



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

**AN ACTIVE PURSUIT  
OF SUSTAINABILITY**

## ABOUT THIS PLAN

This report was published by American University's Office of Sustainability on January 25, 2014. Hard copies are available from the university's Office of Sustainability or online at [www.american.edu/sustainability](http://www.american.edu/sustainability).

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Office of Sustainability would like to thank all the members of the Sustainability Project Team for their contributions toward addressing sustainability as one of the great issues of our time.

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*The Sustainability Project Team poses in front of the LEED Gold-certified School of International Service.*





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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

In its strategic plan, American University committed to acting on its values through social responsibility, service, and an active pursuit of sustainability. This commitment honors the university's history of practical idealism, dedication to public service, and global outlook.

Issued in 2010, our climate action plan galvanized and focused our sustainability efforts around greening our physical campus. These efforts are on track to achieve three facilities-related goals by 2020:

- Emit net-zero greenhouse gas emissions;
- Earn LEED certification on all new buildings as well as on 25 existing buildings; and
- Send zero waste to landfill or incineration.

In addition, we recognized the need to broaden our focus and have expanded our sustainability efforts to include the university's academic programs, administrative programs, and community outreach. I am pleased to present this sustainability plan, which integrates the following areas:

- Education and research;
- Operations; and
- Administration and engagement.

It is imperative that the leaders emerging from our classrooms are equipped to address the critical issues of our time. We will enhance student sustainability literacy through experiential learning and co-curricular engagement, while expanding sustainability in our research and curriculum. We also will promote employee sustainability through ASustainableU, our green office engagement



program. Furthermore, we will investigate ways to integrate social responsibility and sustainability into our investments. We also will engage our campus community in higher levels of public service.

As we continue on our journey toward achieving these ambitious goals, we are committed to transparency and will publish our progress through public reports in STARS, the Sustainability Tracking Assessment and Rating System.

Our plan's success relies on determination, innovation, and participation. I invite you to join our efforts and learn more about this important initiative by visiting [www.american.edu/sustainability](http://www.american.edu/sustainability).

By working together, we will green the American Dream.

Sincerely,

Neil Kerwin  
President



  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
american.edu

School of  


75  
Public Affairs

75 Years

A group of approximately 15 people, including students and staff, are sitting on the grass in front of the building, engaged in conversation. They are dressed in casual attire, and some are looking towards the camera. The scene is set on a paved walkway with a large tree in the background.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2009, American University issued a strategic plan, *Leadership for a Changing World*, articulating ten transformational goals for the next decade. Goal number seven declares the university's commitment to "Act on our values of social responsibility, service [and] an active pursuit of sustainability." In order to help achieve this and other strategic goals, this plan integrates and coordinates sustainability throughout the university.

The Office of Sustainability was created in 2009 to assist in reaching this goal. In 2010, AU adopted sustainability policies, produced a climate action plan, and assessed the university's sustainability using the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS). In January 2011, the university published its first comprehensive sustainability report, earning a STARS Gold rating.

In 2011, the university charged the Sustainability Project Team, comprising students, faculty, staff, and alumni, with weaving these programs into a single, comprehensive sustainability plan. Starting from the university's STARS Gold rating as a baseline, this plan outlines actions toward the goal of achieving a STARS Platinum rating by 2017.



## SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

### EDUCATION & RESEARCH

Engage Students in Co-Curricular Sustainability

Enrich Sustainability in the Curriculum

Promote Research on Sustainability

### OPERATIONS

Build and Maintain Green Buildings & Grounds

Achieve Climate Neutrality by 2020

Purchase Greener Products

Send Near Zero Waste to Landfill

### ADMINISTRATION & ENGAGEMENT

Promote Employee Engagement in Sustainability

Increase Community Service

Align Investments with Social and Environmental Goals

Sponsor Annual Sustainability Service Event



LETTUCE

*The Community Garden provides a supportive place to learn about urban, sustainable gardening.*





*Green Eagle student sustainability educators share a light moment after an end-of-year picnic.*



# EDUCATION & RESEARCH

Sustainability has become one of the critical imperatives of our time. By further integrating sustainability into its educational and research missions, American University reaffirms a central commitment to develop thoughtful, responsible human beings, who are prepared to serve and influence the city, nation, and world during dynamic times.

The university distinguishes itself through an array of sustainability-related education and research programs that exemplify the university's commitments to:

- interdisciplinary inquiry
- international understanding
- interactive teaching
- research and creative endeavors
- practical experiential learning

Six of AU's seven schools and colleges offer a degree program in, or house a center or program on, sustainability. Most students also engage in sustainability activities outside the classroom. AU students overwhelmingly indicate strong interest in learning more about sustainability.

We will improve sustainability literacy and engagement among our students through a combination of co-curricular programs and curricular enrichment. We also will intensify sustainability-related research in the areas of business, law, public policy, international development, communications, the arts, and environmental science.

## EDUCATION & RESEARCH GOALS

Engage Students in Co-Curricular Sustainability

Enrich Sustainability in the Curriculum

Promote Research on Sustainability

### Engage Students in Co-Curricular Sustainability Activities

Seventy five percent of surveyed students said their lifestyle reflects their knowledge of sustainability and 60 percent said their lifestyle has become more sustainable since enrolling at AU. Through the following existing and new programs, AU aims to engage students in co-curricular sustainability activities:

- 1.1** Expand the Green Eagle “eco-rep” program in which students are trained to disseminate sustainable practices and instill a culture of sustainability throughout the campus;
- 1.2** Continue and expand sustainability-themed residential living-learning opportunities;
- 1.3** Support sustainability-related student clubs, such as Eco-Sense, the Community Garden, and the Beekeeping Society.

**1.4** Produce sustainability outreach materials, including a sustainability newsletter, website, social media, brochures, sustainability map and self-guided tour, case studies, and posters and other signage and displays;

**1.5** Organize sustainability-focused events, such as Earth Week, Recyclemania, and campus energy conservation competitions; and

**1.6** Develop a green residence hall room program to encourage sustainable living on campus.

### Enrich Sustainability in the Curriculum

Six of the university’s seven schools and colleges house at least one degree or center focused on sustainability, offering a total of more than two hundred sustainability-focused courses. Yet, 70 percent of surveyed students say they want to learn more about sustainability, and 45 percent say they would take courses or degrees in sustainability if they were offered in their area of academic interest.

Virtually all respondents viewed sustainability as interdisciplinary, agreeing that “sustainability includes social, environmental, and economic factors.” Their rating of important sustainability issues reflects this definition, with “access to health care,” “racial equality,” “fair trade,” “climate change,” and “access to clean water” all receiving high indications of importance.

However, responses suggest that awareness of problems is greater than familiarity with solutions. For example, clean water was ranked the most important sustainability issue, but water conservation was considered less important. A similar disconnect was evident between climate change and energy conservation.

The goal of sustainability education is to provide students, regardless of their courses of study, the knowledge and skills to help create a healthy economy, society, and environment, and to lead and serve in the city, nation, and world. Courses with this goal in mind help students achieve one or more of the following:

- Understand and be able to effectively communicate the concept of sustainability;

- Develop and use an ethical perspective in which they view themselves as embedded in the fabric of an interconnected world;

- Become aware of and explore the connections between their chosen course of study and sustainability;

- Develop technical skills or expertise necessary to implement sustainable solutions;

- Understand the way in which sustainable thinking and decision-making contribute to the process of creating solutions for current and emerging social, environmental, and economic circumstances;

- Contribute practical solutions to real-world sustainability challenges;

- Synthesize understanding of social, economic, and environmental systems and reason holistically.

AU aims to encourage sustainability literacy by:

- 1.7** Assessing the value and feasibility of expanding service learning in the area of sustainability;

- 1.8** Offering workshops for faculty members on how to integrate sustainability into their courses; and

- 1.9** Offering opportunities for applied student research within the campus as a living laboratory.

See the online sustainability course catalog for a list of sustainability courses.

## Promote Research on Sustainability

One in ten research-oriented faculty members reports conducting research on a topic related to sustainability.

We will continue to encourage this exploration, through our commitment to interdisciplinary and collaborative research, and through our sustainability-related programs.

In addition, a new cross-school initiative, in conjunction with the AU Project 2030 planning process, will focus on resilience in urban ecosystems and communities in Washington D.C. and beyond. The combination of climate change, natural resource depletion, global population growth, and increasing urbanization will place increasing stress on human communities, ecosystems, and the services they provide. As an urban university with historic strength in interdisciplinary inquiry and expanded capability at the interface of metropolitan and environmental studies, AU aims to further our understanding of these stresses.

*Students, faculty and staff collaborate to integrate sustainability projects into curriculum and research.*





AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

# SUSTAINABILITY MAP



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To Office of Sustainability

**AMERICAN UNIVERSITY DREAM IS GREEN**

- sustainable food
- bike repair station
- rainwater feature
- electric vehicle charging station
- zero waste
- LEED certified
- solar
- bike share
- green roof
- habitat
- academics

START .....



### MARY GRAYDON CENTER

- Four green roofs
- Solar photovoltaic panels
- Solar hot water tubes
- Vegawatt cogenerator
- Trayless dining
- Compost collection
- View green roofs in second floor courtyards, including "WONK" topiary and beehives in north courtyard



### SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

- LEED Gold
- Solar photovoltaic panels
- Solar hot water tubes
- Rainwater collection & reuse
- LED lighting in parking garage
- Green materials through building
- Bioretention ponds
- Green roof over parking garage
- White roof
- Xeriscaping
- Global Environmental Politics Program
- MA in Natural Resources and Sustainable Development
- Social Enterprise Program



### BEEGHLY BUILDING

- College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Environmental Science



### LETTS, ANDERSON, & CENTENNIAL HALLS

- Student-run bike lending station
- Solar hot water tubes
- Bike repair station



### MCKINLEY BUILDING

- School of Communication, Center for Environmental Filmmaking
- LEED, pending
- Green roof



### OSBORN & ASBURY BUILDINGS

- Yard waste composting & construction debris recycling
- Zero Waste office
- Electric vehicle charging, university vehicles only
- Biodiesel-fueled buses



### COMMUNITY GARDEN

- Managed by students, faculty, & staff
- Herbs used in Terrace Dining Room
- Donations to Bread for the City



### WOODS BROWN AMPHITHEATRE

- Campus is a certified arboretum
- Over 2500 trees, 150 species
- Certified Wildlife Habitat (National Wildlife Federation)
- Tree Campus USA (Arbor Day Foundation)



### HURST HALL

- College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Biology and Public Health Program



### KAY SPIRITUAL LIFE CENTER & WARD CIRCLE BUILDING

- Permeable pavers test site between Kay and Ward allows water to infiltrate soil
- Largest campus green roof on Ward
- School of Public Affairs, Center for Environmental Policy



### KATZEN ARTS CENTER

- View solar photovoltaics from museum third floor (during open hours only)
- Public electric vehicle charging station (garage 1st floor)



### CAPITAL BIKESHARE

- Nation's largest bike sharing system
- Over 200 bike stations in DC
- Sign up at [www.capitalbikeshare.com](http://www.capitalbikeshare.com)



### KOGOD SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

- Green roofs built by volunteers
- Visit north green roof patio above shuttle stop
- Rain garden filters and cleans water
- #1 Undergraduate Business Program for Sustainability (Bloomberg Businessweek)
- MS in Sustainability Management



### WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW

- International and Comparative Environmental Law Program



*Faculty, staff, and student volunteers plant new trees on Campus Beautification Day.*



# OPERATIONS

The physical campus is a visible testament to the university's values and provides opportunities for students to learn about sustainability in a living laboratory. American University is in the heart of the nation's capital, but also has the advantages of a traditional college campus design, with open spaces and award-winning grounds that provide serene natural settings for contemplation, while serving as a habitat for wildlife and helping to restore the Chesapeake watershed.

American University will strive for leadership in campus sustainability.

## OPERATIONS GOALS

- Build & Maintain Green Buildings & Grounds
- Achieve Climate Neutrality by 2020
- Purchase Greener Products
- Send Zero Waste to Landfill



## Build & Maintain Green Buildings & Grounds

The purpose of the university's Green Building Policy is to build and maintain facilities consistent with the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards.

We will green the physical campus in the following ways:

**2.1** Earn LEED certification for 25 existing buildings by 2017; and

**2.2** Earn at least LEED Gold for all new buildings.

These improvements are planned to help achieve these goals:

- Increase the use of native plants and organic grounds management;
- Reduce the use of gas-powered equipment; and
- Reduce pollution in the Potomac River and Rock Creek by decreasing stormwater runoff generated on campus.

## Achieve Climate Neutrality by 2020

AU's climate action plan outlines strategies to achieve climate neutrality by 2020 at no net financial cost to the university.

The university's greenhouse gas emissions inventory indicates that half of the university's emissions stem from purchased electricity; one third are produced by travel (commuting, study abroad, and

business travel); and the remaining are from natural gas, paper purchasing, waste sent to landfill, and other minor sources. We will continue, or adopt, the following climate strategies:

**2.3** Reduce energy consumption in existing buildings by 10 percent; and design new buildings to use at least 30 percent less than ASHRAE standards.

Energy conservation practices are advanced through office, classroom, and residential greening programs. Building energy audits have been conducted and performance benchmarking is under way. Energy conservation measures are being inventoried and prioritized for funding. New buildings included in the Campus Master Plan are all being designed to meet or exceed the 30 percent efficiency goal.

Transportation and travel activities account for nearly one third of the university's greenhouse gas emissions, and contribute to local air pollution and traffic congestion. New programs for the campus fleet and campus commuting will be required in order to significantly reduce emissions from transportation and travel, including:

- Switching the campus fleet to electric, biodiesel, and other efficient and alternative fuels;
- Incentives to reduce commuting emissions;
- Earning "Bicycle-Friendly University" designation from the League of American Bicyclists by improving bicycle planning, facilities, and incentives; and
- Exploring flexible work and telecommuting options.



**2.4** Use clean, renewable power by producing what we can on campus and sourcing the rest from within the regional grid; and explore alternative sources of fuel.

In 2011, AU installed the largest combined solar arrays in the Washington metropolitan area, including 532 kW photovoltaic cells, and 204 kW solar thermal panels. Additional solar capacity is being designed. The university purchases renewable energy credits from the Langdon Wind Center equivalent to its entire electricity use and will continue to explore regional sources of green power.

**2.5** Catalyze the development of carbon offsets for all remaining emissions.

In 2013, the university began supporting a carbon offset project in Costa Rica, integrated with curricular and research interests, and will continue to offset emissions which are considered otherwise unavoidable, such as air travel and commuting.

## Purchase Greener Products

The university's Sustainable Purchasing Policy outlines principles and priorities for greening the procurement of goods and services. In addition to reducing unnecessary consumption, we aim to achieve the following goals:

**2.6** Ongoing consumables (cleaning supplies, furniture, office supplies) and durable goods (appliances, electronics) will comply, at minimum, with LEED standards;

**2.7** Reduce the sale and consumption of bottled water;

**2.8** Support fair trade by sourcing Fair Trade-certified products, and source from apparel suppliers who conform to the Fair Labor Association's code of conduct and who have been included in the Designated Suppliers Program by the Worker Rights Consortium, as applicable;

**2.9** Support the Washington D.C. regional economy by preferentially sourcing from local and disadvantaged businesses; and

**2.10** Source at least 50 percent of food locally and sustainably.

## Send Near Zero Waste to Landfill

In 2010, the university adopted a Zero Waste policy that set a goal of reducing waste produced and sending near zero waste to landfill.

Based on campus waste audits, our specific goals are to:

**2.11** Reduce total waste generation by 10 percent; and

**2.12** Divert at least 90 percent of waste from landfill.

Tactics to achieve these goals will include:

Improve product and service procurement to reduce the amount of waste that enters campus;

Optimize the number and location of recycling and landfill bins;

Expand organic materials collection for composting to campus-wide locations; and

Enhance zero waste signage and communications to improve uptake by members of the campus community.





*The Office of Sustainability enjoys a moment on the solar panel-covered roof of Bender Library.*



# ADMINISTRATION & ENGAGEMENT

The campus administrative organization is structured to support the university’s strategic goals. The organizational structure, culture, and practices will continue to evolve to reflect sustainability goals.

## ADMINISTRATION & ENGAGEMENT GOALS

- Promote Employee Engagement in Sustainability
- Investigate Responsible, Sustainable Investing
- Engage Students in Public Service

## Promote Employee Engagement in Sustainability

In 2011, the Office of Sustainability launched a pilot Green Office (GO!) program, building on a successful student-run office eco-certification program.

**3.1** Expand the Green Office program campus-wide in order to engage AU employees in sustainability.

## Investigate Responsible Sustainable Investing

Explore opportunities to include sustainable and responsible investing as an element of the university's investment portfolio, considering the following:

- Establish an Advisory Committee on Socially Responsible Investing to make recommendations to the Finance and Investment Committee of the Board of Trustees;

- Continue with our existing practice of screening the endowment portfolio to avoid investments in companies doing business in Darfur;

- Study the potential for investing in sustainability investment funds, such as renewable energy investment funds;

- Consider investing with community development financial institutions; and

- Consider ways to improve investment transparency, such as by publicly disclosing a snapshot of investment holdings.

## Engage Students in Community Service

AU values its strong culture of service. The university's strategic plan calls for life at the university to be marked by rich opportunities for service and a vigorous commitment to the city and people of Washington D.C.

We will build on this robust community service program by:

**3.2** Achieving a minimum of 100,000 hours of community service annually across all campus programs;

**3.3** Creating a special course suffix (cb) for all undergraduate courses with service-learning as an integral component; qualifying a minimum of 20 courses for this designation in 2014-2015;

**3.4** Achieving a minimum of 40 courses annually in which students earn add-on credit through the Community Service-Learning Program (CSLP);

**3.5** Achieving annual selection for the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor, which highlights model service programs and their impacts; and

**3.6** Sponsoring at least one major public service event annually related to sustainability.

We will achieve these participation levels by improving coordination and tracking of service events and through continued growth in new and existing public service opportunities.

