

GREEN OSWEGO

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss environmental issues concerning Oswego State University. These issues include current commitments we are undertaking and changes that have already been made. It will also include remedies other schools are undertaking that we could consider in the future.

One of the things that we found during the course of our research was the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, or the ACUPCC (<http://www.presidentsclimatecommitment.org/>). Deborah Stanley, our own President here at Oswego, was one of the charter signatories. We asked ourselves, what does this commitment mean? One of the things we committed to by signing it was initiating the development of a comprehensive plan to achieve climate neutrality as soon as possible. Within two months of signing this document in September 2007, we agreed to create institutional structures to guide the development and implementation of the plan. Within one year of signing this document, all signatories were to complete a comprehensive inventory of all greenhouse gas emissions (including emissions from electricity, heating, commuting, and air travel) and update the inventory every other year thereafter. Within two years of signing this document, we would develop an institutional action plan for becoming climate neutral. We were also to initiate two or more of the following tangible actions to reduce greenhouse gases while the more comprehensive plan is being developed: establish a policy that all new campus construction will be built to at least the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED Silver standard or equivalent; adopt an energy-efficient appliance purchasing policy requiring purchase of ENERGY STAR certified products in all areas for which such ratings exist; establish a policy of offsetting all greenhouse gas emissions generated by air travel paid for by our institution; encourage use of and provide access to public transportation for all faculty, staff, students and visitors at our institution; within one year of signing this document, begin purchasing or producing at least 15% of our institution's electricity consumption from renewable sources; establish a policy or a committee that supports climate and sustainability shareholder proposals at companies where our institution's endowment is invested; and participate in the Waste Minimization component of the national RecycleMania competition, and adopt three or more associated measures to reduce waste. Lastly, we would make the action plan, inventory, and periodic progress reports publicly available by providing them to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) for posting and dissemination.

SUNY Oswego also participated in Focus the Nation, joining with more than 1,550 other colleges and universities on January 31st, 2008. This was a country-wide day of teach-ins about environmental issues. Among the speakers was Patrick Moore, co-founder and former director of Greenpeace International, who spoke about Nuclear power and how it is the only way to provide the energy the world needs and simultaneously reduce humankind's carbon footprint.

We are already doing a lot here at Oswego State to deal with the environmental issues that we face. For example, we are in the process of switching to an electronic campus, decreasing the impact made by the overwhelming amounts of paper used on college campuses. We are also active in recycling, and we use energy efficient lighting in many of the buildings. We offer Distance learning courses which studies show can cut carbon emissions by two thirds even for part time on campus students, and we have implemented greener building plans and environmentally friendly construction techniques.

In the course of our research we also found some very interesting things other schools are doing, which we could implement here at Oswego to make an even bigger difference. Middlebury College in Vermont touts an environmentally friendly dining hall with a vegetated roof that opened in 2005. UC-Santa Cruz is an institution recognized for reversing the outsource trend by moving from a food service company contract to an in-house operation, and now, instead of using national mega-suppliers, the dining halls buy organic produce grown on local farms, which supports the area economy and reduces transportation time (and thus gas emissions). UCSC also recycles used cooking oil and use paper plates made from recycled materials. The dining operation is also reducing landfill waste by donating leftover food to the "Second Harvest Food Bank." When UCSC started buying fresh, locally grown organic produce the local farmer's organization ALBA's output increased by 300 percent in a single month. At Case Western Reserve University, a new housing complex will feature a kiosk that displays statistics on the buildings energy use. The University of South Carolina uses recycled materials (right down to the carpets) and keeps energy use to a minimum through good engineering and usage changes. Think lots of natural light, low-flow faucets, and motion-detected lighting. This is the way we need to go in all buildings.

There is also the impressive Northland College Environmental living and learning center (ELLC). Living arrangements feature three styles: regular double rooms, suites, and apartments. It also includes nine lounge or study areas, and four different energy and waste management systems. Among the special environmental features is a 120-foot 20 kilowatt wind tower. Three photovoltaic arrays will provide efficient active solar energy collection and help study the efficiency -- one array is stationary, a second one tracks the sun's path horizontally, and the third tracks both horizontally and vertically to maximize solar gain. Fourteen solar panels placed on the roof will preheat hot water for use by residents. Composting waterless toilets in two of the apartments will provide a demonstration of their function and efficiency. The apartments have passive solar design and share two greenhouses open to student use. The school also utilizes Heat recovery units in the building's ventilation system. They have high efficiency natural gas w/ solar preheating and use green building materials in the construction. The environmental

features of the ELLC result in a 50% greater efficiency than a similar building designed to code. Students living in the dorm said it made them more ecology-conscious. This is an excellent example of where we could go with our school in the future.

There are also some simple things that students themselves can do. First of all, we can recycle everything, especially paper! Think about how many pieces of paper a student can go through in a semester. There are class notes, scrap copies, term papers, daily school newspapers, and assorted stuff that has been printed out from the internet. It all adds up. Look for a paper recycle bin on campus -- they are often near a dormitory or large classroom building. And we can recycle other items as well, including cans, bottles, and cardboard boxes. We can also use our printers more carefully. We can save paper by printing on both sides of the page. Many professors don't mind if a student turns in a paper like this -- we just need to ask first. Students can save pages that have been printed and use the backs to print out drafts and other things that don't need to be turned in. In addition, many printers have multiple settings for print quality. Use the high quality print setting for things that have to look nice, but use the low quality setting for things that don't. This will save ink. While we're at it, we can consider cutting down on the things we print out. Do we really need to print out that web page, or can we just bookmark it? Another thing students can do is limit the use of disposable cups and plates, and the use of paper napkins. If a student moves into his or her first off-campus apartment, it can be tempting to buy disposable cups and plates to save time. This adds up to a lot of waste *and* money. He or she can buy some inexpensive plates and wash them. This also works in a dorm setting. Many dorms have a kitchen, and if it doesn't, students can wash dishes in the bathroom sink. Also, since college students eat a good deal of fast food, napkin use can add up. One napkin will usually do the trick, instead of using a whole pile of them.

There are a lot of other things students themselves can do to reduce their impact on our environment. You can use compact fluorescent light bulbs. These bulbs cost more, but they last longer and ultimately save you money. If you live in a dorm, get yourself a lamp and screw in one of these bulbs. Lamp light is much more pleasant and environmentally efficient than overhead dorm lighting. Another thing you can do is walk, bike, and limit your use of a car. Most campuses are very pedestrian friendly, and many college towns offer good public transportation and bike paths. Ask yourself if you really need a car as a college student, because if you can get by without one, you can save a good deal of money on gas, repairs, and overpriced student car insurance. If you do own a car, try to use it as little as you can. Buy recycled products whenever you can, especially paper. Buy environmentally safe cleaning products as well. Some of these products cost more-- but many don't, or the price difference is negligible. Students can also carry a water bottle instead of drinking from disposable plastic bottles. Think of how many bottles of water get consumed on a campus every day. Save waste and money and carry a refillable bottle. If the tap water on your campus is questionable, buy large containers of waters to refill your bottle. Use refillable binders, not disposable notebooks. This is a simple way to save waste. If you want to save your notes after the semester is over, take them out of the binder and staple them. Or you can go electronic and take all of your notes on a laptop. Lastly, students can buy, sell, and donate at second hand stores. Lots of students do this to save

money, but it's also a great thing to do for the environment. Reusing clothes decreases the use of resources to make clothing and puts a dent in the problem of worldwide sweatshops. All these small sacrifices can add up, especially at Oswego State.

Also, something you don't think about much, but there are Green mutual funds out there, ones that not only avoid companies that harm the environment but actively pursue investment with companies that make a positive impact on the world. Not only should our University look into this type of investing but all individuals can too.

In conclusion, we at Oswego are doing a great job in our opinion, and we appear to be at the forefront of schools trying to make a difference. We need to make more advances in the areas of Environmental education by implementing course work in Photovoltaic Systems and the National Electrical Code, Solar Hot Water Education, Wind Energy Science, Criterion-Referenced Testing and Nuts and Bolts of Ethanol and Biofuels-Hydrogen and Fuel Cells. I got this directly from Renewable energy online's article "Educating the Green Workforce." But that is what we need. More challenging course work involving these fields would be instrumental in making advancements in the green movement, bringing more students who are actively involved in the changes that must be made to our campus and our world. Many would wonder why here? According to Bartleby of Associated Content it is because "campuses are diverse in their development: they combine residential components like dorms and dining halls with offices, classrooms, laboratories, sports venues, theatres, and all kinds of other spaces." They are like models of a city or even of a country. We can and do learn so much from what we have here. Universities are also where many people learn how to live on their own, forming habits that will last throughout their lives. That is if they are good habits and being green can be part of that.

We would like to offer a quote in closing.

"Sustainability is the art of ever after, assuring that people in the future will have what they need to lead fulfilling lives."