Sustainability

Creating a "green" campus with sustainable systems is a cause that is certainly striking a chord among many college constituents. It can mean many things, from lobbying for local foods to be served in the dining halls to holding Energy Wars competitions between residence halls to constructing LEED certified campus buildings. It's a concept that is really resonating with many of today's students, too. As resources become scarcer and the felt impact of human consumption on the environment becomes more evident, sustainability is quickly moving from a good idea to a global necessity.

What is Sustainability?

It is the biggest buzzword to hit college campuses in recent years, and with good cause—colleges and universities are among the largest consumers of energy. Just think about the amount of energy that goes into powering students' computers, iPods, chargers, and more, plus what it takes to heat and cool multiple campus spaces. In addition, water usage is high, due to showers, landscaping, laundry, and food preparation. It takes a great numbers of resources to make a college system hum.

A Definition

In 1987 the Brundtland Report used the phrase "sustainable development" and defined it as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

In order to address the issue of sustainability, hundreds of college and university presidents have signed the "American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment," pledging to create and execute a plan to achieve climate neutrality as soon as possible and to immediately take action to reduce greenhouse gas emission and improve energy efficiency. Sustainability must also be integrated into the campus curriculum. The commitment that presidents signed says their institutions should adopt the following actions:

- Adopt green standards for buildings
- Require Energy Star certification for products produced by the university
- Reduce air travel or offset emissions by investing in renewable energy sources
- Encourage public transportation
- Purchase energy from renewable sources and support climate shareholder proposals through their endowment

The Triple Bottom Line

Many people perceive that the sustainable choice is not the economically sound choice. However, a good number of sustainable products and projects pay for themselves through energy savings. A sustainable decision requires a long-term outlook that considers a "triple bottom line":

√ economics

√ environment

√ social justice

Resource Consumption

- ▲ 100 million trees are used each year for junk mail. 250,000 homes could be heated with one day's supply of junk mail.
- ▲ 100 billion plastic shopping bags are produced annually in the U.S. at a cost of $4 billion.
- ▲ The average distance our food travels is 1500 to 2500 miles.
- ▲ Lighting consumes 22% of the electrical power generated in the U.S.
- ▲ It's estimated that 64 billion paper cups and plates, 73 billion Styrofoam cups and plates, and 190 billion plastic containers and bottles are thrown away each year.
- ▲ 150 billion liters of bottled water are consumed worldwide per year. U.S. consumption of bottled water annually is 25.8 billion liters.

Sources:
www.epa.state.oh.us/opp/consumer/junkmail.html; www.reusablebags.com/facts.php; www.foodroutes.org/; www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr_cfls; www.worldcentric.org/bio/index.htm; www.answers.com/topic/bottled-water-2

125 Paterson Ave. • Little Falls, NJ 07424 • 973.256.1333 • Fax 973.256.8088 • www.Paper-Clip.com •