

Sustainability Plan for the College of Wooster
Submitted by the Campus Sustainability Committee, May 2019

Context:

In Fall of 2018, in order to advance the strategic priority of greater environmental sustainability, President Bolton charged the campus sustainability committee (CSC) with developing a 5-year plan for sustainability on campus.

Wooster has long been engaged with sustainability; we had an early recycling program (and recycling coordinator) in the 90s; we had an ongoing Environmental Task Force that became a standing committee, the CSC, in about 2008; we had a sustainability intern from 2012-2014; we have active student groups; and of course we have many environmental initiatives to be proud of. However, involvement has been uneven and many members of the campus community, as well as a broader potential audience, are not even aware of some of the things we are doing. In the context of a new strategic plan for the College, this is a good time to plan out a more systematic approach to sustainability.

Why:

We face growing environmental challenges. In particular, scientific consensus is that ongoing climate change has already warmed the world by 1.8° F and threatens consequences that will likely be devastating if rapid and far-reaching actions to increase sustainability are not taken *immediately* (IPCC 2018). Suggested changes target a 45% reduction of CO₂ emissions by 2030 and net-zero emissions by 2050.

This concerns the College of Wooster because we have established graduate qualities that include understanding the implications of global processes, demonstrating ethical judgment, and commitment to civic engagement. If we ignore the global challenge of climate change -- something our students are very aware of -- we are undercutting our educational mission.

It also concerns us for practical reasons: sustainability is important for both student recruitment and the college's operating budget. For example, 63% of college applicants say they consider environmental issues when making their college decision (Princeton Review 2018). Unfortunately, the College of Wooster's green score lags behind both our rankings in other categories and our peer institutions (Figure 1). In fact, of the Ohio Five schools with available data, Wooster ranks last in sustainability (Figure 2). Clearly, increasing sustainability on campus --- and publicizing it --- can only help us recruit students in this challenging time period.

Sustainability measures that focus on renewable energy and waste reduction can also help reduce the operating costs of the college. Previous energy audits and improvements at Wooster achieved significant savings. For example, the 2011 energy audit paid for itself within 5 years through cost reductions. Unfortunately, our expenditures on energy are predicted to increase with the recent addition of air conditioning to many dorms. Although smart investments in renewable energy may

carry substantial upfront costs, they can ultimately reduce expenditures on energy over a longer term, especially as fossil fuel resources become more costly.

In sum, investing in sustainability is not just an ethical responsibility, it is necessary to fulfill our educational mission; it can also potentially improve our recruitment of students and lower our operating costs.

What:

Our recommendations are premised on the goal of increasing sustainability while maintaining our educational mission. We are mindful that to be fully sustainable, actions must be affordable and equitable. But we are also convinced that actions are necessary and that failing to act will be more expensive in the long run. We have prioritized proposals that seem to be most feasible as well as most effective.

These changes must permeate every aspect of the College. Even when simplifying environmental sustainability to a single metric such as CO₂ emissions, significant inputs include not just our energy generation and use, but our food, grounds, waste, and transportation systems. In addition, increasing sustainability often requires behavioral changes and/or financial inputs. Creating meaningful change will require acknowledging connections across all departments and divisions.

How:

Sustainability plans require commitments from many aspects of the College. Although details vary, peer institutions have often formed action plans via 1) an analysis of current energy use and/or carbon footprint analysis, 2) finding campus-specific energy savings, and 3) campus specific financial analyses (see appendix E for examples from other institutions). Often these steps involve outside consultants and their recommendations may require significant financial resources.

Major Recommendations for Immediate Implementation

- Hire a Sustainability Coordinator
- Form a renewable energy exploratory committee
- Conduct an external energy audit
- Create a revolving green fund
- Incorporate sustainability into campus culture and establish relevant goals and targets

Hire a Sustainability Coordinator

Our highest recommendation is to hire a sustainability coordinator/director. Without someone in this position, we lose a great deal of efficiency and institutional memory. Our website, where people turn to find out about college practices, is out of date. We also miss out on the PR opportunities that could result from the actions we are already taking. The sustainability coordinator can help to monitor our progress toward sustainability goals and recommend new goals and targets at regular intervals. See Appendix A.

Form a renewable energy exploratory committee

Any meaningful change to our CO₂ emissions will require more sustainable energy sources, which based on our local climate will likely feature solar and geothermal solutions. Unfortunately, we currently do not know where our emissions stand. Our last greenhouse gas emissions inventory was limited in nature and conducted in 2013. It found that our on-campus and purchased power consumption (scope 1 and 2 emissions) totaled 23,306 metric tons of CO₂ equivalents (<https://sustainability.scotblogs.wooster.edu/2013/11/12/from-sbs-desk-greenhouse-gas-emissions/>). An exploratory committee, including staff from facilities, finance, and advancement, could investigate ways to reduce our emissions consistent with the IPCC recommendations for limiting warming to 1.5° C (2.7° F).

Conduct an external energy audit

We strongly encourage an energy audit to be conducted by an outside company next year. Our previous audit, in 2011, identified a number of fixes that not only reduced our energy use but also saved us money, with a return on investment period that was shorter than originally anticipated.

Create a revolving green fund

Revolving green funds can both increase sustainability and save costs. After an initial infusion of capital, funds are used for energy efficiency upgrades, and then replenished over time through the cost reductions they generate. In addition, savings can be used to fund new initiatives; there may be an opportunity to promote student ideas (as we did on a smaller scale several years ago). Typically both a sustainability coordinator and someone in finance would manage the fund.

Incorporate sustainability into campus culture

Under the guidance of the sustainability coordinator, the message about sustainability should permeate the campus culture. Students should be introduced to relevant policies at ARCH, during first-year orientation, and as part of Res Life programming. Faculty should be introduced/reminded about sustainability goals at faculty meetings once a semester. Sustainability programming can be included at staff socials. A consideration of environmental impact should be mandatory in all College decisions, from purchasing to building construction. The new major in Environmental Studies can support a curricular component to sustainability.

Finally, we need to set goals for becoming carbon neutral, reducing waste, etc. in consultation between the sustainability coordinator, representatives from relevant departments (e.g., facilities; grounds; dining services), and those with decision-making authority. A target date for carbon neutrality should be set by the end of 2020. Emission and waste reduction targets should be established and reviewed at least every 5 years.

In sum: The College needs to be sustainable in every sense of the term. By taking deliberate, mindful action to address environmental challenges, we have an opportunity to distinguish ourselves in a positive way with prospective students and to make considered changes that rather than reacting to changing conditions as they become urgent.

Appendix A:

A possible job description for a sustainability coordinator

There are a variety of different models for sustainability coordinators. We recommend someone with enough authority to have influence, and whose purview is not restricted to facilities. In the long term, we may want multiple positions; at the outset, we suggest hiring a professional who would supervise one or more student interns. Most of our peers have someone in this position.

Position Title

Sustainability Coordinator/Manager/Director

Reports To

Vice President of Finance; Cabinet or president directly; Facilities

Responsibilities

Serve as administrator of the Campus Sustainability Committee.

Research and remain up-to-date with industry best practices in sustainability.

Propose and implement initiatives to reduce on-campus energy use, waste, and carbon emissions.

Coordinate sustainability efforts between all academic and non-academic departments, as well as individual students and student groups.

Keep records of the campus' sustainability efforts regularly up-to-date. This will include the preparation of official reports, such as the STARS report.

Manage the sustainability budget.

Investigate and pursue grant opportunities to fund sustainability initiatives.

Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree from a four-year college or university and 3-5 years of related experience within the field of sustainability or enacting sustainability initiatives required. Any combination of acceptable education and experience, which has provided the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill the requirements of this position, may be considered.
- Maintain a valid Ohio driver's license.
- Must have experience with supervising and coordinating individuals.
- Must have excellent oral and written skills, strong interpersonal skills, excellent organizational skills and attention to detail, independent problem solving skills and the ability to manage multiple responsibilities simultaneously.

Note: we briefly investigated salaries for this position and found a range of something like \$38-65,000, with an average of about \$50K. However, we had limited access to this information.

The importance of this position:

We briefly had someone responsible for coordinating the College's sustainability efforts in the past. The position was originally proposed as a full-time, 9-month-long (from August 2012 to May 2013) intern-level position. Though the position title was "Sustainability Coordinator," it was defined at the level of an intern position, similar to the CDI Intern position which currently exists within the office of the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, that it only required a Bachelor's degree and 1-2 years of experience. However, despite being deemed an "intern-level" position, both in the wording of the job posting and the responsibilities it ultimately entailed, the position was actually that of a seasonal contract employee, who worked under the Grounds Department. The Sustainability Coordinator position was ultimately filled by a recent graduate of the College. The position was extended an additional year, to 2014, but was not renewed at that point despite support from a number of people on campus.

It would be preferable to have the next sustainability coordinator be a person with more power and authority. Recognizing budgetary concerns, it might have to be someone who does not have much experience. However, we believe it is important for this new position to be granted more authority and a more visible position than the previous intern, in order to effectively coordinate efforts across multiple departments.

Not having an individual in charge of sustainability puts the College at a competitive disadvantage. Virtually all of our peer institutions (including but not limited to Denison University, Kenyon College, Oberlin College, and Otterbein University) have at least one, if not more than one, full-time salaried sustainability professional. In this way, we are severely lagging behind these peer institutions.

Appendix B:

Some other specific suggestions

- Campus dining should be incorporated into our sustainability initiatives, and any new facilities should include best practices that reduce food's footprint through food plating, in-house composting, and promotion of environmentally friendlier food options.
- Any new or remodeled facilities should not only strive to be energy efficient (e.g., meet LEED standards, though not necessarily obtaining LEED certification) but also promote practices and policies that allow for more sustainable behavior.
- The College should work with the City of Wooster to find synergies where sustainable initiatives can be coordinated, such as in recycling, public transportation, and community gardens. These could be experiential learning opportunities for our students.
- As part of the plan, we should set a goal of becoming carbon-neutral by a specific date, say in 10 years (or in 2030: 160 years after Wooster was dedicated). Every year there should be an evaluation to track our progress.
- As part of the plan, we should set a goal for reducing our waste stream by a given percentage, including food wasted, and monitor our progress.
- Some specific policies: we should support the purchase of carbon offsets for all work-related travel. In order to minimize waste, we should not hand out plastic bags in any campus store unless one is specifically requested. We should let all campus members know that they will pay more for a drink when they don't use a reusable mug. We should consider incentives for people who drive energy-efficient vehicles (preferred parking places) or who walk or cycle to work, bearing in mind that not all incentives need to be financial. We should reduce the amount of meat served on campus. We encourage the investment committee to consider a gradual divestment from fossil fuels. We should maximize the exchange of information with the campus, collecting feedback and suggestions, and publicizing all of our sustainability initiatives

Appendix C

Suggestions for a preliminary timeline

Summer-Fall 2019

- finalize job description for a sustainability coordinator and hire someone to fill this position.
- Disseminate sustainability information at ARCH.

Fall 2019:

- the CSC will work to update the websites where outdated information about sustainability is present.
- Begin to implement standard educational programming for students (through Res Life), faculty (at faculty meetings), and staff (at staff meetings). This will occur at least once a semester.
- Host an open discussion for the campus to discuss sustainability
- Work with Facilities to develop plan for an energy audit
- Form the renewable energy committee

Spring 2020:

- Set long-term targets for reducing our carbon emissions, including identifying a date by which we hope to be carbon neutral.
- Complete a full greenhouse gas emissions inventory as a baseline measure.
- Develop plan for a green fund.
- Work with Greenhouse to celebrate Earth Day.

Spring 2021:

- Complete a campus-wide energy audit with external companies.
- Complete a full greenhouse gas emissions inventory to track out progress.
- Complete a Climate Action Plan (renewable energy committee and external consultants) that identifies the best way forward to carbon neutrality.

Spring 2022:

- Complete a full greenhouse gas emissions inventory to track out progress.
- Raise capital for the Climate Action Plan.

Spring 2023:

- Complete a full greenhouse gas emissions inventory to track out progress.
- Implementation of first steps of Climate Action Plan.

Spring 2024:

- Complete a full greenhouse gas emissions inventory to track out progress.

Fall 2024:

- host an event to commemorate and celebrate our sustainability achievements over the past 5 years (perhaps achieving carbon neutrality).

Appendix D

Some details about the committee:

CSC structure: The committee is an appointed committee of the faculty but also includes representatives from facilities, grounds, dining services, custodial services, and students; student members include representatives from SGA and Campus Council. It is chaired by Susan Clayton; other members are Nick Brandley, Oria Daugherty '21, Halen Gifford '21, Olivia Hall '19, Beau Mastrine, Mary Kate Norton '19, Grace O'Leary '20, Marjorie Shamp, Venice Swigart, and Abbi Tarburton '22.

In addition, we formed four subcommittees and issued an open invitation to any member of the campus community to join these committees. They are: Energy; Food; Waste and Recycling; and Outreach. The CSC as well as most of the subcommittees meet bi-weekly.

CSC Process: We held two open fora in the Pit , one in the fall and one in the spring, to which all members of the campus community were invited. We also hosted a visit from the sustainability coordinator at Denison, Jeremy King. We had one hour of open discussion to which all members of the campus were invited. We had another hour meeting between Jeremy and the CSC. At a faculty meeting, we informed the faculty that a plan was being developed and invited input. We also participated in two open poster sessions, one for students and one for faculty and staff.

Appendix E

Publicly available Sustainability/Climate Plans at other GLCA institutions:

Denison University– Campus Sustainability Plan & Climate Action Plan was first released in 2012:

<https://denison.edu/sites/default/files/forms/Denison%20Sustainability%20Plan%202012.pdf> and updated in 2015

<https://denison.edu/sites/default/files/forms/sustainabilityplan2015.pdf> with a goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.

Kalamazoo College – Sustainability and Climate Action Plan was first established in 2010

http://reason.kzoo.edu/green/assets/Sustainability_and_Climate_Action_Plan.pdf

Oberlin College - Carbon Neutrality Resource Master Plan, Implementation Strategy, and Economic Approach was conducted in 2016 by SSOE Group and Ever-Green Energy

https://www.oberlin.edu/sites/default/files/content/office/environmental-sustainability/documents/final_oberlin_college_carbon_neutrality_resource_master_plan_implementation_strategy_and_economic_approach_2016_redacted_for_public.pdf with a goal of carbon neutrality by 2025.

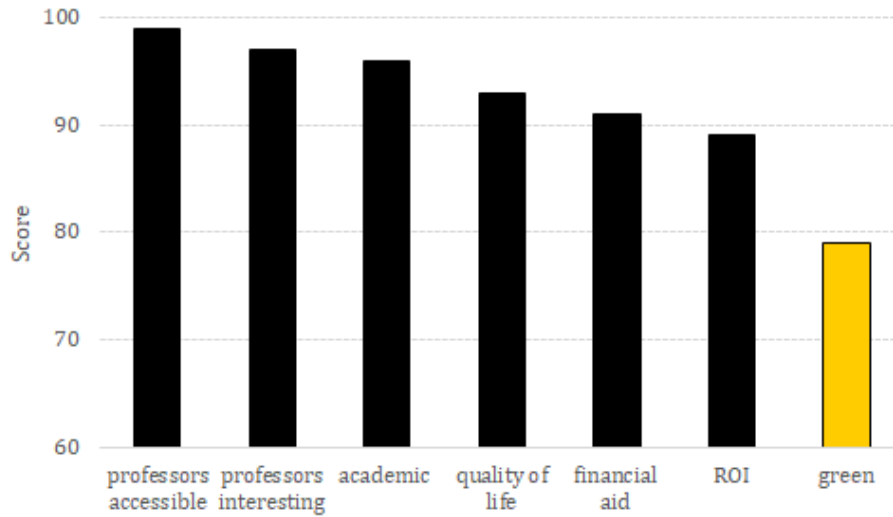


Figure 1: Of the various ratings given by the *Princeton Review*, Wooster’s green rating is the worst. The green rating is “comprehensive measure of a school's performance as an environmentally aware and prepared institution”, and includes the presence of a sustainability coordinator, % of energy from renewable sources, and whether schools have a plan to mitigate their greenhouse admissions amongst other factors. Truncation of the y-axis represents that all categories are scored on a 60-100 scale. All scores and more information can be found at princetonreview.com.

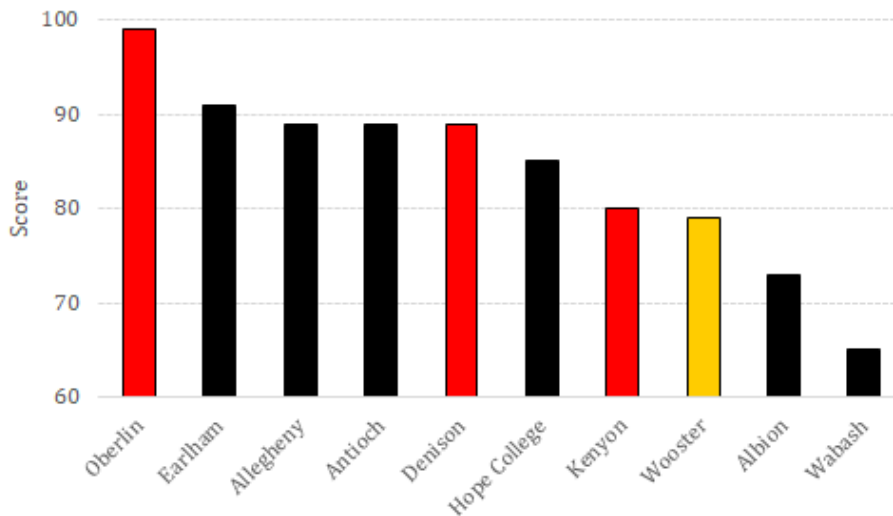


Figure 2: Wooster (yellow) lags behind both Ohio Five (red) and GLCA institutions in the Princeton Review’s green rating. Truncation of the y-axis represents that all categories are scored on a 60-100 scale. Depauw College, Kalamazoo College, and OWU do not report relevant data. All scores and more information can be found at princetonreview.com.

Table 1:
Comparison with Peer Institutions

	Sustainability Professionals, Committees, and Offices	Green fund	Plan for CO₂ Neutrality	Dining, Grounds, and Custodial	Student Groups
Wooster	Campus Sustainability Committee	None	None	Grounds waste composted and used as mulch on site, food waste sent to bio-digester, local produce in dining hall.	Greenhouse, Environmental Justice Club (New)
Oberlin	Office of Environmental Sustainability, Assistant VP of Campus Energy and Sustainability, Sustainability Manager, 10 paid student interns	Unknown	Committed in 2006 to be carbon neutral by 2025	Unknown	Students for Energy Justice, Resource Conservation Team
Denison	Sustainability Coordinator, 6 paid student sustainability fellows,	Green revolving fund of over 2.5 million: an initial 1 million from the operating budget with increases from energy savings	Become carbon neutral by 2030. Since 2010 have decreased energy footprint by 40%	41% of food is sourced locally,	Green Team, Denison PEAS, IntersectECO

Allegheny	Sustainability Coordinator	Unknown	Plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2020, primarily by purchasing energy only from renewable sources	Food waste, grounds scraps, paper, and local municipal waste composted on-site.	AC Veggie Club, Students for Environmental Action
Kenyon	Office of Green Initiatives, Director of Green Initiatives, 9 paid student interns, Recycling Center with student interns, Rural Life Center with student interns.	Unknown	Signed statement of intent in 2016	Dining partners with local food, Kenyon Farm, sends food waste off campus to be composted	ECO, Land Lords, Sustainability Council
Knox	Office of Sustainability, Director of Campus Sustainability Initiatives, 7-12 paid student interns, President's Council on Sustainability	Green Fund and Sustainability Endowment	125% of energy use on campus from wind power in the Midwest through Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs)	College-generated compost used on campus and by local farms, on campus Share Shop to reduce and reuse.	Students for Sustainability, Food Recovery Network, Nature Club
Ohio Wesleyan	Sustainability Task Force, plan to hire a full-time Sustainability Coordinator by 2020.	None	None, with goal of 5% energy from Solar by 2020	Goal of 15% of food purchased locally by 2020	Beekeeping Club, Environment and Wildlife Club

Wittenberg	Sustainability Task Force	None	None	Food composted off campus	POWER, Green Senator on SGA
Centre	Sustainability Committee, Paid Recycling Coordinator housed under Custodial	Green fund built by \$20 student activities fee annually	Plan for carbon neutrality by 2040, milestone of 25% reduction from 2008 levels by 2020	Food composted off campus, on-campus farm	Environmental Association
Juniata	Sustainability Team	None	Signed commitment in 2007 to work towards carbon neutrality, no detailed plan	Use organic fertilizers	Environmental Coalition
Earlham	Sustainability Office, Director of Integrated Program in Sustainability, Assistant Director of Sustainability, Sustainability Progress Committee,	Unknown	Exploratory planning committee formed in 2016	Compost pre-consumer food scraps	Student Sustainability Corps, Sustainability Agriculture Club
Hope	Green Team, Office of Sustainability, Director of Sustainability, Hope Advocates for Sustainability (paid student interns)	Unknown	Energy footprint has decreased over the last 5 years, no carbon-neutrality plan	43% of food grown within 250 miles, Paper products, grounds cuttings, and food scraps composted and used on campus	Green Hope