

2022 Sustainable Solutions Challenge

Stakeholder Interview Summaries – Prepared by Suraya Souidi

ROB ANDREJEWSKI

Rob Andrejewski has been the University of Richmond's Director of Sustainability since 2015, and during this time, has spearheaded a wide variety of initiatives on campus, such as:

- Procuring solar on and off campus (Placing solar panels on the Weinstein Center for Recreation and utilizing solar off campus in Spotsylvania County)
- Establishing the Eco-Corridor on campus
- Carbon accounting across all scopes to determine the University's emissions profile
- Launching the composting effort across most dining locations

Within the Office for Sustainability, he works with Kelsey Fastabend, the Sustainability Program Coordinator, and student interns.

Some of the most notable efforts towards sustainability on campus include the University's transition from coal in 2011, and the establishment of the Climate Action Plan in 2011. Andrejewski notes that the signing of this plan and the creation of the Sustainability Goals a few years later both commit campus to achieving excellence in sustainability, allowing initiatives to be pushed through by citing this commitment.

Currently, the University is on its way to reaching key decarbonization targets. "We have reduced what's called scope 1 emissions by 10%, and we have eliminated an additional 35-40% by eliminating scope 2, which is our electricity. Those two aspects have been the biggest impacts on our carbon neutrality." Moreover, Andrejewski is pushing ahead more exciting initiatives that will help achieve the goals in the Climate Action Plan, such as implementing a sorting center on campus for waste, as well as converting one of the Lodges on campus to house the new Rethink Waste team.

Recently, Andrejewski ran a workshop for incoming first-year students called "Meeting the Challenges of Our Time" in partnership with the Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship department, where he gained a strong understanding of students' concerns, ranging from, "social justice issues, climate change, and polarization. Students certainly have a lot of environmental concerns, as well as concerns relating to equity." He describes his role as a liaison to student's needs. "Ultimately, personal responsibility only goes so far—it's changing the systems you're a part of. [But] students have power if they choose to work together." This is important to the idea of buy-in, and how students have a great impact on the University's interest in pursuing a proposal.

Another important aspect of proposing a successful initiative is the cost. "Alongside environmentally responsible comes increased costs," Andrejewski states. Overall, universities are businesses, and what may be best for the environment may not align with the budgetary restrictions of the departments across campus. Therefore, it's important for students to propose a solution that has a high environmental and social impact with minimal costs.

Looking towards the future, Andrejewski is working towards integrating sustainability within the curriculum on campus, understanding that education is the main goal of the University, and by embedding sustainability within this goal, students will become more aware of the issues on campus and beyond.