

THREE YEAR SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

PREFACE

The “Sustainable Bates” program is a campus-wide effort to integrate environmental responsibility into academic, operational, and residential life at Bates. The purpose of the program is to take a comprehensive look at Bates’ environmental footprint and provide strategies for making the College more sustainable. As such, the Environmental Coordinator is working with students, faculty, and staff to bring sustainability into decision-making processes in all realms of the college.

What exactly is sustainability? While it can be complex and abstract when it comes to measuring programs, sustainability is a simple idea overall. In a sustainable world, our demand on nature is in balance with nature’s capacity to meet that demand. In other words, we live within our ecological means.

Sustainability does not mean sacrificing growth for strict preservation and does not have to unhinge economic planning. On the contrary, “greening” our footprint can be cost-effective and help the College grow. More and more incoming students are asking about sustainability programs when they come to the College, and the media increasingly scrutinizes environmental performance. Today it is necessary for corporations and institutions to be environmentally conscious. In fact, improving energy efficiency, exploring fossil fuel alternatives, and encouraging waste minimization through innovative programs are essential strategies for maintaining a competitive advantage.

This strategy provides a roadmap for building the sustainability program over the next three years. It will lay the foundation for figuring out how we can use energy more efficiently and generate it more benignly, how we can integrate sustainability into long-term planning, how we can learn to use resources more efficiently and value “waste” materials as recyclable resources, and how we can use our purchasing power and influence to demand this of others.

Colleges and universities nationwide are recognizing the need to become more sustainable and build sustainability into their operational frameworks and master planning. Many schools have been adopting sustainability policies for over a decade. As a result, the movement has grown into a mature network of professionals, associations, and conferences dedicated to integrating sustainable practices into higher education. In fact:

- > Over 250 colleges and universities have hired sustainability professionals.
- > At least 200 institutions have adopted long-term global warming commitments.
- > Over 200 schools competed in this year’s national *Recyclemania* competition.
- > More than 100 institutions are purchasing electricity generated from renewable sources.
- > Over 55 institutions have one or more LEED certified building on campus.

Bates has traditionally been among this group of leaders, and in 1995 President Harward endorsed an *Environmental Policy Statement* to highlight the College’s firm commitment to environmental sustainability. Developed by the Environmental Issues Committee comprised of faculty, staff, and students it reads:

BATES COLLEGE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Bates College will strive to:

- *conserve natural resources and support their sustainable use;*
- *conduct affairs in a manner that safeguards the environmental health and safety of students, faculty, staff and the surrounding community;*
- *reduce the use of toxic substances and the generation of wastes and promote strategies to reuse and recycle those wastes that cannot be avoided;*
- *purchase renewable, reusable, recyclable and recycled materials and*
- *conduct our business practices in accordance with this policy.*

In our education and research missions, Bates College will strive to:

- *foster an understanding of and a responsibility for the physical environment;*
- *ensure that individuals are knowledgeable about the environment and health issues that affect their discipline and/or department;*
- *orient newcomers to our community with regard to the campus- wide environmental ethic;*
- *encourage environmental research; and*
- *conduct research and teaching in an environmentally responsible way.*

In our student and employee relations, Bates College will strive to:

- *delineate individual responsibility and guide action for ensuring safety and minimizing adverse environmental impacts in the implementation of this policy.*

Bates will consider full compliance with the law to be the minimally acceptable standard and will exercise whatever control is reasonable and necessary to avoid harm to the public health and environment, whether or not such control is required by regulations. Bates will initiate, promote, and conduct programs that fully implement this policy throughout the College.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The role of the Environmental Coordinator is to reestablish a center point for information and environmental leadership at Bates. The Coordinator will work with faculty, staff, and students to put the College's Environmental Policy into practice and provide practical tools and strategies for making the College more sustainable.

At the same time the Environmental Coordinator will coordinate *Sustainable Bates* to provide outreach and environmental education to faculty, staff, and students on campus, and link initiatives at Bates with other colleges and communities. The *Sustainable Bates* program will establish opportunities for practicing sustainability in everyday campus life, and begin to build a holistic, campus-wide sustainability ethos. This means emphasizing greater personal responsibility and accountability, and promoting sustainability in all levels of decision-making.

Though the program is certain to evolve over time and will be flexible to changes and opportunities as they arise, developing the overall program in the next three years will entail the following three components (with working examples):

1) Develop permanent, consistent forums for outreach and education.

Providing forums for up-to-date information and resources is the first step in raising awareness throughout the Bates community. How is Bates working toward sustainability? How does that work relate to nationwide efforts? How does that affect each of us? What will sustainable growth look like?

- Website
- Quarterly newsletter
- Annual Report
- Green Campus Education Program
- Partnership/recognition programs
- Conferences and meetings (*Northeast Campus Sustainability Consortium 2007 annual meeting hosted by USM, Bates, Colby, Bowdoin*)
- Orientation materials (*e.g. letters in packets, presentation to new students and JAs/RCs*)
- Integrate sustainability into college's admissions brochures, advancement materials, etc.

2) Engage faculty, staff and students in sustainability as part of campus life.

How will students, faculty, and staff most effectively embrace a comprehensive vision of sustainability and adopt and nurture it at Bates? Campus life initiatives will be aimed at improving environmental literacy and engaging faculty, staff, and students in sustainable everyday behavior through interactive programs.

- Outreach materials (*posters, stickers, shirts, bags, letters, trivia games, raffles, etc.*)
- Recyclemania
- Clean Sweep
- Sustainability Concert/Fair
- Environmental theme house
- Energy conservation dorm competition
- Work with faculty to expand sustainability into broader curricula
- Legislated Committee on Environmental Responsibility
- Partner with ES dept. on projects relating to class work (*get students involved in campus sustainability efforts through the classroom*)

3) Reduce Bates' environmental footprint.

How is Bates consuming resources and what impact is it having on the environment? The first step is to benchmark the College's environmental footprint, which means getting a measurement of what we consume, emit and discard. The second step is promoting conservation and the sustainable use of resources. This means delving into how we make decisions. How are policies, practices, and habits affecting the College's use of resources? Can current operational systems and processes lead to a sustainable system? If not, what needs to be changed? How can we make these changes sustainably?

- Update GHG Emissions Inventory
- Develop a Roadmap/strategies for reducing GHG emissions
- Create a Data collection/analysis system (*e.g. recycling rate, energy consumption, emissions, waste composition, etc.*)
- Develop a Waste/Recycling Analysis Report (including college-wide recycling policy)
- Conduct Transportation analysis (*GEM car proposals, fleet info.*)
- Develop language for Green Procurement standards
- Develop Paper Use Analysis (including conservation strategies)

LONG-TERM GOALS

=> Going from Initiatives to Institutionalized Sustainability

For over a decade Bates has been implementing successful environmental initiatives. Although these endeavors have improved the college's environmental performance, and in many cases have led to economic savings, they have yet to be consistently coordinated across campus or formally managed under the rubric of college-wide sustainability. Therefore, above and beyond establishing successful outreach initiatives and sustainability projects, the environmental coordinator's long-term aim is to transform sustainability into a comprehensive program which cultivates a college-wide sustainability ethos.

=> Fostering Culture Change

There are two components to culture change as it relates to sustainability. First, how can we get people to be more conscientious about the impact their actions have on the environment? Outreach alone is limited in its ability to cause people to change their behaviors. Culture change will require incremental behavior modifications so that sustainable actions become the norm. The most effective initiatives will have direct contact with people and engage them personally in sustainable behavior. One-on-one engagement is fundamental to this goal.

Second, how will students, faculty, and staff most effectively embrace a comprehensive vision of sustainability and adopt and nurture it at Bates? It is crucial to make personal responsibility and accountability the principle building blocks of sustainable initiatives and actively engage people in sustainable behavior. Leadership in this capacity will need to be campus-wide and cross-cutting.

=> Achieving Carbon Neutrality

In March 2007, Elaine Hansen signed the President's Climate Commitment, pledging Bates to work towards carbon neutrality. Becoming carbon neutral means the College would not emit a net addition of greenhouse gases – the major cause of global warming – to the atmosphere. This will require long-term technical, policy, and behavioral changes. Over the next two years the Environmental Coordinator along with the Committee on Environmental Responsibility will develop a roadmap of strategies and options for achieving carbon neutrality, including targets, costs and dates.