

# Concordia College's Sustainability Work 2006-2016

## **Vision**

*Our challenge is to ensure that the ecological systems on which we depend remain healthy even as we seek to thrive economically and in community. Concordia College will embrace a concern for sustainability that is rooted in the responsibility to ensure the environmental, economic, and social health of the college and of our global community. Concordia College's sustainability vision is interwoven with our commitment to global learning, with our faith tradition . . . , and practices of the liberal arts. It arises from the conviction that we have a sacred duty to protect the earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty.*

-From the Concordia College Vision for Sustainability (2012)

## **Building Institutional Capacity**

- 2006 President Pamela Jolicoeur established the Concordia College Environmental Task Force
- 2009 Substantial environmental education grant received from the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation
- 2011 A full-time Sustainability Coordinator administrative staff position was created
- 2011 President William Craft replaced the task force with the President's Sustainability Council
- 2012 The *Concordia College Vision for Sustainability* adopted: [see sustainability web page](#)
- 2014 Substantial sustainability education grant received from the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation
- 2016 The Sustainability Council assesses sustainability progress and develops a strategy for deepening and extending the work towards the college's sustainability vision while continuing to leverage sustainability to support achievement of core college goals.

## **Increasing Operational Efficiency and Saving Energy - Highlights**

- Facilities Management engages in Retro Commissioning studies to determine how to increase the energy efficiency of buildings on campus and implements cost-effective measures across campus as a result. Facilities carries out a large number of projects to reduce water and electricity use on campus.
- Expansion of recycling efforts on campus to include every kind of material possible result in the recycling of 80 to 100 tons of materials annually. Efforts to repurpose and reuse materials results in savings by reducing the amount sent to the landfill.
- Concordia Dining Services implements a host of measures that result in a reduction in plate waste and back-of-the-house waste. A "Taste Not Waste" movement is launched, aiming to achieve a 50% reduction in plate waste by 2020.
- The Offutt School of Business building is certified at the Silver level on the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) scale.
- The renovation of Jones and Ivers to create a new integrated science facility is designed to incorporate leading-edge sustainability features, resulting in long-term energy savings and an array of educational tools. The project is set to achieve LEED Silver, while work continues to build in additional sustainability features that may result in the achievement of LEED Gold status.
- Offices representing 210 employees sign up for the Office of Sustainability's Green Office Program during its first six months, receiving resources to enable them to reduce waste and energy use in their office space.

## **Promoting Integrative Learning and Supporting the Educational Mission - Highlights**

- Over 60 faculty members participate in faculty development programming aimed at enhancing teaching and learning through the infusion of sustainability-focused content, tools, and exercises, with an emphasis on community engagement and real-world problem-solving.
- Innovative program to link study abroad with sustainability education is launched.
- Student internships with organizations in Fargo-Moorhead are created.
- Cornucopia, Concordia's Organic Garden, is created. An innovative solar thermal high tunnel (greenhouse-type) structure is put up in partnership with the Rural Renewable Energy Alliance. The garden supports class projects, student interns, and community engagement and is a demonstration site for urban food production.
- Infrastructural upgrades are made to the Long Lake Research Station, enhancing its value as a site for research and experiential learning.
- The Concordia College EcoHouse is created as a living-learning residential option and college/community resource.
- A student-led Eco-Reps program is established in the residence halls, along with a variety of other on-campus internship for students.

## **Developing New Partnerships and Boosting the College's Reputation - Highlights**

- The Fargo-Moorhead Sustainability Network is created and led by Concordia College. A gathering for organizations and individuals involved and interested in sustainability is held each month.
- Leadership of the sustainability network is leveraged to create new relationships with organizations, resulting in the creation of new internship and research sites for students.
- Concordia participates in the ELCA movement Lutherans Restoring Creation. Hosting of a number of visitors to speak about the connections linking sustainability with faith and spirituality.
- The college joins the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, including sending one or more representatives to each annual conference to give presentations on our work at Concordia.
- Concordia serves as a Regional Host Institution for the 2015 Annual Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.
- A rewarding relationship with the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation is forged; the college demonstrates the ability to design and implement complex sustainability-focused projects.

## **Next Steps**

Over the past ten years, the college has learned that work to promote sustainability in campus operations and education for sustainability directly supports progress towards achieving Concordia's other strategic priorities. The pursuit of sustainability is a method and strategy for ensuring that we can meet goals concerning integrative learning, diversity, enrollment, career preparation, community partnerships, institutional capacity, and fiscal health. It is time to push Concordia College's sustainability work to the next level, to harness fully the power of sustainability to fulfill our mission as a global liberal arts college of the church.

In early February 2017, President Craft announced that the college will sign the *Integrated Climate Commitment* and join the Climate Leadership Network on April 11. He has challenged the President's Sustainability Council and the entire campus community to work together to develop the shape of that commitment and the responsibilities it will require.

Questions and comments may be directed to Dr. Kenneth Foster, chair of the President's Sustainability Council, [foster@cord.edu](mailto:foster@cord.edu).