

# Sustainability Plan

## Dominican University

11/5/12

Dominican University is firmly committed to sustainability. For us, sustainability means not only being good stewards of the natural resources available to us, but also leveraging our educational leadership to prepare and promote others to be respectful and responsible citizens of the world.

This Sustainability Plan outlines Dominican's approach to sustainability, and is intended to be a guiding document while the more detailed Climate Action Plan is being developed. Areas addressed are as follows:

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### **Sustainability: Core to the Mission**

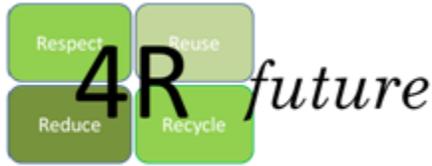
Dominican University's commitment to sustainability finds its roots in its Catholic Dominican ethos, which includes an environment of Caritas et Veritas, in which we contemplate the meaning of existence and strive collaboratively for a more just and humane world. It enables students to develop a sense of care and responsibility for oneself, one's community and the wider creation. It affirms the sacredness of all creation, the dignity of every living being, and concern for the common good.

In his recent encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI writes: "The environment is God's gift to everyone and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole." As we uphold the dignity of the environment, we also uphold the dignity of our sisters and brothers, including those yet to come, and especially those most in need. Dominican University lives these responsibilities both through its own sustainability practices and by educating for environmental sustainability.

Our ongoing commitment to sustainability includes respecting the environment, managing our resources, and fostering a culture of social justice and environmental sustainability through education and collaboration.

Dominican University is a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and agrees with their position that sustainability should be defined "in an inclusive way, encompassing human and ecological health, social justice, secure livelihoods and a better world for all generations".

Several green initiatives have been implemented, and many more are being planned. Going forward, our goal is to organize and integrate these efforts, as well as broaden the scope within the university.



Greening Dominican University

## Organizational structure

4Rfuture was developed as the umbrella framework for Dominican's sustainability efforts. It consists of five inter-related components.

1. Dominican's 2010-2015 Strategic Plan, *Pathways to Distinction*, which was approved at the Board of Trustees level in October 2010, establishes sustainability as a university priority.
2. *Supporters of Sustainability ("SOS")* is the working group comprised of approximately twenty faculty, staff and students that developed the sustainability plan and shapes the institution's approach to sustainability, as well as gathers ideas and provides guidance for implementation of specific green initiatives. The SOS council is divided into four subcommittees, each pertaining to a targeted area of concentration:
  - Water, Energy, and Transportation
  - Food and Waste
  - Community Outreach, Partnerships/Collaborations
  - Education/Programming
3. *Friends of 4Rfuture* is a large body of interested faculty, staff and students that are role models and advocates, and provide enthusiasm and momentum for sustainability efforts.
4. *Eco Club* is a student organization whose focus is to encourage environmental stewardship and sustainability from a student perspective.
5. *Staff Responsibilities* – Headed by the Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration, five staff positions formally include "assist with implementation and communication of sustainability" as part of their responsibilities for furthering Dominican's sustainability plan, and they meet regularly to coordinate. In addition, student workers and student internships are specifically employed to work on sustainability related activities.

## External Commitments

Dominican University actively participates within several communities: its neighbors/village, the association of other higher education institutions, members of its catholic heritage, etc. Beyond the involvement managed under the SOS's Community Outreach, Partnerships/Collaborations committee, Dominican is also researching the commitment to sign the President's Climate Commitment, has already signed the Illinois Campus Sustainability Compact and is a founding member of the Villages of Oak Park and River Forest's PlanIt Green Sustainability Plan. These institutional commitments expand the focus of sustainability efforts to beyond our campus.

## Plan Goals

While improvement in every aspect of sustainability is intended, this plan establishes overarching and quantifiable goals where feasible, recognizing that alternative means of measurement may be used for specific initiatives. Using the village's PlanIt Green goals as guidelines, Dominican has developed the following sustainability goals for the university.

## **Water, Energy and Transportation**

Dominican aspires to reduce their carbon footprint and processed water usage, while still maintaining acceptable standards with respect to occupant health and comfort. Specific goals over the next 10 years are as follows:

1. *Energy*: Reduce energy consumption for the campuses by an average of 3% per year, for a total of 30% over the next 10 years.
2. *Energy*: Increase the percent of renewable energy procured an average of 2.5% per year, for a total of 25% over the next 10 years.
3. *Energy*: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by an average of 3% per year, for a total of 30% over the next 10 years.
4. *Water*: Through reduced consumption and alternative sources of water, reduce the quantity of potable water purchased through the village by 10% over the next 10 years.
5. *Transportation*: Increase the number of hybrid or electric vehicles in the university fleet to 50% and increase bike program usage by 3% each year for the next 10 years.

## **Food and Waste**

In conjunction with Chartwells, the university food service vendor, Dominican intends to provide healthier food choices and sustainable food information for the campus community, to help them make better consumption choices. Dominican also intends to reduce the environmental impact of our waste by reducing unnecessary consumption, increasing the re-use and recycled content of materials that are purchased, and improving the rate of recycling on campus.

1. *Waste*: Increase waste diversion to a total of 50% within the next 10 years.
2. *Food*: Increase goods locally purchased to a total 25% over the next 10 years.

## **Community Outreach, Partnerships/Collaborations**

Dominican strives to forward sustainability by being leaders in the local community movement, building relationships, and initiating and strengthening partnerships within university divisions and in the larger community.

## **Education/Programming**

Dominican will utilize its position as an institution of higher education to teach not only its students, but also the greater community on the need and the means to achieve a sustainable future.

1. *Education/Programming*: Increase formal recognition from external organizations, targeting two over the next five years. Recognition should take the form of ratings, awards, articles, etc. for Dominican's sustainability related education offerings and/or co-educational programs.

## **Areas of concentrations and strategies**

Dominican's sustainability efforts are focused in four areas. Those areas and a list of initial strategies to address in 2012 are listed below. There is a master list of additional items in each area that is under review and updated regularly.

### **Water, Energy, and Transportation**

1. Install water, electricity, and gas metering in each building, to facilitate the gathering of utility usage data (both baseline measuring and improvement). Given funding considerations, the expected approach is to purchase the master controls system in 2012, then assign a budget line in following years to address existing areas on campus. The first priority is to install additional

metering in the residence halls to allow for awareness building and measurable initiatives with students.

2. Research ways to reduce vehicle usage through carpooling systems, rental car (I-Go) availability, and awareness building for public transportation. Identify policies for parking and fleet management that support a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Educate the campus community about power saving settings on computers and overhead projectors. Research potential of IT to make this standard setting on all computers and projectors.
4. Remove the hot water option on all but one laundry wash machine per bank in the residence halls.
5. Install lighting controls such as occupancy sensors and timers to use them most efficiently. Approach is to include as part of all new construction/renovation, plus assign a budget line each year to address existing areas on campus.
6. Purchase a thermal scanner and an electrical power monitor, to both identify energy waste on campus and to make available for community use.

### **Food and Waste**

1. Pilot the Reusable Lunch Bag program for catering events. Develop marketing and procedures for Chartwells (the university's food service vendor) and users of the program, and analyze cost savings and waste reduction.
2. Continue to market and track the Battery Tube Recycling Programming, Electronics Recycling Program and Terra Recycling Program.
3. Develop an herbal garden at the Priory Campus Dining Hall.
4. Monitor waste usage in offices, across campus and in residence halls. Review current locations of garbage and recycling containers, specify items that can be recycled, and identify move out procedures of Residence Halls that could reduce waste.
5. Work with office services to re-use envelopes and paper, including making free paper pads from scratch paper to give to offices. Review and identify alternatives to the current use of personalized pads of paper.
6. Develop a pilot Zero Waste Program, including identifying concerns/issues, marketing, and reviewing the success of the program.
7. Gather a core team to review the composting process. Identify what can be composted and issues with cross contamination. Develop a Food Waste Audit to be implemented as a Student Honors Project and coordinated with PlanITGreen and Seven Generations Ahead.

### **Community Outreach, Partnerships/Collaborations**

1. As a University, and with employee time allotted & responsibility given, continue to align, promote, be involved in & be a leader in PlanITGreen, the OPRF sustainability initiative.
2. Continue to develop Dominican University's Garden, with particular focus on creating wider ownership and a part-time position to coordinate the garden & ensure its future. Coordinate these efforts with the work of other subcommittees.
3. Establish sustainability service learning initiatives and a sustainability component in all service learning outcomes.
4. Recruit a future Lund-Gil chair invited because of her/his expertise in sustainability &/or commit to recruiting several sustainability experts to give talks for several high-profile speaking events.

5. Support and grow the Green Growth Scale project; define, implement & communicate a Green Steward Pledge project
6. Consider and develop a long term structure to promote and implement sustainability initiatives across departments and provide resources to make university sustainability initiatives sustainable.

### **Education/Programming**

1. Expand the sustainability aspects in the existing service learning programs.
2. Add green facts on the myDU web page.
3. Develop internal internships addressing sustainability.
4. Open communication lines within the community by starting a wiki, hosting seminars, sponsoring lectures, etc. to invite further progress towards more comprehensively and inclusively defining sustainability, and understanding what is needed to create a sustainably just and flourishing world.
5. Review the recent survey data regarding sustainability within our existing curriculum, to inform ideas about a sustainability minor and ideas for incorporating more sustainability awareness into existing classes.

### **Criteria for prioritizing initiatives**

The following criteria will be used to determine and prioritize the initiatives which best fit Dominican's culture, available resources, and finances.

- Financial: Initial cost and payback period
- Educational and awareness building
- Reduction of carbon footprint and waste
- Impact on social justice
- Influence on positive behavioral change

### **Measurement and Data**

Tracking quantitative measures and comparing those benchmarks to both our past performance, as well as the performance of similar institutions, provides good information for decision making.

Benchmarking helps guide which projects would yield the best results and, after they are completed, how successful the projects actually were.

Appropriate assessment measures will be determined and tracked for each area of concentration and initiative. In addition, overall campus data will be collected, assessed and benchmarked annually, both in gross numbers and in pro-rated usage as a percent of student population and/or square feet of built space. Examples of overall campus tracking in gross numbers:

- Waste: tons sent to landfill, recycled, and composted
- Electric: kWh, peaks
- Gas: therms
- Water: gallons (potable water)
- CO2 Emissions: metric tons

Baselines will be calculated from both current (2011) data, as well as retrospective (2001 and 2006), so that the impact of past initiatives can be recognized.

In addition, Dominican is considering adoption of two reporting structures already established for measuring sustainability at universities. Clean Air Cool Planet's Campus Carbon Calculator is a comprehensive tool for measuring institutional greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), commonly called "the carbon footprint" of a facility. The Sustainability Tracking and Rating System ("STARS") was developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education ("AASHE") and is structured as a checklist that encompasses a broad range of sustainability aspects: educational, operational, financial and social justice, among others. Both systems require significant time commitments for completing, as they require an in-depth review of campus functions.

## Funding

Finding outside funding opportunities in the form of grants, earmarks, loans, designated donations, etc. will allow more projects to be completed, and will build awareness. In addition, providing internal funding for green initiatives provides more control in the planning process. Ideas for university funding sources include a green fee, alumni or senior gift designations, percentage allocation of green project savings into a green funding pool, and dedicated line items in the university budget. It should also be acknowledged that the university funds the personnel to staff the committees and implement most initiatives within departmental budgets. A more detailed framework for determining how projects will be funded will be an important part of the forthcoming Climate Action Plan.

## Next Steps

The next steps on Dominican's sustainability path have been identified as follows:

1. Continue with departmental efforts to be green and build awareness for sustainability.
2. Proceed with implementation of the SOS subcommittees' initial strategies for 2012.
3. Gather additional "green" ideas from the campus community by implementing an electronic suggestion box system.
4. Develop a tracking/measurement system
5. Finalize a comprehensive calculation of Dominican's carbon footprint of green house gas emissions
6. Start gathering data to complete the STARS checklist
7. Draft a Climate Action Plan for the university
8. Regroup on Campus Sustainability Day (3<sup>rd</sup> Week in October) to formally review and celebrate progress
9. Utilize the greenhouse gas emission calculations and Climate Action Plan draft to inform the decision for signing the Presidents' Climate Commitment.

Formalizing sustainability at Dominican is aptly named *4Rfuture*. This plan is truly "for our future, for your future".