

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Sustainability Guide for Greek Houses



2020-2021



Office of Sustainability
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

University of Wisconsin-Madison Sustainability Guide for Greek Houses



The Green Greeks program seeks to establish and support efforts within the Greek Life community that improve environmental, social, and economic sustainability.



Office of Sustainability
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Best Practices for the Full House

In this section we will break down waste streams, energy and water usage, and cleaning supplies for the house. The purpose of this section is to provide simple changes to a house to lessen your carbon footprint.

Waste, Recycling, and Composting

The single easiest way to reduce waste is to buy less and buy only what you need and frequently use. The next important step is to reuse what you already have or swap with friends. Lastly, if you need to dispose of something and have the option to recycle or donate, make sure you do. Below are some tips on how you can reduce, reuse, and recycle while living in your house.

Replace Frequently Used Items With a Reusable Alternative

- **EX:** Water filters for the fridge.
- **EX:** Use tupperware instead of plastic/styrofoam to-go containers.
- **EX:** Bring reusable bags to the grocery store.
- Reduce your house's plastic and styrofoam use.
- Remember: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle - in that order!

Recycling

- In the city of Madison, a recycling bin is mandated by law at every place of residence, as found in subsection 7b of section 10.18 of [Madison Code of Ordinances](#). If you do not have a recycling bin please contact your landlord.
 - Remember, it is **illegal** for your landlord to not provide recycling bins.
- Pair every trash bin with a recycling bin.
 - Use bin sizing to promote recycling (small trash bin, large recycling bin).
 - NOTE: Recycling should be loose (unbagged) or, if necessary, in a clear bag.
- To guide proper disposal practices, download our Waste & Recycling Signage [here](#) and attach to your bins!
 - Unsure of proper disposal signage? [Here](#) is a quick tips sheet from the City of Madison.
- Identify what is commonly disposed of incorrectly at your house and ask the Office of Sustainability for customized signage.

- Make sure you are cognizant of what you put in the recycling. Contaminated bags of recycling WILL be thrown away.
 - **Remember this recycling rule: When in doubt, throw it out!**
- Follow the “More clean than dirty” rule when recycling. In order for an item to be recycled, it must be more clean than dirty. It is better to throw away one or two items instead of an entire bin because those items were too dirty and contaminated the load.
 - **EX:** Peanut butter jars with peanut butter crusted on the sides.



What are the minerals and fossil fuels that are necessary for the items you buy? Reducing, reusing, and recycling can ease the burden on Earth’s people and resources as well as reduce your carbon footprint.



Composting

Composting is very important as organic material creates methane gas in landfills. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change, and it is also harmful to human health. Organic waste does not fully degrade in a landfill. Composting brings nutrients that would otherwise be wasted back into the food cycle that then can be used to grow more food.

- Consider holding your event/meeting in campus buildings that have composting.
 - [Here](#) is a list of campus buildings that have compost services.
- If you’re interested in composting at home, you can check out this guide from [NPR](#).
- The City of Madison does not offer compost pickup; however, there are private pick-up services.
 - Contact a local service for curbside pickup. There are services that provide a compost bin that start at \$7/week.
 - [Earth Stew](#), 608-213-6990
 - [Curbside Composter](#), 608-338-4798

Energy

Madison’s power grid is mostly powered by carbon polluting sources like coal and natural gas. Using less energy will lessen your carbon footprint and often saves you money. Below are some tips you can use to reduce your energy consumption.

HVAC - Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning

- Thermostat
 - The furnace is one of the biggest energy sources in any home.
 - Set the thermostat at 68°F during cooler months and 78°F during warmer months.
 - This setting maximizes efficiency and can save you anywhere between 5-15% per year on utility costs.
 - When you're **out of town**, MG&E recommends setting the thermostat to 55°F during cooler months and to 85°F during warmer months.
 - Consider installing a “smart thermostat” to make control easier and more efficient.
 - MG&E offers a \$75 cash incentive on Energy Star certified smart thermostats [here](#).
- Maintenance
 - Keep your furnace filter clean, and have a professional tune up your system every other year.
 - Talk to your landlord and maintenance staff about this.
- Windows & Insulation
 - Replacing windows is expensive and has a long payback period.
 - Instead, identify weak seals on doors and windows, and implement draft guards.
- Turn off/unplug fans when not in use.
- Window AC units are energy intensive and expensive.
 - Aim to cool the person in the room, rather than the whole room itself.
 - Turn off your unit when you are not in the room.
 - Follow the MG&E recommendations above.

Devices and Appliances

- Smart Use
 - **TURN OFF** devices and appliances when not in use.
 - **UNPLUG** devices and appliances when not in use.
 - Certain devices and appliances still draw power while turned off! This is called **ghost power**, and accounts for almost 10% of residential electricity use.
 - Implement power strips; they don't draw ghost power!

- Biggest culprits: straighteners/curlers, toasters, egg cookers, and coffee makers.
 - Add a ghost power [sticker](#) to these appliances.
 - Microwaves also draw ghost power, but cannot be plugged into power strips. We recommend you unplug them when out of town.
 - Appliance Replacement
 - When an appliance requires replacement, buy an Energy Star certified appliance.
 - Appliance Recycling
 - MG&E will give you a \$20 rebate to pick up your old fridge for free, and recycle it properly.
 - More information can be found [here](#).



Lighting

- Reduce the Use
 - Open blinds instead of turning on lights.
 - Turn lights off when you leave a room.
 - Identify spaces that are rarely occupied yet well lit and install motion sensors.
 - These sensors are available for less than \$20.
 - Don't forget to turn off access lights: lighting in closets, stove lights in kitchen, etc.
- Update Your Light Bulbs
 - Switch to LED lights when/where possible.
 - LED light bulbs can last 5x longer than any other bulb and use 6x less electricity than incandescents.
 - LEDs are a little more expensive than incandescents, but they are far more efficient and have a payback period of about 4 months, resulting in a 3271% return on investment.



Who replaces a lightbulb when it goes out? If it isn't you, talk to that individual about which light bulbs are currently being used around the house, and how LEDs are not only better for the planet, but will result in less frequent replacement and lower operational costs.



Services and Sources

- Energy Audit Services.

- Certified home energy audits reveal where the most energy is being wasted and how to best maximize energy efficiency.
- The following companies are located in Madison and provide this service:
 - [American Home Consultants LLC](#)
 - [5 Lakes Home Energy Audits](#)
 - MG&E also provides an energy audit you can complete yourself, called [Home Energy Saver](#).
- Madison Gas & Electric Focus on Energy Program.
 - MG&E offers FREE, energy saving “Focus Packs” to customers that include low flow shower heads, LED light bulbs, and more. Order one [here](#).



Water

The city of Madison uses water from the Yahara Watershed, and water is a nonrenewable resource. The vitality of the watershed is crucial for homes, municipalities, and local ecosystems. Below are some tips on how to reduce your water waste.

Establish a Purified Water Source

- Consider adding a water purifying attachment to the most central sink to discourage members from buying bottled water.
- Sink attachments are more efficient and cost effective than water cooler dispensers (e.g. Culligan jugs).
- NOTE: *Make sure you inform the residence that the attachment purifies water so they know they can use the tap water.*

Report Leaks

- Contact your housing manager or landlord at your earliest convenience to report a leaky shower head, sink, or toilet.
 - Leaks waste a lot of water and thus increase your water bill.

Reduce the Use

- Use a dishwasher instead of handwashing dishes to save water and energy.
 - Only run the dishwasher when it is full, as a half-full and a full dishwasher use the same amount of water.
- Take shorter showers.
 - Challenge yourself to stay in the 5-10 minute range.
 - Put a 5 minute song on or use your phone as a timer.

Update Appliances

- Install water conserving devices and attachments on existing plumbing, such as low flow shower heads and faucet tops
 - Low flush toilets:
 - Make use of [Madison Water Utility Toilet Rebate Program](#) if you have an old toilet.
 - Madison Water Utility has a service which allows their customers to track home water usage online, learn more [here](#).
 - Install/Indicate water refill stations in the house.
 - Discuss this possibility with your housing manager.
 - Refill mods for existing water fountains (bubblers).
 - For dishwashers, washers, dryers, and other water intensive appliances, choose Energy Star!



Water Heater

- Check the settings of your water heater and adjust to 120°F. This will not compromise anyone's ability to have hot water.

Cleaning

Cleaning companies make specific cleaners for your floors, tables, and countertops. However, you really only need one cleaning spray for all three! Having separate products allows these companies to make more money, but it's easier and cheaper to have one all-purpose cleaner. We recommend keeping an all-purpose cleaner, toilet cleaner, window cleaner, and dish soap in your cupboard.

Use Non-Hazardous Cleaners

- DIY recipes
 - All purpose cleaner [Here](#).
 - Window cleaner [Here](#).
- For dish soap and toilet cleaner we recommend using products that indicate they are all natural.
 - Some great companies are Method, Seventh Generation, Dr. Bronner's, Ecos, Mrs. Meyers, Common Good, and Veles.
 - NOTE: *Castile Soap is great for Toilet Bowl Cleaner!*

- If you have leftover cleaning supplies or need a free option, [Clean Sweep](#) at the Dane County Landfill accepts unwanted household chemicals and properly disposes of them. Previously donated chemicals and cleaners are available for free.
 - NOTE: Many cleaning supplies are toxic and cannot be disposed of down your drain.

Purchasing

If you have the resources to evaluate and change your habits, purchasing is an area where you may want to focus your energy to make an impact. Some products and services are far more environmentally harmful than others. Altering your habits to buy in bulk, shop local, and buy less fast fashion are great ways to save money, support your community, and decrease waste. Below are tips to be more sustainable with the things you buy.

Food

- Buy in bulk when you can.
- Encourage the use of reusable grocery bags.
 - Consider putting a box of these in the entryway or common area for members to take/leave as they go to the grocery store.
- Try to buy locally-sourced and/or organic options.
 - These options reduce pollution related to transportation, pesticide and herbicide applications.
 - Some nearby options:
 - [FH King](#) Weekly Harvest Handouts.
 - Get organic and local produce for **free!**
 - Dane County Farmers Market
 - Apr-Nov: Saturday, Capital Square & Wednesdays, Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
 - Nov-Dec: Monona Terrace
 - Jan-Apr: Madison Senior Center
 - [South Madison farmers market](#)
 - Willy St Co-op - East (1221 Williamson St)
 - Willy St Co-op - West (6825 University Ave)



- Capital Center Market (111 N Broom St)
 - Trader Joe's (1810 Monroe St)
 - Woodman's Food Market (725 S Gammon Rd)
- BIPOC Owned Catering options:
 - Equity is an important part of social sustainability. If you would like to learn more go to our [Sustainability and Environmental Justice section \(pg. 18\)](#). We encourage buying from BIPOC businesses because it is one way to promote social sustainability in your community.
 - You can check out the [Madison Black Chamber of Commerce](#) for a directory on BIPOC businesses in the area. There are also Wisconsin directories for [Hmong-Owned](#) businesses and [Latinx-owned](#) businesses.



Do you know where the food served in your house is sourced? Talk to your house mom/chef about purchasing in bulk and/or purchasing from sustainable sources.



Clothing

- **What is fast fashion?** Fast fashion is clothing that is mass-produced rapidly and cheaply to keep up with trends and consumer demand. The industry is responsible for large amounts of environmental pollution and abuse of working people. [Here](#) is an article that provides some insight.
- Opt for resale clothing instead of buying new.
 - Some nearby options:
 - ReThreads (410 State St)
 - St. Vincent de Paul Dig-N-Save (1900 S Park St): \$1/lb of clothing
 - St. Vincent de Paul Store (1309 Williamson St)
 - Goodwill (closest to campus option: 4530 Verona Rd)

Online Shopping

- Here are some online stores that sell resale clothing and allow you to sell your own clothing:
 - Depop
 - ThredUP
 - Poshmark
 - Instagram/Facebook accounts
- Opt for recycled, durable, rechargeable and/or energy efficient products.
 - [Link to top 35 ethical clothing brands \(2018\)](#)

- [Link to top 25 sustainable companies to purchase from \(2018\)](#)
- Opt out of expedited two day shipping when it is not absolutely necessary.
- Make use of the Amazon Locker Locations at Sellery Residence Hall (821 W Johnson St) or Fresh Market (703 University Ave).
 - Sending your packages to these locations greatly reduces carbon emissions associated with transportation.
 - Package arrives in up to half the time without specifying expedited shipping option.
- Use these brands used and refurbished clothing sites:
 - [REI's Used Site](#)
 - [Patagonia's Used Site](#)
 - [Northface's Used Site](#)

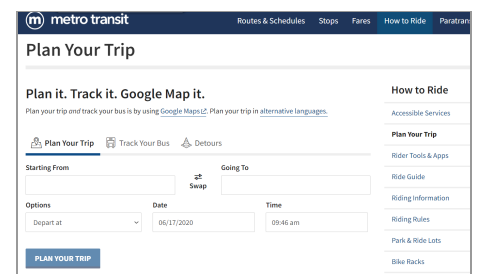
Textbooks

- Opt for renting used textbooks for the semester instead of buying new ones.
 - Some links to two affordable rental sites:
 - Great for chapter books: [Thriftbooks](#)
 - Great for textbooks: [Chegg](#)

Transportation

Getting around Madison can be difficult and many students do not know all of their transportation options. Below are some tips to help you find sustainable transportation options.

- Walk or Bike
 - Use one of Madison's electric bicycles; BCycle Information [here](#).
 - It costs \$120 for a full year of unlimited 60min rides on electric bikes.
- Bus options:
 - Put route information for public transportation in the common area of your house. Encourage people to ride the bus together!
 - Download the UW Bus system app.
- Carpool options:
 - Consider time-sharing a moped or a ZipCar account.



- Have a Greek life Carpool Facebook page for getting groceries or going home on the breaks.
- Utilize ridesharing apps such as Uber and Lyft.

Room Specific Initiatives

This section highlights specific sustainable measures and habits that you can incorporate in various areas of your house. To make these changes easier, we have divided areas of your house into sections so you can see what steps you can take room by room. These simple switches in materials or behavior can create a dramatic reduction in energy and water use.

Kitchen

- Use reusable silverware and dishes rather than plastic or “compostable.”
 - Disposable silverware is too small to be recycled, and compostable brands cannot be composted in the University’s system.
- Encourage the use of reusable containers instead of plastic bags.
 - Have a house set of reusable containers.
- Avoid purchasing individually-packaged snack items when possible.
- Talk to your chef about the kitchen disposal streams.
 - How to compost:
 - Refer to the **Waste, Recycling, and Compost** section (pg. 3)
 - How to dispose of kitchen packaging materials:
 - Thin plastics (EX: cereal/produce/ ziploc/bread bags, bubble wrap): Collect, ball up to the size of basketball or larger, recycle.
 - Cardboard: Break down, recycle.
 - NOTE: You CANNOT recycle cardboard with food or grease on it (Ex: Pizza Box).
 - Large Plastic jugs: Rinse, cap, and recycle!
 - NOTE: You CANNOT recycle frozen food bags, salad bags, plastic/saran wrap (compound plastics), or anything with food residue on it.
- Buy in bulk to reduce packaging waste.
- Set your refrigerator to 37°F and freezer to 3°F.
 - Contact the head of the kitchen to change the temperature.
 - Make sure there is no air leaking from the refrigerator.

- Do the same for personal mini-fridges.
- Unplug toasters, egg cookers, coffee makers, and microwaves when they are not in use.
- Use power strips to easily switch off kitchen appliances not in use.
 - **Exception:** *microwaves should **not** be plugged into power strips!*
- Encourage house members to reduce their consumption of meat and dairy products.
 - Meat production carries a large carbon footprint which contributes heavily to climate change. **EX:** Red meat uses **20 times** the land and emits **20 times** the emissions as growing beans, per gram of protein.
 - Consider a “Meatless Monday” option.
 - NOTE: *These are suggestions only. Diets are subjective and individual, and often have cultural histories. Be careful to involve members in conversations about diets to ensure inclusivity.*
- Reduce food waste.
 - Reducing food waste can save money AND reduce your carbon footprint.
 - Focus on only buying as much food as you can eat, and freeze food that is about to go bad so that you can eat it later.
 - Composting is a great way to reduce food waste and divert waste from the landfill.
 - Refer to **Waste, Recycling, and Compost** section (pg. 3).

Think Locally Sourced and Organic!

- Organic farming practices reduce pollution and soil degradation, conserve water, and use less energy. Farming without pesticides is also better for local ecosystems as well as people who live close to farms. *Did you know that algae blooms in our lakes are from fertilizer used on farms and lawns?*
- Purchasing organic can become very expensive. Consult the “Dirty Dozen” produce list to help you be strategic about organic produce.
 - **The Dirty Dozen:** Strawberries, Spinach, Nectarines, Apples, Grapes, Peaches, Cherries, Pears, Tomatoes, Celery, Potatoes, Sweet Bell Peppers.
 - Learn more [here](#).
- NOTE: *There’s more to sustainable food than organic labels. Talk with farmer’s market vendors about their practices!*

Bathrooms

- Encourage smart water use.

- Shower
 - Take faster and cooler showers to save water and energy.
 - The average showerhead flows at a rate of 2.1 gallons/minute.
 - Turn off shower when shampooing/ cleaning.
- Shaving
 - Turn off the water while shaving.
 - Use cold water, which allows a closer shave as well!
- Non-flushables
 - Except for human waste and toilet paper, all the other items (wipes, menstrual care items) can potentially disrupt the water flow in pipes.
 - Also, fats, oils, and greases can form clogs and disruptions as well.
- Pharmaceuticals
 - **Do not flush medications down the toilet.**
 - Most wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove pharmaceuticals or hormones. The contaminated wastewater released into the environment can have negative effects on aquatic wildlife.
 - To properly dispose of pharmaceuticals, drop them off at a drug take-back site. For more general information, visit:
 - <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/safe-disposal-medicines/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know>
 - If you are looking for more information specific to Madison and the Wisconsin area, please visit:
 - <https://safercommunity.net/meddrop/>
- Hand Dryers
 - Consider installing hand dryers in communal restrooms.
 - Discuss with your landlord if necessary.

Laundry Room

- Wait to do laundry until you have a full load.
 - This practice is not only more sustainable but saves time and money when using a pay-per-load machine.
 - Share loads with a roommate.
- Wash with cold water.
 - You can combine color loads this way. This practice also reduces electricity use.
- Are your loads taking longer to dry than they should? Get the dryer vents cleaned.

- This removes debris from the lines, reducing load time and electricity consumption.
- Landlords and housing corporations are often willing to pay for this since clogged vents are a fire hazard - just ask!

Commons

- Entryway
 - Consider LED, motion-sensor lighting.
- Printers
 - Set double-sided printing as the default setting.
 - Use recycled paper, or tree-free paper made from hemp or other sustainable materials.
- Televisions
 - Turn off before leaving the room.
- Gaming consoles
 - Unplug when not in use because gaming consoles use ghost power.

Bedrooms

- Include a personal recycling bin and trash bin in EVERY room.
- Place a community recycling and trash bin at the end of EACH hallway.
 - Organize a take-out schedule.
- Use power strips for lamps, space heaters, and other devices.
 - Greatly reduces ghost power draw.
- Limit use of personal mini fridges and space heaters as they use high amounts of electricity.

Outside

Lawn Care

- If your lawn care uses fertilizers or pesticides, ask them to use organic fertilizers or organic pesticides only. Inorganic fertilizers have toxic compounds that run off into our lakes and streams.
- Talk to your landlord about the chemicals applied.
- Help keep our lakes swimmable!

Preventing Water Pollution

- Home wastewater is mostly sent to a septic tank to seep into the ground or to a local wastewater treatment plant. Preventing

contaminants from entering the plant is an effective way to protect clean water because the removal process is both energy-intensive and costly.

- The following are the specific pollutants that the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District is working to reduce:



- Salt (chloride): Use ONLY the necessary amount of salt for water softener and ice melting can protect our lakes and streams.
 - Phosphorous: Avoid using phosphorous fertilizer for gardens.
 - The three numbers on the package for fertilizer refer to the percentage of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Be sure to pay attention to the middle number as excess phosphorus washed off in runoffs may lead to algae blooms in local aquatic environments.
 - Be mindful of trash and pick up trash after gatherings.
- Ask your landlord to plant vegetative brush along the lakefront to act as a runoff buffer.

Events

Rushing and hosting events are an integral part of Greek Life. Here we offer some suggestions on ways you can host fun “green” events and provide information to help your chapter throw a successful sustainable event!

Community Engagement

Often, in the environmental movement, people talk about sustainability in regards to “saving the planet” or stopping global warming. Sustainability, however, also incorporates the health and well-being of communities. When trying to make your chapter more sustainable, it is also important to think about your chapter’s relationship with its community members. The following are some sustainable engagement options that could count towards required community service hours or be modified into a hosted philanthropy event.

- Participate in a community clean up following a Game Day.
- Host a “thrifting day” for chapter members to buy second-hand clothes as a group at local Goodwill or St. Vincent De Paul locations.

- Encourage donations during Move-Outs by designating an area for donated items and securing transportation for items from your house to a drop off location.
- Begin a competition for all members to walk or bicycle to their classes.
- Throw a Greek clothing swap.
- Create a social justice book club.
- Schedule a diversity training for your chapter.
 - Reach out to campus partners such as the [Multicultural Student Center](#) or the [Social Justice Hub](#).

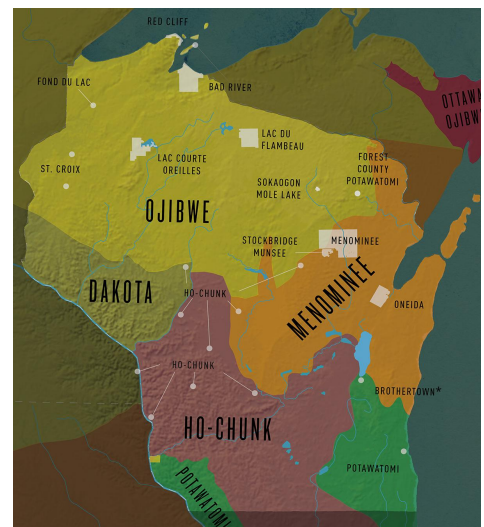
Sustainable Event

Interested in hosting a sustainable event? Our Green Events team has a comprehensive guide that we recommend. The link to it is [here](#).

Land Acknowledgements

A Land acknowledgement is a statement given at the beginning of events to recognize the true ownership of the land on which the event is being held. As [Northwestern University puts it](#), “It is important to understand the longstanding history that has brought you to reside on the land, and to seek to understand your place within that history. Land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process, and we need to build our mindfulness of our present participation.”

- Inquire about a UW-Madison specific cultural landscape tour. Due to COVID-19, they are currently not offering the tours in person, but you can watch a video of the tour [here](#).
- [Here](#) is a helpful guide if your chapter is interested in learning more.



Social Sustainability and Environmental Justice

Historically, the mainstream environmental movement has not recognized social and environmental inequalities. In response, the term “environmental justice” was coined to include concerns not only for outdoor nature, but also for human habitat, such as threats that low-income and minority communities often disproportionately face from pollution. In this section, you will learn about tools to help make your communities more inclusive. We encourage you to look at the resources we've compiled and reach out to those who are experts in these areas.

- It is critical to be aware of the intersections of racism and the environmentalism movement. According to the [NAACP](#), climate change has a “disproportionate impact on communities of color and low-income communities in the United States and around the world.”
 - UW–Madison Libraries provides [a useful guide](#) for researching crucial topics including climate change and the Black Lives Matter Movement.
 - If you would like to learn more about environmental (in)justice at home and abroad, consider checking out [this presentation](#) made by our Social Sustainability Coalition team. You can view the presentation [here](#).
 - Also, consider taking some time to independently research environmental racism.
- Another way to learn more about social sustainability is by listening to podcasts and reading books on the subject. See the resources below that our office has enjoyed as a starting point.
 - **Podcasts:**
 - [Environmental Racism: It's a Thing](#)
 - [Outside Voices Podcast](#)
 - [Yikes Podcast](#)
 - **Books:**
 - [Black Faces, White Spaces](#)
 - [Environmental Racism and Classism](#)
 - [Other Environmental Justice Books](#)
- It can be important to know how to have a productive conversation and gain deeper understanding about important social issues within your own chapter.
 - Before reaching out to your chapter mates, we recommend you to do the basic research on complex social issues to understand the context of the problem. The resources we shared above are great places to start.

- When having a conversation on social issues with your chapter mates, it is important to keep in mind that not every member from a minority community has the responsibility to teach you.
- Understand and acknowledge your own implicit biases. You may not be aware of some of the unconscious prejudices that you hold.
 - One way to understand your implicit biases is to [Take An Online Implicit Bias Test](#).
- For more information check out resources offered at UW-Madison:
 - Multicultural Student Center
 - [Hate and Bias Resources](#)
 - The Social Justice Hub
 - [Social Justice Books and Documentaries](#)
 - [Education program](#)

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to utilize this resource! If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the Green Greeks team at [greengreeks@g-groups.wisc.edu](mailto:green Greeks@g-groups.wisc.edu). We are more than happy to help with your sustainability efforts or to connect you with other resources that best fit your needs. Making sustainable choices can seem like a daunting task, but remember that small steps can add up to a large impact.

Thank you for taking the time to help build a sustainable Greek community!



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