

Sierra ranks UWO 14th nationally for sustainability efforts

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The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is again being nationally recognized and applauded for its strong commitment to environmental sustainability.

The Sierra Club and Sierra Magazine released its annual “Coolest Schools” ranking, based on the “greenness” of participating universities; UW Oshkosh was ranked 14th in the nation, the highest ranking for UW Oshkosh to date and the highest ranking in the state.

“UW Oshkosh has made incredible strides in its sustainability efforts over the last three years, and this year’s Sierra rankings affirm that,” said UW Oshkosh Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services Thomas Sonnleitner. “We have moved up Sierra’s rankings from 84th, to 35th and now 14th place nationally. Sierra’s ranking system is a fair, comprehensive and thorough measure that higher educational institutions can use in their pushes to become more sustainable. This latest ranking affirms UW Oshkosh is a national leader in campus sustainability.”

Sierra Magazine's "Coolest Schools" ranking is open to all four-year undergraduate colleges and universities in the United States. In March 2011, Sierra sent a 12-page questionnaire to 940 schools. Evaluations were based on survey information provided by the 96 participating schools.

The survey included more than 10 categories, including: energy supply, efficiency, food, academics, purchasing, transportation, waste management, administration, financial investments, innovation and other initiatives.

UW Oshkosh received a perfect-10 score in the innovation category. Out of 894.50 total points, UW Oshkosh earned 594.96. The highest ranking institution earned 709.17.

Since making its commitment sustainability, UW Oshkosh has hit several milestones.

- 2002: UW Oshkosh was one of a small number of universities to endorse the Earth Charter.
- 2003: The University became the first Wisconsin university to join the EPA’s Green Partnership by agreeing to purchase at least 3 percent of its energy from alternative sources.
- 2008: UW Oshkosh declared itself a [Fair Trade University](#), the first in the United States, by committing to the purchase and use of fair trade products whenever feasible. Following a comprehensive and sophisticated carbon-footprint study conducted by Johnson Controls, the University recently established one of the nation’s most aggressive Climate Action Plans to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025.
- 2010: The UW Oshkosh Foundation partnered with the University and BIOFerm Energy Systems of Madison to build the nation’s first [commercial scale dry fermentation anaerobic Biodigester](#), which began turning agricultural plant and food waste into methane in the fall of 2011.
- 2011: The UW Oshkosh Foundation again partnered with UW Oshkosh and BIOFerm to pursue

an innovative partnership with Milk Source's Rosendale Dairy to [construct a wet anaerobic Biodigester/biogas production facility](#) at the Pickett dairy site. UW Oshkosh expects the facility, in concert with campus' array of other sustainability initiatives, will significantly accelerate UW Oshkosh on its carbon neutrality timeline and could cut the campus' carbon neutrality target by more than half, reducing it from 14 years from now to seven.

- March 2012: [Another Foundation-BIOFerm partnership was developed with Allen Farm](#), which is about six miles northwest of Oshkosh. The project, referred to as the "Titan 55," is supported in part by the Wisconsin Department of Administration and will involve a small-scale, wet Biodigester with a 55 kW engine.

"Our faculty and staff are incredibly proud of the fact that sustainability at UW Oshkosh is not just an idea and pursuit limited to new technology and more efficient energy systems," UW Oshkosh Provost and Vice Chancellor Lane Earns . "We have made the principle of living a sustainable life a core component of the academic experience here. Our faculty and staff help students see the actions they can take on campus and off to lessen our impact on the earth and encourage others to follow their lead."

Guided by a sustainability plan, which was formally developed in 2008, UW Oshkosh has also earned high rankings from the Princeton Review and was the 25th institution to earn a gold rating from the [Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education](#).

This is the sixth consecutive year *Sierra* magazine is releasing its annual rank of the nation's "Coolest Schools," which is a "salute to U.S. colleges that are helping solve climate problems and making significant efforts to operate sustainably." *Sierra* is the official publication of the Sierra Club, America's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 1.4 million members and supporters nationwide.

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh sustainability](#)
- [Sierra "Coolest Schools"](#)