

Sustainability at UW–Madison



In November 2019, [UW–Madison signed the Resilience Commitment](#) administered by [Second Nature](#). Resilience refers to the ability of institutions, infrastructure, and communities to prepare for the impacts of climate change. The commitment requires that UW–Madison create a Climate Action Plan, assess and improve resilience thresholds, and incorporate resilience into the curriculum. The [Office of Sustainability](#) is partnering with stakeholders from the campus and community to inform the Climate Action Plan.

Research and Scholarship

- UW–Madison produced the [most climate change research](#) of any midwestern university from 2014–2018 and generated over \$459 million in funding for sustainability-related research in fiscal year 2020.
- The [Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts](#), a statewide collaboration between the Nelson Institute and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, will contribute climate modeling and other data to inform Gov. Evers' [Climate Change Task Force](#).
- American Family Insurance and UW–Madison weather experts are [teaming up](#) to better predict catastrophic, wind-related weather events in Wisconsin.
- Jonathan Patz, director of the Global Health Institute, was [elected to the National Academy of Medicine](#) in recognition of his pioneering research showing the risk climate change poses to human health.
- 338 courses were tagged with a provisional [course attribute for sustainability](#). These courses address economic, social, and environmental topics (e.g., responsible production, reduced inequalities, and clean energy).
- The [Green Fund](#) doubled its student involvement during 2019–2020; projects included installing solar panels, prototyping a waste recovery station for catered events, and testing window glazing to prevent bird collisions with glass.

Living the Wisconsin Idea

- UW–Madison students completed 11 projects related to sustainability for [Pepin County through the UniverCity Year program](#). Topics included composting, groundwater quality, and GIS data management.
- The [UW South Madison Partnership](#), home to the [Neighborhood Law Clinic](#) and the Odyssey Project, announced an [expansion](#) in 2019 to better meet the needs of the South Madison community.
- The Odyssey Project launched [Odyssey Beyond Bars](#), the first-known campus effort to teach face-to-face credit courses to people who are incarcerated. All 15 men in the pilot program will earn three UW credits in English.

Teaching and Educational Achievement

- 50 years: age of the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, which was honored by a [proclamation](#) presented by Gov. Tony Evers, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes, and DNR Secretary Preston Cole.
- UW–Madison leveraged its [innovative cluster hire program](#) to welcome a freshwater ecologist, a hydrologist, and a water resources economist to address emerging water sustainability issues.

A Vibrant Campus Community

- UW–Madison is home to over 15,600 bike parking stalls and is one of only [eight universities to be awarded a Platinum designation](#) by the Bicycle Friendly America Program.



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- The LGBTQ Archives, a fast-growing collection of LGBTQ history from Madison, Dane County, and beyond, received the [Governor's Award for Archival Advocacy in 2019](#).
- Wisconsin Sea Grant collaborated with the Chazen Museum of Art to present "[Plastic Entanglements: Ecology, Aesthetics, Materials](#)," an exhibit that raises awareness about the "complex cultural and material nexus that is plastic."
- More than 3,000 participants joined the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies and the Office of Sustainability for dozens of virtual workshops, tutorials, and other events to mark the [50th anniversary of Earth Day](#).

A High-Performing Organization

- Over 100 students, staff, and faculty from around the state [gathered at UW-Madison for the UW System Sustainability Conference](#). The conference resulted in several state-wide working groups as well as a set of recommendations on sustainable development and climate change mitigation for the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change.
- 60 campus offices partnered with the Office of Sustainability through the [Green Office Certification Program](#).

- UW-Madison [hired its first Director of Tribal Relations](#) in 2019. The university is [taking additional steps](#) to recognize the 13,000-year history of the Ho-Chunk people on this land and to acknowledge their forcible removal from this region.
- From [research on a vaccine](#) and the [manufacture of PPE](#) to the development of [new mental health resources](#), UW-Madison has taken an interdisciplinary approach to public health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Wisconsin: The Year Ahead

- The Office of Sustainability will convene virtual listening sessions for campus and community members to learn about the UW-Madison Sustainability Advisory Council and to provide feedback on the Council's process and intended outcomes.
- The Center for Limnology, Division of Extension, and the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies are supporting UW-Madison's membership in the [Yahara CLEAN Compact](#), which includes 18 agencies and organizations working to improve water quality in the five Yahara lakes.



38%
reduction in
[Greenhouse Gas Emissions per building square foot since 2007](#)

