



State of Sustainability at UW-Madison: Spring 2021

Strategic Initiatives

Sustainability Advisory Council develops sustainability priorities

Sponsored by the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration, the council is composed of campus members representing students, staff, faculty, and alumni who are working to develop strategic sustainability recommendations for the institution.

Office of Sustainability releases Resilience Commitment impact report

The new report spotlights campus-community initiatives identified over the past year that touch on several dimensions of resilience: Infrastructure, Economics, Ecosystem Services, Social Equity and Governance, Health and Wellness, Academics, and Research. UW-Madison will now complete a campus vulnerability assessment and create a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan.

UW-Madison students build Campus Sustainability Map

Graduate student Audrey Stanton and undergraduate Mackenzie Thelen developed a [campus sustainability map](#) to serve as a comprehensive resource for the campus and community. The map includes information on renewable energy projects, resources for wellness, equity, inclusion, and diversity, and many other topics and is structured using the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Zero Waste initiative gains momentum

Under the direction of Campus Resource Coordinator, Travis Blomberg, UW-Madison is fulfilling its [2015 Campus Master Plan](#) goal to become a zero-waste campus by 2025. This initiative incorporates expertise from around campus including procurement, facilities, janitorial staff, campus planners, students, and community partners.

Student Involvement

Students join Sustainability Advisory Council (SAC)

Thanks to advocacy from student orgs like [CLEAN](#) and ASM, the Office of Sustainability incorporated three student seats into the [SAC](#) and supported the development of a student subcommittee, adding a critical mass of student voices to institutional sustainability planning.

Social Sustainability Coalition launches Amplifying BIPOC Voices in Sustainability

The series seeks to recenter Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) voices in sustainability and environmentalism. Each month, the series highlights the work of one or more BIPOC community members engaging with sustainability through a live, interactive webinar.

Office of Sustainability student interns create new podcast

[The SustainUW Podcast](#) episodes feature special guests — including professors, student activists, campus staff, and other experts — who help the hosts uncover the complicated story of sustainability at UW-Madison and beyond.

Honors and Mentions

UW-Madison wins U.S. Department of Education Sustainability Award

The university was one of just five higher education institutions, and the first in the Big 10, to earn the [US DoE's Green Ribbon Schools Postsecondary Sustainability Award](#) for its commitment to holistic sustainability in education, research, and campus operations.

UW-Madison staff inform Governor's Task Force on Climate Change

Sustainability staff across the UW System schools worked with the state's Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy to provide crucial recommendations to the Governor's [Task Force's final report](#).



4,500

Hours worked by [Office of Sustainability student interns](#) during the 2019-2020 academic year



\$99,198

funds distributed for [student-led Green Fund projects](#) during the 2019-2020 academic year

UW–Madison highlighted as sustainability leader in higher education

The [Princeton Review](#) and the [Sierra Club](#) included the university in their annual recognitions of sustainable universities. Both organizations' 2020 assessments utilized the UW–Madison's [STARS report](#) along with a review of campus policies and operations.

Clean Lakes Alliance awards UW–Madison its 2020 Organization Lake Leadership Award

The university received the award for its pioneering research in the Yahara watershed, its work on the [Yahara CLEAN Compact](#), and its ongoing educational and volunteer opportunities aimed at addressing lake health.

Wisconsin Experience

Green Fund reaches more students than ever

The first quarter of 2021 saw expanded solar projects, including a new photovoltaic array at the Arboretum visitor center and solar panels on campus bus shelters. The Green Fund supports student-initiated projects that address the environmental footprint, social impact, and operating costs of campus facilities.

Research

Approximately 35% of UW–Madison research dollars relate to sustainability

UW–Madison [retained its top 10 ranking](#) in the national research rankings determined by the Higher Education Research and Development Survey (HERD). \$459 million was generated for sustainability related research during FY2020, which resulted in the most climate change research of any midwestern university in recent years.

Spotlights:

- [Climate change and health in Wisconsin](#)
- [New solvent-based recycling process](#)
- [The importance of bumblebees](#)

Alumni

Recent graduates leverage internship experience

In the Offices of Sustainability's "[Where Are They Now?](#)" newsletter series, readers learn about

the professional skills that students gain in the sustainability internship. Recent graduates have leveraged their experiences to land jobs in a range of fields, from supply change management to local government.

Staffing

New Interim Director of Sustainability Education and Research hired

With the retirement of campus sustainability champion [Professor Cathy Middlecamp](#), the Office of Sustainability [welcomed Assistant Professor Andrea Hicks](#), who brings expertise in environmental engineering and studies the environmental and social impacts of emerging technologies.

Testimonials

"It has been an eye-opening and enriching experience serving on the Sustainability Advisory Council. I appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the efforts and aspirations of the Office of Sustainability and to have engaging discussion with campus colleagues and student leaders. It is one of the best work groups I have ever been associated with, due in large part to the thought and intentionality that goes into planning the meetings and facilitating meaningful dialogue. In addition to an excellent process, the collaborative discussions are yielding tangible outcomes in the form of recommendations which are representative of stakeholders' needs and will build a strong foundation to advance sustainability at UW–Madison." – *Sarah Schutt, Chief Alumni Engagement Officer*

"My internship through the Office of Sustainability has allowed me to flourish in my pursuits and passion for sustainability, as well as gain skills for a professional career. I have been able to complement my role as an intern and as ASM Sustainability Chair by joining the Sustainability Advisory Council as one of its members. In all, the Office has created streamlined communication and coordinated initiatives that enhance the conversation of sustainability throughout the campus community." – *Natalie Tinsen, Office of Sustainability intern*



6,000
Number of reusable bottles of disinfectant spray distributed across campus as a part of [Smart Restart](#)



51%
reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from campus heating and cooling plants since 2007

