

**Building Environmental Sustainability  
at  
Bowling Green State University**

**Executive Summary**

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## Introduction

Bowling Green State University can become the premier public university in Ohio for students selecting to study an environmental discipline, and for those selecting to study or work at an institution with a deep commitment to building a sustainable environment. BGSU began this process over ten years ago when President Paul Olscamp signed the Talloires Declaration, an international agreement “founded on the belief that institutions of higher learning must exercise leadership to promote and reinforce environmental responsibility by integrating the ethical, social, economic, and ecological values of environmentally sustainable development into institutional policies and practices.” More than 280 university leaders from around the world have signed this agreement, including those from such prestigious U.S. institutions as Brown University, University of Virginia, Rice University, Rutgers University, and the University of Wisconsin, Madison (for a complete list, see [www.ulsf.org/programs\\_talloires\\_signatories.html#US](http://www.ulsf.org/programs_talloires_signatories.html#US)). Many of the signatory universities have made substantial changes to their operations, missions and academic practices in response to their commitment. Although a signatory institution, BGSU has not moved aggressively forward.

Establishing a strong environmental identity will provide a new niche for Bowling Green State University, one for which we are very well prepared. The University offers a variety of academic programs in environmental disciplines, and includes in its operations an office dealing with environmental health and safety. However, its environmental activities are diffuse and do little to establish a reputation for overall campus environmental excellence. In Ohio, the only two institutions with well-established, progressive environmental reputations are private colleges: Oberlin College and Antioch College. Of the Mid-American Conference institutions, only Ball State University has implemented a comprehensive campus sustainability assessment review process. Elsewhere, environmental awareness continues to grow as the international community better recognizes the significance and character of environmental problems, as evidenced by the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. The time could not be more ideal for BGSU to raise awareness of its current environmental capabilities and enhance its commitment to environmental sustainability.

During the 2001-2002 academic year, a committee was appointed by Provost John Folkins to offer recommendations for building an environmentally sustainable community at Bowling Green State University. The recommendations of the full committee are identified under the heading “Committee Recommendations and Action Steps.” These are broad, institutional recommendations documenting major policy areas that may require substantial structural change. Following these initial recommendations are reports of each of the subcommittees:

1. Marketing and Outreach,
2. General Studies Education, Graduate Programs, Interdisciplinary Incentives, Reconfiguration, and Other Academic Initiatives,
3. Operations, and
4. Capital Development

The full subcommittee reports are labeled, respectively, Chapter 1, 2 3 and 4. Each of these subcommittee reports begins with a summary of recommendations and is followed by recommendation detail and rationale.

This document provides only the beginnings of a blueprint to move BGSU forward in achieving prominence for its environmental programs, attitudes and practices. However, this initial work clearly shows the potential of BGSU’s environmental activities to achieve preeminence throughout the state and the region, and to serve as another example of the excellence of Bowling Green State University.

# **Environmental Sustainability Committee Recommendations and Action Steps**

Bowling Green State University can become a leader in environmental sustainability. Achieving this leadership would enhance our stature and effectiveness as a public institution, and move the university forward toward its goal of becoming the premier learning institution in the state and one of the best in the nation. The five recommendations and accompanying action steps below provide a framework for meeting this goal.

- 1. Adopt an institutional statement on Environmental Sustainability that clearly demonstrates its centrality to the mission of Bowling Green State University**

Action step needed:

*The “Bowling Green State University Statement on Environmental Sustainability,” (as presented on the following page) proposed for adoption by the University President to the University Board of Trustees.*

- 2. Proclaim the achievement of environmental literacy a goal of Bowling Green State University undergraduate education.**

Action step needed:

*A committee appointed by the University Provost to develop and promote specific options for modifying general education requirements to include environmental literacy.*

- 3. Establish a centralized university structure to promote environmental academic programming, curricular initiatives and research, and to provide leadership to activities across administrative areas related to environmental sustainability.**

Action step needed:

*A committee appointed by the University President, in consultation with the University Vice Presidents, to develop specific options for centralized university structures. Part of the responsibility of this committee would be to include estimates of resource needs associated with each option.*

- 4. All major operations should be audited in such areas as waste reduction, energy conservation, green purchasing and educational/information sharing programs.**

Action step needed:

*A committee appointed by the University President, in consultation with the University Vice Presidents, to identify options and associated costs for conducting audit.*

- 5. Incorporate environmental sustainability standards into the design, construction, post construction and renovation of new and existing buildings and their surroundings.**

Action step needed:

*Work group appointed by the Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration to identify sustainability standards and develop a model for the incorporation of these standards into future renovation and building projects.*

## Statement on Environmental Sustainability Bowling Green State University

In 1991, Bowling Green State University became a signatory of the Talloires Declaration, an international agreement “founded on the belief that institutions of higher learning must exercise leadership to promote and reinforce environmental responsibility by integrating the ethical, social, economic, and ecological values of environmentally sustainable development into institutional policies and practices” (*Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, 1990*).

Environmental sustainability means protecting and preserving the environment while meeting human needs in a manner that assures a healthy environment for future generations. To attain its goal of becoming the premier learning community in Ohio and one of the best in the nation, BGSU must adopt a leadership role in promoting and practicing environmental sustainability.

In honoring its commitments, Bowling Green State University pledges to:

- Engage the University Community in conversations that promote environmental sustainability as central to its mission.
- Establish environmental literacy as an institutional goal.
- Promote interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, education, and creative work on environmental sustainability.
- Establish partnerships with primary and secondary schools to help develop capacity for teaching about environmental sustainability.
- Apply best management practices for environmental sustainability to University operations, with the following goals:
  - To protect the natural environment and its biodiversity.
  - To use energy, water, and other resources wisely, and to maximize the use of conservation practices, efficiency improvements, and renewable-resource alternatives.
  - To minimize the production of hazardous and other wastes, to minimize pollution, and to maximize the use of recyclable materials.
  - To establish purchasing practices to account for the recycled content, energy efficiency, and minimal hazardous-material content of new purchases.
  - To apply sustainability concepts to land acquisition, use and development.
  - To apply sustainability concepts to new construction and remodeling.
- Achieve or exceed compliance with applicable environmental laws and regulations.
- Set an example through community outreach including demonstrating and showcasing the success of sustainability concepts.

# **Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee Recommendations**

Four subcommittees identified ways in which Bowling Green State University can achieve environmental sustainability. The recommendations of each of the four subcommittees are provided below.

## **Marketing and Outreach Subcommittee**

1. Create an Environmental Sustainability Planning Commission (ESPC) to provide leadership and direction to senior administration officials on issues, programs, and initiatives related to environment sustainability.
2. Designate at least one of the Provost's Lecture Series lectures to an environmental issue.
3. Adopt an institutional statement on Environmental Sustainability.
4. Develop an annual awards program that recognizes individuals, organizations and offices that have helped make BGSU or the surrounding community more environmentally sustainable.
5. Host an annual symposium or conference on an environmental sustainability topic or issue.
6. Work with Marketing and Communications to design a marketing concept for environmental sustainability that may include the use of the word "green" in Bowling Green, and the design of a logo.
7. Produce an Annual Report on Environmental Sustainability at BGSU.
8. Create a website that promotes campus efforts towards sustainability.
9. Through the ESPC, offer Environmental Sustainability Audits for units interested in modifying their current work practices, ordering and reliance on products and practices that challenge the environment.
10. Work with Marketing and Communications to write short news articles about new or ongoing sustainability projects.
11. Earmark a pool of funds to encourage faculty research that has an environmental focus.
12. Solicit offices that would serve as models on how to become more environmentally sustainable.
13. Produce educational materials on how to select "green products" when ordering.
14. Include BGSU's commitment to environmental sustainability in all promotional materials and on the Website
15. Continue to work with select units to develop collaborative outreach projects with local schools and communities.

## **General Studies Education, Graduate Programs, Interdisciplinary Incentives, Reconfiguration, and Other Academic Initiatives Subcommittee**

1. Proclaim the achievement of environmental literacy a goal of BGSU undergraduate education.
2. Graduate education and research initiatives should be explored.
3. BGSU should provide mechanisms to encourage team-taught interdisciplinary courses.
4. Mechanisms to formally link academic environmental units across the campus should be explored.

## **Operations Subcommittee**

1. All major operations areas should be audited for waste reduction activities, energy conservation activities, green purchasing and educational/information sharing programs.
2. A strong link must exist between academics and operational implementation of sustainable activities.
3. All current and future sustainable activities must be promoted both internally and externally.
4. BGSU should hire a full-time Sustainability Coordinator to oversee the implementation of future projects.
5. Specific and detailed recommendations are provided for a number of operational areas. For these areas, detailed are BGSU's current status and examples of activities to increase sustainable behaviors. Recommendations are prioritized on the basis of: A = Must Do, B = Should Do, C = Important, D = Not Urgent

## **Capital Development Subcommittee**

1. Those who originate project ideas to inception should be required to demonstrate global thinking that is sensitive and inclusive of environmental sustainability.
2. Include the requirements for a general commitment to environmental sustainability to projects and the continuous proactivity required during design, construction and post construction.
3. Identify all environmental sustainability items to be researched and reviewed for a project.
4. Determine the level of commitment and level of investment projects would be suited for regarding environmental sustainability.
5. Provide and define the particular design requirements for environmental sustainability in projects.
6. Include requirements for any and all space requirements, functional aspects, building form, or systems associated with environmental sustainability.

7. Provide the global and micro connectivity to campus environmental sustainability plan for projects.
8. Generate the needed budgetary and financial commitment to environmental sustainability for projects.
9. Provide the analysis aspects of including environmental sustainability in projects.
10. Provide all hazard control and mitigation of hazards in the process of producing a project.
11. The capital planning process should incorporate designs that maximize the efficient use of energy.
12. The reuse or recycling of buildings should be the primary alternative considered before the construction of new facilities.
13. Building designs should include space that facilitates recycling.
14. Building designs should incorporate proper maintenance access for the provision of good indoor air quality.
15. Building design should incorporate community spaces into the building design.
16. The process for selecting project architects should give consideration to the firm's present capabilities to evaluate sustainable options and past accomplishments.
17. Project designers and engineers should offer "low environmental impact construction materials" options that minimize product packaging.
18. Building designs should be based upon flexible structures that are easily reused.
19. Project designers should attempt to minimize construction and demolition debris.
20. Project designers should attempt to incorporate educational exhibits highlighting elements of a building that support a sustainable environment.
21. Campus landscaping plans should incorporate indigenous plants that are acclimatized to the local conditions.
22. Guidelines concerning the construction phases should be developed by a working group during FY 2002-03.
23. Guidelines concerning Post Occupancy evaluation of sustainable systems should be developed by a work group during FY 2002-03.