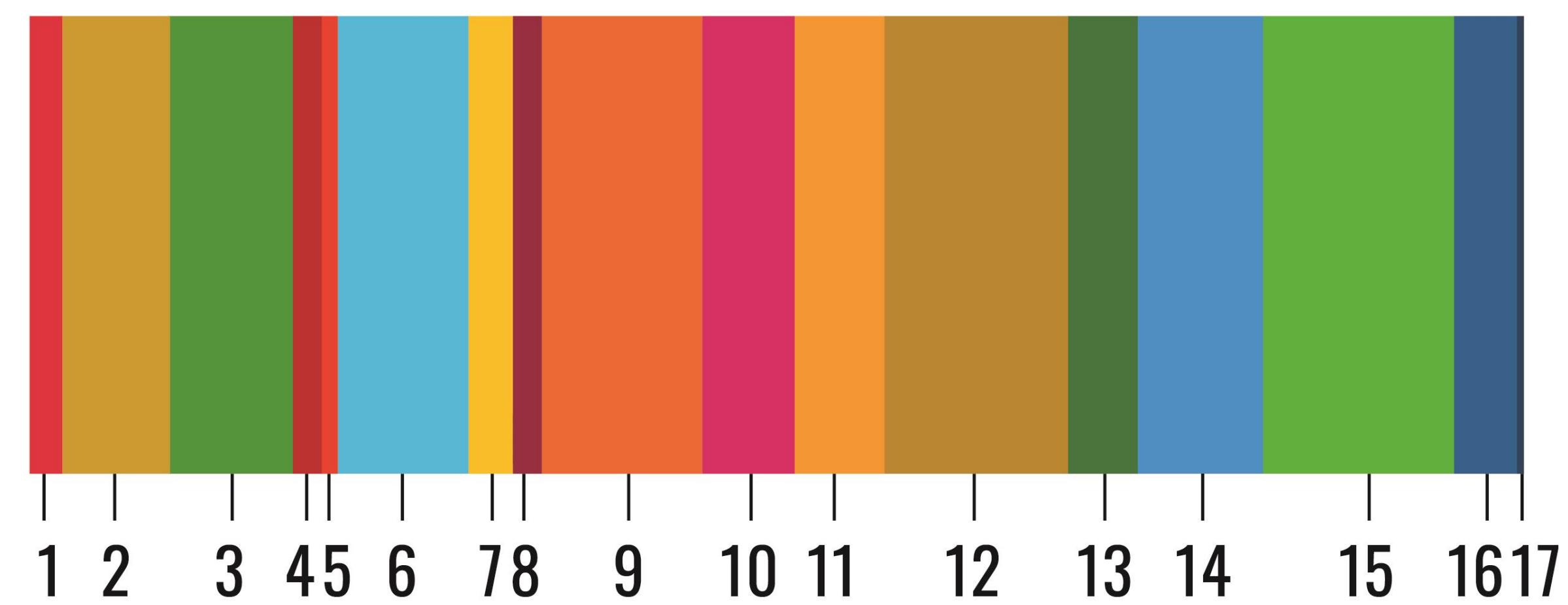
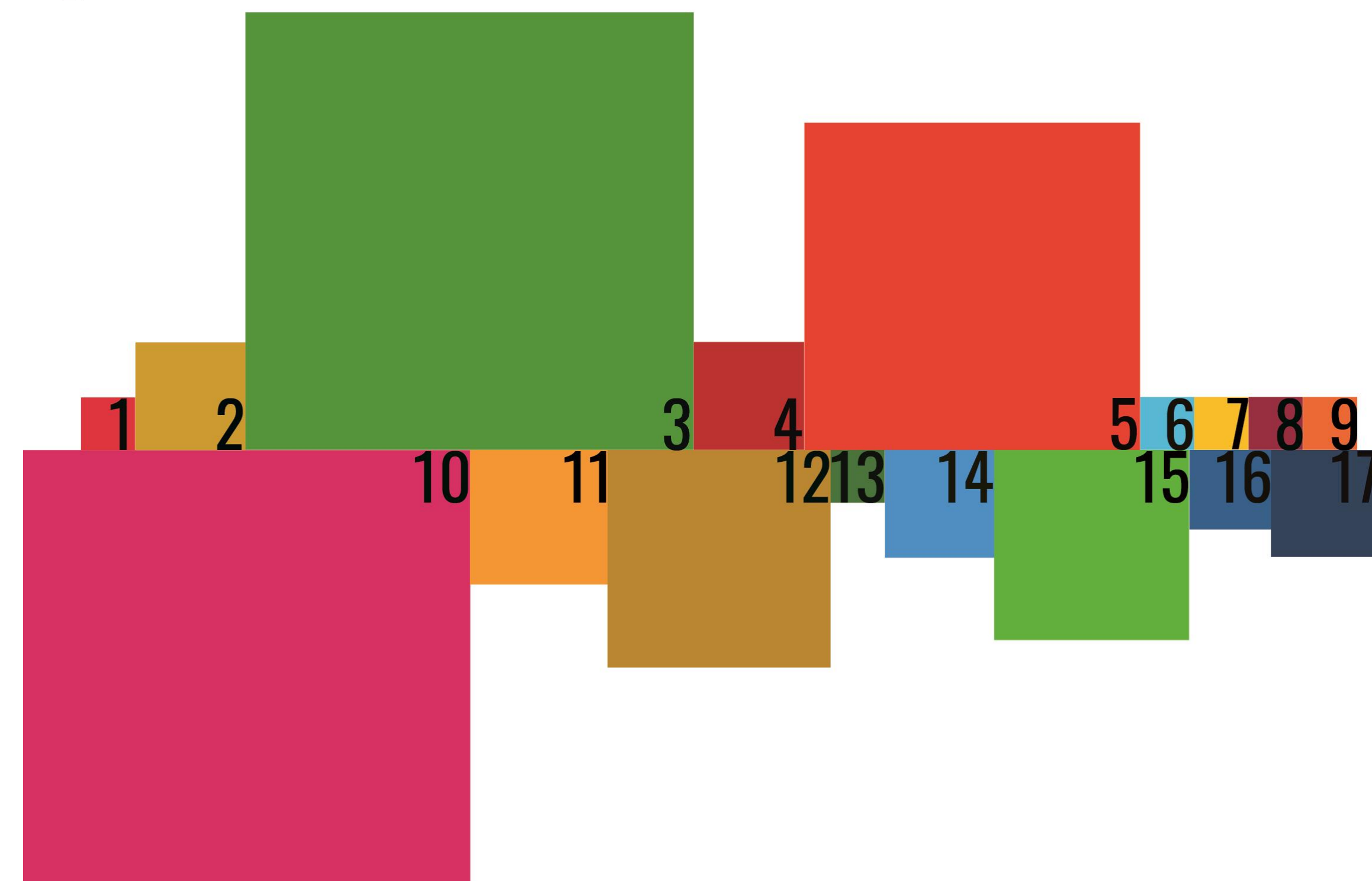
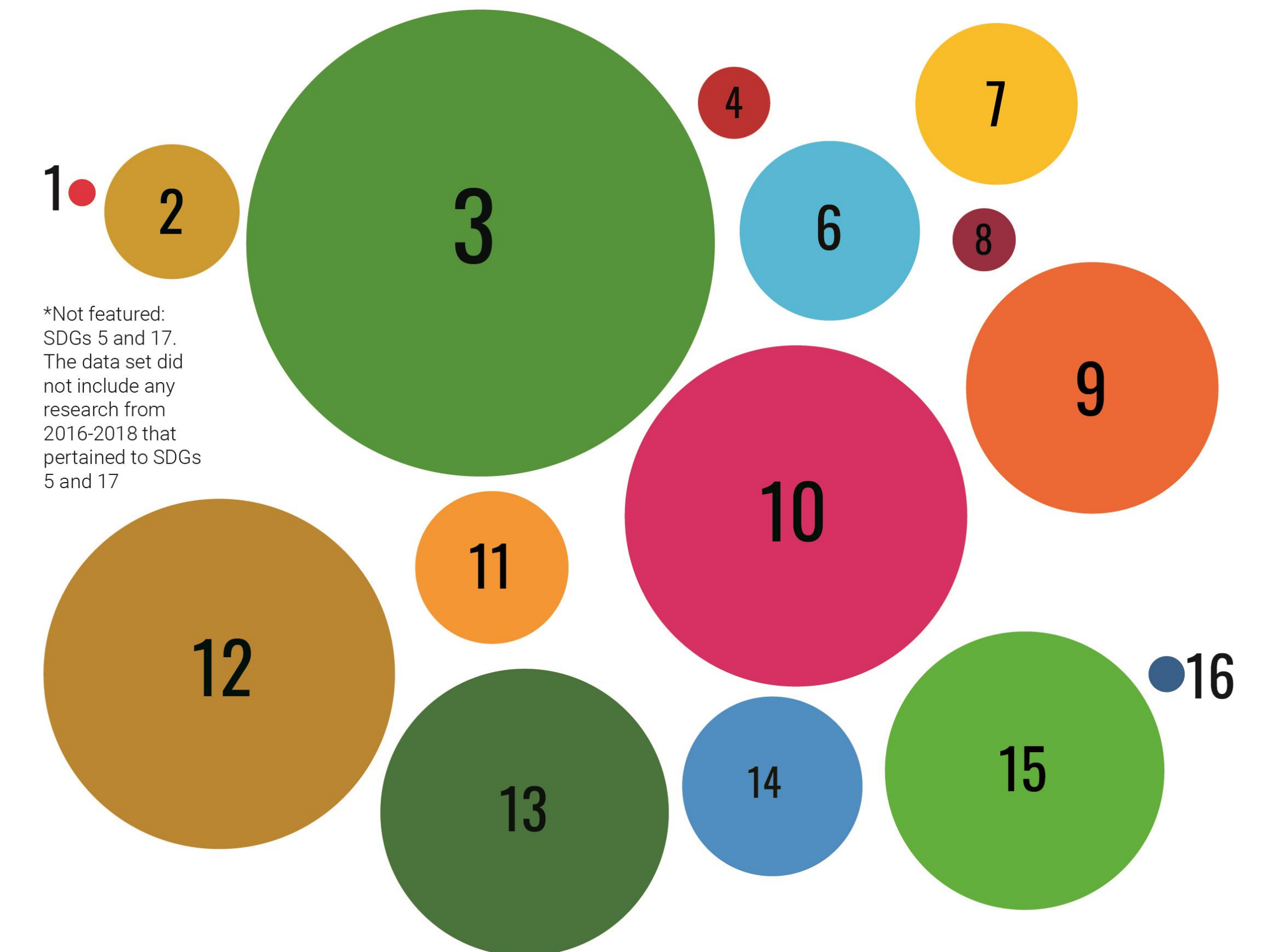


Figure 2: Outreach



1. About the Sustainable Development Goals – United Nations Sustainable Development. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>. Accessed May 28, 2020.
 2. Auburn University 2019-2024 Strategic Plan. Office of Communications and Marketing. http://ocm.auburn.edu/strategic_plan/goals/excellence.php. Accessed May 29, 2020

Figure 3: Research



Discussion & Implications

While Auburn University has much to celebrate regarding its engagement with specific SDGs, many opportunities exist for further SDG engagement across all categories of teaching, research, and outreach. This report may be used by Auburn University administration, faculty, and students to learn more about each of the 17 SDGs as well as gain insight into what Auburn University is already doing to support each goal.

The United Nations SDGs are a common thread to unite the world in pursuit of sustainable progress that improves the planet and quality of life for all people. As Auburn University continues to strengthen its position as a national and global leader in higher education, the SDGs must support this pursuit. Auburn University has begun to direct its teaching, research, and outreach toward achieving higher quality of life for people worldwide.

Acknowledgements

A report of this scale and depth would not have been possible without the support of a brilliant group of administrators, faculty, staff, and students from across Auburn University's campus. I would like to thank the Office of Sustainability, Academic Sustainability Program, and the Deans of the School and Forestry and Wildlife Sciences and College of Human Sciences for their contributions to the report development process. Dr. Alicia Powers, managing director of Hunger Solutions Institute, was invaluable to report authorship, offering guidance, wisdom, and editing for the entirety of the report writing process. Finally, I would like to thank the men and women of Auburn University for their commitment to developing sustainable, quality futures for all people.