

What is Sustainability?

"Sustainability means living, working and behaving in ways that sustain the integrity and biodiversity of the local, regional and planetary ecosystem upon which all life depends."

(Guy Dauncey, Penn State Indicators Report)

Some Principles of Sustainability

Value the Web of Life

Nature provides us with many services that we don't know how to replace or can't afford to replace. Avoid actions that harm the biotic community which provides us with the air, water, and climate upon which we all depend.

Live within Limits

Recognize that our planet has a vast, but not infinite, capacity to nourish us and process our wastes. Avoid harmful persistent compounds..

Account for Full Costs

Currently, prices often don't reflect all costs. *(Do you really pay the full health and environmental cost of burning fossil fuels at the gasoline pump?)* Choose and buy things based on the product's overall impact on the world.

Value the Local

Our current economy wastes transport fuels and treats the world's goods and people like cookie-cutter "inputs." Help to create strong regional economies that respect the natural and cultural resources of our neighborhoods, communities, and watersheds.

Work for Justice and Democracy

Desperate people sacrifice their long-term good for short-term survival, which harms all people and the planet. Long-term solutions to problems will only be achieved if everyone's voice is heard and everyone is involved in decisions.

Why should I try to live sustainably?

Evidence mounts that human societies, across the globe, are not living sustainably. The results: pollution, global warming, ecosystem damage, poverty, hunger, and disease.

In 1997, thousands of scientists signed a statement, put forth by the Union of Concerned Scientists, stating that

"Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at serious risk the future that we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms."

Making more sustainable choices, as an individual and as a society will create more abundant futures for humanity and for the Earth's rich web of life.

As a New Jersey higher education community member, you can take actions and make choices that can significantly improve the well-being of people and the planet.

Look Inside for Some Ideas!

Campus Actions for a Sustainable World



NJHEPS

New Jersey Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability

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Save Energy

Burning fossil fuels for heat and transportation are chief sources of pollution and global warming. It's also expensive: your institution spends millions of dollars each year to power equipment and heat buildings. Help save the planet by using less energy, and use that money for more direct contributions to your knowledge and happiness!



- Last one in a room? Turn out the lights.
- Draft a resolution, signed by faculty and students, for an energy-efficient heating and cooling policy.
- Build a coalition at your school for new campus buildings and renovations that achieve Earth-friendly LEED certification. (See www.usgbc.org to learn about the many, many benefits of green buildings).
- Car pool, train, or bike to and around campus. Organize or use ride-shares through your student center.
- Take shorter showers, and take showers instead of a bath. Cool down and insulate your water heater.
- Insulate your home to the greatest extent possible. State energy programs (like New Jersey's Clean Energy Program) can help finance these improvements.
- Unplug electronics that use converter devices (those little boxes) when not in use; these "vampires" continually draw power.
- Cook with your microwave! They're energy-efficient.
- Turn on "sleep" mode on your computer. (See csd.njit.edu/energy.html for detailed instructions.)
- Turn off your printer if it won't be used in the next hour.
- Use Compact-Fluorescent lights (CFL's) for lamps. They cost more, but last much longer and use much less energy—and nowadays give off soft, warm light.
- Use natural light in rooms. Cellular shades for your windows also insulate, saving energy.
- If it's time for a new roof, consider a long-lasting, insulating green roof (www.greenroof.com)

Consume Sustainably

With a little thought and planning, you can make more sustainable choices for almost any consumer product.

Paper. Saving a tree saves forests, complex ecosystems, and helps ensure that forests continue to clean our water, purify our air, and regulate our climate. Each ton of recycled paper reduces energy use 27%, emissions 47%, wasted water 33%, solid waste 54% and wood use 100%. (www.ecopaperaction.org) Use less paper with small "default" margins and paper-wise printing options (see www.udel.edu/topics/printless/Reformat.html). Read and edit documents onscreen (most word processors have tools for collaborative editing). Print double-sided copies. Print drafts or informal documents on the clean side of used paper. Share documents/newsletters electronically. Buy recycled paper and paper bleached without toxin-producing chlorine. (Recycled paper used to look dingy and jam copiers, but now most products are just as good as paper made from virgin wood: the US Government Printing Office endorses many brands of recycled paper).



Recycle. Make sure you use recycling bins; enormous energy and natural resources are saved when paper, plastic and metals are recycled. Electronics recycling is especially important, as it keeps toxics out of landfills and water systems (see www.thegreenguide.com for productive ways to reuse/recycle electronics). Organize disposal/reuse/recycling collections of materials— see Rutgers' "Leave with Less" event for a model (www.eden.rutgers.edu/~mkovatch/eco/moveout.htm).



Food. Buy organic and local food (choose USDA Organic and Jersey Fresh labels). Organize your cafeteria to provide more local and organic food. Create or support herb and food gardens; compost your food wastes or sell it to local farmers. Buy Fair Trade, shade-grown coffee, supporting the lives of workers and songbirds.



Clothes. Buy used clothes or clothes made with organically produced and low-impact fibers (organic cotton, hemp). Work with United Students Against Sweatshops (www.usasnet.org) to ensure that your school's logo is emblazoned on clothing made in decent working conditions.



Learn About Sustainability

In every academic subject, scholars are working to reconcile their field's theories and practices with ever-growing knowledge about sustainability:

Ecological economics, socially responsible investing, green design and eco-fashion, sustainable architecture and green buildings, green chemistry, green manufacturing, industrial ecology, organic and "permaculture" agriculture, eco-tourism, alternative energy, environmental history, "smart growth" and sustainable communities, sustainable development—in addition to environmental science. In your courses, you can learn about sustainability and the ways that your chosen field can evolve to better reflect and protect our changing world.

- Visit the NJHEPS website (www.njheps.org) and subscribe to the NJHEPS listservs to find out about sustainability-related conferences, workshops, resources, groups and events.
- Ask your school to join the Graduation Pledge Alliance, which asks students to pledge to "explore and take account of the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of the organization for which I work." (See www.graduationpledge.org).

Measure!



What kind of progress towards sustainability is your institution making? Work to systematically measure this progress through yearly environmental and sustainability assessments. See www.nwf.org/campusecology/fellowprofile.cfm?fid=20 for models and inspiration.