



2011

Maryland Green Registry Leadership Award Winner



University of Maryland, College Park



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The Maryland Green Registry Leadership Awards recognize organizations that have shown a strong commitment to the implementation of sustainable practices, the demonstration of measurable results, and the continuous improvement of environmental performance. Read here how these award winners achieved their environmental successes and continue to move their organization forward along the path to sustainability.

What innovation or set of results are you most proud of?

The University of Maryland is a charter signatory of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. By signing the commitment, former President Mote committed UM to innovate its way to zero carbon footprint and formal sustainability education for all enrolled students. Since the commitment was signed in 2007, a group of more than fifty stakeholders completed the University's first Climate Action Plan (in 2009) and the University is on track to meet its 2012 target of reducing emissions to 15% below 2005 levels. Cooperation across the institution has resulted in a recycling and composting rate of 62% in 2010, an all-time high, replacement of classroom and hallway lighting to reduce electric load, investment in wind and solar energy projects, growing support for bicycle commuting and other "terp steps" toward climate neutrality. Working closely with faculty, the Office of Sustainability has developed two new programs to introduce first-year students to the campus culture of sustainability and to support faculty as they incorporate sustainability concepts into their curricula. As we continue our work to integrate climate action into all aspects of the institution, many challenges remain. The University has put into place a high-level University Sustainability Council consisting of senior

administrators, faculty and students to work with the Office of Sustainability to chart our future course.



How do you measure and ensure continuous improvement in environmental performance? What have you learned from this process?

The University measures greenhouse gas emissions from various processes that result from campus operations as well as a more comprehensive set of twenty-two sustainability metrics for the campus as a whole. On an annual basis, the University Sustainability Council reviews the Greenhouse Gas Inventory and the Sustainability Metrics Report to keep abreast of the University's progress and to establish priorities. Our set of sustainability metrics was developed by the Office of Sustainability over 18 months of collaborative communication with facilities managers and other campus stakeholders. To inform the process in the initial stages of metric development, a multi-disciplinary student research team conducted a benchmarking study of sustainability metrics from existing corporate and academic sustainability reports. The



University's Sustainability Metrics Report is now in its second year of publication. Data is collected from departments all over campus. Thus far we have learned that the process and communication on which our metrics were founded is critical to the success of our measurement program. It is important to work closely with stakeholders in developing metrics in order to get their buy-in and participation. Over time, the set of metrics can be adjusted and expanded as appropriate to inform on-going planning and decision making, but without participation and support from across the organization, meaningful adjustments would not be possible.

What is the first step you would recommend that someone take when starting to green their organization?

Greening is a participatory process. When developing a sustainability strategy, it is essential to take stock of past accomplishments and initiatives that are already underway. It is important to communicate these "stories" to the entire institution so individuals understand the steps that have been taken and are inspired to build momentum for future activities. By forming a network across the organization to find out what is already going on and where people's interests lie, it is possible to identify sustainability champions who will be important

allies in moving the effort forward. Inviting these champions to participate in visioning and planning for your initiative will distribute ownership and incite more widespread behavior change than a highly centralized program. In our view, it is important to have an individual or office lead the sustainability effort to facilitate the organizational effort and to develop new concepts. However, the primary role of a sustainability office is to facilitate change by bringing disparate departments together to collectively solve broad challenges, creating social connections that can magnify opportunities, appropriately questioning and reviewing operational decisions with a critical eye, measuring performance, reporting on progress, and supporting the larger institutional effort through outreach, education, research, and communications.



For more information on environmental best practices at University of Maryland, College Park, visit the Maryland Green Registry website at www.green.maryland.gov/registry and click on List of Maryland Green Registry Members to view member profiles.

The Maryland Green Registry is a voluntary program that promotes and recognizes environmentally sustainable practices in organizations of all types and sizes across the State. Visit the Maryland Green Registry website at www.green.maryland.gov/registry for tips and resources designed to help organizations set and meet their own goals on the path to sustainability.

