University of Richmond Campus Sustainability Primer

This University of Richmond sustainability primer is designed to give you a sense of previous and current sustainability initiatives. Collectively, these initiatives tell a story about the way we currently define and organize our sustainability efforts, while serving as the foundation for efforts moving forward. Where possible, language is pulled from primary sources and linked to online content to provide further background.

Commitments

- **American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment** (ACUPCC): In 2007, President Ayers signed the ACUPCC, committing the university to climate neutrality by 2050, ensuring all students are exposed to climate neutrality and sustainability as part of their educational experience, and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2020.
- **Talloires Declaration**: In 2003, former President Cooper committed the university to ten actions aimed at catalyzing sustainability leadership within higher education: 1) increase awareness of environmentally sustainable development, 2) create an institutional culture of sustainability, 3) educate for environmentally responsible citizenship, 4) foster environmental literacy for all, 5) practice institutional ecology, 6) involve all stakeholders, 7) collaborate for interdisciplinary approaches, 8) enhance the capacity of primary and secondary schools, 9) broaden service and outreach nationally and internationally, and 10) maintain the movement.
- **Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Responsibilities of Higher Education**: In 2009, President Ayers signed a second Talloires Declaration focused on strengthening the civic role and social responsibility of colleges and universities. Through the declaration, UR commits to using the processes of education and research to respond to, serve and strengthen its communities for local and global citizenship.

Timeline

- 1985 – [Robert R. Merhige, Jr. Center for Environmental Studies](https://example.com) established
- 1991 – Recycling program begins
- 1992 – [Environmental Studies Program](https://example.com) created; Class of 1992 Environmental Awareness Endowment established
- 2003 – Former President Cooper signs [Talloires Declaration](https://example.com); Provost establishes [Environmental Awareness Group (EAG)](https://example.com)
- 2004 – Weinstein Hall becomes first UR building (and the first in central VA) to receive [Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification](https://example.com)
- 2005 – [Earth Lodge (formerly Outdoor House) Living Learning Community](https://example.com) created; [Dual degree programs with Duke](https://example.com) initiated
- 2007 – President Ayers signs [Presidents’ Climate Commitment](https://example.com); UR commits to LEED Silver for new construction (part of ACUPCC); RENEW (which became GreenUR) founded
- 2008 – RENEW began partnership with UR Sierra Club chapter; [Department of Geography and the Environment](https://example.com) founded
• 2009 – First Sustainability Coordinator, Trey McDonald, hired; Energy use dashboard installed in dorms; UR became the 100th school to sign the Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education; RENEW becomes GreenUR; Began annual greenhouse gas inventories

• 2010 – Sustainability Working Group (SWG) founded; Community Garden started; URot campus composting project established | AASHE Student Diary; Climate Action Plan completed; Second Sustainability Coordinator, Megan Litke, position hired w/ new report to VP Business and Finance (eventually transitions into Sustainability Manager)

• 2011 – Green Office Program created; Greater Virginia Green Building Council (GVGBC) chapter started; University stopped burning coal

• 2012 – River City Project created; Dual degree program with VCU started

• 2013 – Greeks Going Green founded

• 2014 – Parking Lot Project; Environmental Justice Think-Tank created

• 2015 – DivestUR founded; Hired third sustainability officer, Rob Andrejewski, as Director of Sustainability. Position now reports to VP Business & Finance, with dotted line to Provost; Secure Futures Solar installation (204 kW) set for July

Education Initiatives

• Dual Degree Programs with Duke University and Virginia Commonwealth University: Two joint programs for students interested in earning a Master’s degree in environmental studies or forestry.

• Earth Lodge Living Learning Community: Founded in 2005 as the Outdoor House, Earth Lodge provides students interested in the outdoors the opportunity to live and study together, promoting interdisciplinary engagement and discussion.

• Environmental Justice Think Tank: A collection of faculty, students, and staff from the Center for Civic Engagement and the Office for Sustainability working to strengthen environmental justice learning opportunities among existing and new partners.

• Environmental Studies Program: Integrates the study of interactions among physical, chemical and biological components of the environment. Students take many courses in the natural sciences, but not at the expense of courses in the social sciences and humanities.

• Geography and the Environment: Geography cultivates informed and engaged global citizens through an emphasis on integrative problem solving, spatial analysis, and communication skills. Our department bridges the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities to provide a better understanding of the earth’s cultural and biological diversity.

• Global Environmental Speaker Series: Each year the Environmental Studies Program, Department of Geography & the Environment, and International Studies Program partner to bring noteworthy speakers to Richmond to present lectures related to our global environment. Funding is provided, in part, by the Class of 1992 Environmental Awareness Endowment.

• Parking Lot Project: Transforms a UR parking lot into a yearlong, collaborative artwork, driven by students from diverse disciplines. Individual parking spaces are excavated to be green spaces alongside functional spaces, disrupting the parking lot’s identity. Students redevelop the spaces as sites for independent research and public art, while considering questions about sustainability, land use, and landscape on their own terms – as artists, scholars, and citizens.
• **River City Project**: The River City Project is a faculty development program that promotes the infusion of sustainability content into courses across the curriculum. A fundamental principle of the project is to welcome any faculty member, teaching any course, to develop some sustainability component for their teaching. Annual participants in the River City Project attend a two-day faculty workshop, agree to revise a course to include some sustainability content, and submit their syllabus and a final report describing the outcomes of their participation.

• **Robert R. Merhige, Jr. Center for Environmental Studies (Law)**: The Robert R. Merhige, Jr. Center for Environmental Studies at the UR’s School of Law engages in research, instruction, and public outreach on energy and environmental issues in the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond. The center hosts conferences, symposia, and speakers on pressing environmental issues, generating dialogue for policy solutions.

• **School of Professional and Continuing Studies**: SPCS’s environment and sustainability programs encourage and teach sustainable living, ecological stewardship, and environmental leadership. Our courses enable professionals and do-it-yourself-ers to learn and lead by implementing sustainable design and practices in their everyday lives. SPCS offers certificate programs in implementing green practices and technology in home and business, open-enrollment classes offer hands-on experiential opportunities, and intensive summer institutes for professionals.

• **Sophomore Scholars in Residence Programs**: In the Sophomore Scholars in Residence (SSIR) program, sophomores with shared interests immerse themselves in an academic topic during a year in which they live, study, and travel together. Learning occurs both inside and outside the classroom. SSIR takes the traditional coursework, reading, and research in class and adds experiential opportunities outside of class to further enhance learning. While many of the SSIRs engage in sustainability-related discussions, two are framed largely around sustainability issues: *Eating Locally, Thinking Globally* and *Protected Lands of the American West*.

**Office for Sustainability Programming**

**Education and Engagement**

• **Community Garden**: Provides 15’x10’ plots to university community members to grow organic fruits, vegetables, and flowers from March-October.

• **Eco-Reps Program**: Peer education program dedicated to promoting sustainability and environmentally responsible behavior through campus residence hall. Eco-Reps educate their peers about sustainability issues, such as resource consumption and waste generation, through three primary outlets: promoting and raising awareness of sustainability related programs; coordinating with Residence hall staff to incorporate sustainability into programs; and encouraging participation in sustainability related competitions.

• **Eco-Olympics**: A set of two competitions (Campus Conservation Nationals and RecycleMania/the Waste Reduction Competition) engaging campus community members in reducing electricity and waste. In the weeks leading up to, during and after Eco-Olympics, UR hosts a number of sustainability lectures, events, and activities all aimed at learning about and engaging in sustainable behaviors.

• **Green Office Program**: Aims to establish a culture of sustainability, help staff and faculty across UR do their part to meet University goals in all focus areas, provide tangible sustainability-focused action items, educate the University community, and build community within and across offices. Offices earn recognition by working their way through three checklists: Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

• **Office Supply Exchange**: Run primarily by students, the program allows offices to donate surplus supplies in exchange for free supplies donated by other offices.
• **Green Room Certification Program**: A certification framework for adopting sustainable living habits in the residence halls and apartments.

• **River City Project**: See above.

• **Sustainability Book Club**: A monthly book club to explore books that focus on the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability.

• **Sustainability Internship Program**: Employs 5-6 interns yearly as sustainability change agents, researching wicked problems, building innovative new programming, and supporting the critical work of the Office for Sustainability.

### Operations

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<th>Area</th>
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| Consumption and Waste Reduction     | • Reduce: [Green purchasing program](#)  
                                   | • Reuse: [Big Yard Sale](#)     
                                   | • Recycle: [Recycling program](#), [Electronic Waste Collection Days](#) |
| Energy and the Built Environment    | • [LEED Green Building Program](#)                                       
                                   | • [Climate Action Plan](#): Original, updates, and greenhouse gas inventories 
                                   | • Revolving Loan Fund                                                     
                                   | • [Energy efficiency retrofits/policies](#)                               
                                   | • [Water conservation measures/policies](#)                              
                                   | • [Lucid Energy Dashboard](#)                                            
                                   | • [Secure Futures solar installation](#)                                 |
| Environmental Quality and Land Use  | • Certified Nutrient Management Site                                      
                                   | • [Sustainable land management policies](#)                              |
| Food                                | • [Organic Community Garden](#)                                           
                                   | • Sustainable food data project                                           
                                   | • [Live Well, Dine Green](#)                                             |
| Transportation                      | • [Green Bike Program](#)                                                 
                                   | • [Zipcar](#)                                                             
                                   | • [GRTC, buses and shuttles](#)                                           |