

UWO ranked 35th nationally for sustainability efforts

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/5341/uwo-ranked-35th-in-the-nation-for-sustainability-efforts/>

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh continues to be recognized as one of the nation's leading green campuses.

This week, the Sierra Club released its annual Cool Schools rankings, based on the "greenness" of participating universities. UW Oshkosh ranked 35th in the nation.

The Cool Schools ranking is open to all four-year undergraduate colleges and universities in the nation. Evaluations were based on survey information provided by the 162 participating schools, as well as follow up inquiries and outside sources. The survey included 10 categories: energy supply, efficiency, food, academics, purchasing, transportation, waste management, administration, financial investments and other initiatives.

UW Oshkosh received a perfect-10 score in administration, a score of 9.5 in other initiatives, and scores of eight and nine in academics, purchasing and waste management.

Since making the commitment to be a green University, UW Oshkosh has hit several milestones in sustainability. In 2002, UW Oshkosh was one of a small number of universities to endorse the Earth Charter. In 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. In 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.

Earlier this year, the UW Oshkosh Foundation partnered with the University to build the nation's first commercial scale dry fermentation anaerobic biodigester, which will convert yard and food waste into fuel. The project will break ground later this month; the facility is expected to be operational by summer 2011.

"While the University has shown a commitment to sustainable operations for a number of years, today UW Oshkosh is guided by a very comprehensive Sustainability Plan, implemented in 2008, which encompasses sustainability not only in campus operations and green construction, but also in research, throughout the curriculum and in the many services the University provides to the region," said Chancellor Richard H. Wells.

Added Director of Sustainability Mike Lizotte, "We already knew we were a leader in the state for sustainability. To be recognized as a leader in the nation is a great honor. We are pleased that our administrative commitment as well as our efforts to infuse sustainability into the curriculum and the student experience were recognized by the Sierra Club."

The University offers students the opportunity to get involved through internships and by joining the Student Environmental Action Coalition, the Oshkosh Community Garden or simply by following more sustainable practices one individual at a time. Students who plan to pursue environmental careers after college also can take advantage of UW Oshkosh's extensive environmental career resources, which include an annual panel on sustainability careers and access to subscriber-only environmental job listings. UW Oshkosh offers majors in environmental studies and environmental health; moreover, 47 percent of academic departments offer environment- or sustainability-related classes.

"Sustainability is definitely a priority in student governance at UW Oshkosh because the students themselves are pushing for it," said Aaron Campbell, sustainability director for the Oshkosh Student Association. "From the Titan Transit program, which uses segregated fees to make mass transit available to students outside the city's bus schedule, to Recyclemania to the waste audit performed during Earth Week, there is a lot of cooperation among University students, faculty and administration, resulting in a very proactive approach to sustainability."

Additionally, construction is underway on two new buildings that will be built to at least Gold LEED standards, utilizing such features as a geothermal heat field, green roofs and solar energy.

For more information on how UW Oshkosh has become a leading green university, visit www.uwosh.edu/sustainability.