



UNIVERSITY GREEN INITIATIVES

by Kristi Clemens



2013 isn't just a new year—it's a new chance for colleges and universities to capitalize on green initiatives. Being an eco-friendly university is more than just reducing emissions and having a more efficient recycling program; it's about sustainability and long-term changes for the better of the environment.

Many universities have embraced the opportunity to make a difference in their communities and now have entire departments dedicated to green initiatives and campus sustainability programs. And it's not just the university staff that are directing these efforts; on many campuses, students also have a say in what green initiatives a university will adopt.

The Green Movement is nothing new. It is based on several key principles that include ecological wisdom, global responsibility, and sustainability. Each university applies these principles differently, but they all have the same common goal of sustainability: the capacity to support, maintain or endure.

One university to embrace the Green Movement is Brown University, by capitalizing on the solar energy movement. The university had Sunlight Solar Energy, Inc. install 168 solar panels on the roof of their new aquatics center. The panels will do double duty by providing both electricity for the building and heat for the million-gallon pool. Lined up in 21 rows that take up the majority of the roof, the panels are outfitted with photovoltaic cells that produce electricity from sunlight. Each panel is tilted at just under 10 degrees to optimize resistance to natural forces and to lighten the panels' collective weight. Underneath the photovoltaic strip is a membrane that siphons the heat generated by the sunlight to heat up glycol, a fluid that is channeled to a source, which, in turn, heats the pool. Collecting and using the heat also cools the panels, improving each panel's electrical output by 6 percent, an additional 18 watts. It is the largest hybrid solar installation in the country and the first on a college campus.

Similarly, the University of Wisconsin-Madison has initiated many eco-friendly changes on their campus, including installing new eco-friendly flooring by Infinity Flooring in their SERF Weight Room. Infinity Flooring is not only easy to clean and more durable than other gym flooring, it also contains up to 95% recycled content made with 100% post-consumer material rescued from landfills. In fact, that flooring is so popular that it's used in over 40 university gyms around the U.S.

Small changes can make a big difference, and the University of Maryland is a prime example. They believe sustainable food is the future. This food is produced from sustainable agricultural systems and has specific attributes related to the production systems, labor practices, and

distance traveled. With these principals in mind, they have developed four separate campus gardens. Students, faculty, and staff maintain the gardens year round. It's not only a learning experience for the horticultural students, but the crops produced are also enjoyed by those eating in the campus cafeterias. It is a win-win for everyone involved.

GREEN FITNESS: CONVERTING EXERCISE TO ENERGY

Several universities including Tennessee Tech University, Chapman University and the University of South Florida have retrofitted their fitness centers to include energy efficient treadmills and energy producing cardio equipment by SportsArt Fitness. One of Tennessee Tech's cardio rooms, now christened the Green Room, has replaced some of their older cardio equipment with a combination of 16 ellipticals, recumbent cycles



Photograph courtesy of Ben Corda



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and upright cycles from SportsArt's Green System. The Green System works by harnessing the energy created through exercise and converting it into utility-grade electricity that is fed back into the Fitness Center's electrical system to help offset power consumption in other areas of the building. The universities are able to save money by generating their own energy, while also educating their students on the importance of energy conservation.

Additionally, New York University has employed several free programs geared towards raising awareness for students who want to be greener. They have a program called the Stair Campaign where they encourage students to take the stairs instead of elevators to conserve energy. Each year, NYU consumes 130 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, and the energy used in their buildings accounts for most of the university's contribution to global warming. NYU also encourages students to use reusable bags instead of accepting plastic bags. With each purchase made at the Bookstore, customers have the opportunity to refuse a plastic bag and in turn the Bookstore donates the average cost of a bag (5 cents) to one of four designated non-profit environmentally friendly organizations.

Education is becoming more green-focused both nationally and internationally. Universities are doing their part by digging deeper into the subject and making students aware of their impact on the planet. Many universities now have degree programs geared toward environmental fields of study, including Green Interior Design, Human Ecology, Sustainable Clothing, Environmental Management, EcoGastronomy, and Sustainable Tourism. These programs give students a foundation for living more sustainably for the rest of their lives. What it all comes down to is the little changes that add up to a world of difference. We have a global and personal responsibility to protect our natural resources. It's up to you: how do you want your generation to be remembered? 🌱

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