The University of Georgia
Office of Sustainability
Strategic Plan 2010-2015

August 2010
Executive Summary

The Office of Sustainability was initiated in 2010 as part of a strategic directive to enhance conservation of resources and long-term sustainability at the University of Georgia. President Michael F. Adams established the Office in response to student-led initiatives and campus-wide recommendations, including the 2009 Report of the Working Group on Sustainability at the University of Georgia. Primary responsibilities of the Office include coordination, communication and advancement of sustainability initiatives at the University of Georgia.

Vision

To pursue a model for healthy living on campus and beyond. To develop a sustainable university that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. To create opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to enhance the quality of life in their communities, both physical and scholarly. To function as a living laboratory where sustainability is researched, taught, practiced, and constantly refined.

Mission

To conserve – “keep safe and well” – natural, physical and financial resources. To provide leadership and coordination of sustainability initiatives on campus. To ensure campus-wide implementation of the University’s commitment to sustainability as outlined in the 2010-2020 Strategic Plan.

Areas of Focus

The sustainable University values interaction as much as component parts, and crosses traditional divides to address issues collectively. The five aspects of university life - teaching, research, public service and outreach, student activities, and internal campus operations – form an interrelated web of experience and learning.

Teaching: The University of Georgia prepares professionals who will teach, develop, manage, work in and influence society’s institutions. As part of the constant pursuit of academic excellence, UGA offers over 60 sustainability-related degree programs in seven different colleges and 10 interdisciplinary Certificate programs to provide the academic credentials required for leadership toward a sustainable future. The Office of Sustainability engages with academic departments, faculty, staff and students both in and out of the classroom to integrate principles of sustainability into academic programs and to redefine the relationships between human activity and natural systems.

Research: Research is the lifeblood of the institution. UGA engages in basic and interdisciplinary research, as well as grants, publications, and licensed inventions that enhance our understanding of natural and social systems, reduce the consumption of natural resources, mitigate the impact of human practices on natural systems, and develop new strategies for a sustainable future. Specific areas of expertise include water resources, bioenergy, sustainable agriculture, climate change, ecosystem dynamics, sustainable forest management, and more. The Office of Sustainability collaborates with student and faculty researchers in departments and centers throughout the University to enhance sustainability-related research and promote coordinated multidisciplinary efforts.

Public Service and Outreach: The University extends resources in the form of professional knowledge and expertise to help communities improve their quality of life and relationship with the natural world, as well as to create opportunities for students through service learning. Over 20 programs, including the nation’s first cooperative extension service within the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, actively serve to advance sustainability beyond the UGA campus, to the state of Georgia, and around the globe. The Office of Sustainability engages with UGA service-learning programs to combine active, experiential and inquiry-based learning with real world problem solving on campus and in the broader community.
**Student Activities:** The University provides a broad range of educational, service, and social opportunities to inspire and support students in efforts to reduce their own environmental “footprints” and learn more about opportunities to improve the campus, community, and world around them. Student engagement will always be a critical component of the University’s sustainability initiative. A partnership between the Office of Sustainability and the Go Green Alliance, an umbrella organization representing over 25 environmentally focused student groups at UGA, provides an effective lifeline for meaningful interaction with the student community.

**Operations:** The University practices sustainability through policies and programs that reduce energy and water usage, promote recycling, reduce waste, improve the local ecosystem, construct high performance buildings and green spaces, and create a healthy environment for all campus constituents. The Office of Sustainability is firmly rooted in campus operations, working closely with departments within Finance & Administration and throughout the University to model economic, social and ecological sustainability and to create the optimal student environment that serves as a living laboratory for sustainable development.

**Ongoing Initiatives**

**Energy & Climate:** UGA has been implementing energy-saving projects throughout campus. Construction of new buildings and major renovations target energy reduction of 20% beyond code compliance. Over the last three years, energy upgrades have been implemented in 51% of existing buildings on UGA’s main campus with a 5% reduction in total energy costs, even with a significant increase in total square footage. Efforts are being made to educate campus constituents regarding personal energy conservation to modify behavior within the campus community. Significant UGA research contributions have been made in the fields of climate change, bioenergy, and biofuels. At the UGA steam plant, 99% of particulates and 90% of hazardous air pollutant emissions are captured before release into the atmosphere, and bioenergy fuel source alternatives are being tested. Campus vehicles are fueled by various experimental sources and the Campus Transit bus fleet runs on 20% biodiesel when financially feasible. In an effort to further reduce reliance on gasoline and resultant greenhouse gas emissions on campus and beyond, University researchers are working under a federal grant to create cost-competitive biofuels by 2012.

**Water Resources:** The University has been aggressively implementing water-saving projects, resulting in overall water usage down 30% over the last three years. In 2007 and 2010, UGA won water conservation award due for the success of its Every Drop Counts campaign. Overall, UGA has 15 cisterns installed or under construction, totaling over 530,000 gallons of storage capacity for continuous reuse of harvested rain and condensate water. In addition, over 50 rain gardens and other stormwater quality features have been installed on the UGA campus to improve water quality.

**Recycling & Waste Reduction:** For years, UGA has been actively involved in waste reduction and recycling on campus. An increase in recycling and decrease in landfill tonnage results in cost avoidance and annual income. By the end of January 2010, the campus recycling rate was 41%. Other waste reduction efforts include a robust composting operation that converts landscape debris into useful soil and mulch that is incorporated into the UGA campus. In 2008, a construction and demolition waste recycling program was implemented to divert from the ACC landfill 75-86% of construction debris from several capital improvement projects and to reuse resulting products on campus construction sites.

**Green Building & Historic Preservation:** UGA has been implementing environmentally responsible building construction techniques for years. Recently, UGA decided to pursue Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Certification on several major capital projects. The Tate Student Center Expansion received a Gold rating as UGA’s first LEED Certified building. Four other buildings currently under construction are tracking LEED at a minimum Silver Certification level. UGA is also a responsible steward of historic building
resources. Eleven buildings on historic North Campus have been - or are in the process of being - restored, diverting construction waste from landfills and avoiding further consumption of energy and material resources that would be required to construct new facilities.

**Campus Grounds:** Sustainable and functional UGA campus landscapes provide beauty and culture, as well as education and ecological restoration. In the past 15 years, the University has removed over 1.5 million square feet of asphalt and added over 46 acres of campus greenspace. UGA has been reducing impervious paving and creating greenspace, utilizing native plants and trees, actively improving stormwater quality, using efficient irrigation strategies, and restoring wildlife habitats. Due partially to its acclaim as one of the most beautiful University campuses in the U.S., UGA was designated as a Campus Arboretum in 2000 and is now engaged in a Sustainable Tree Trust to ensure long-term viability of the campus tree canopy. Other notable projects include the restoration of Herty Field on North Campus, the conversion of D.W. Brooks Drive on UGA's south campus to D.W. Brooks Mall, the Performing & Visual Arts Corridor landscape improvement, and the historic Town Spring restoration.

**Alternative Transportation:** UGA boasts the largest campus transit system in the country. In 2008, over 9 Million riders utilized the campus buses instead of driving personal vehicles. There are also over 19 miles of bike paths on the UGA campus, including connections to the N. Oconee River Greenway. UGA Parking Services offers participation in the Alternative Transportation Program (ATP) and free ridership of ACC public transit to provide incentives to walk, bus, or bike to campus instead of driving.

**Food Service:** UGA Food Service provides an award-winning campus dining experience. Kitchen operations incorporate the philosophy Reduce, Reuse, Recycle to save water and energy, and recycle food and waste materials. UGA Food Services is the largest contributor to Full Plate, an organization that provides food to the local homeless population. Vegetarian options are provided at 100% of meals on campus and local food is purchased when available and economically feasible. Reusable and compostable serving containers and utensils are used in dining areas on campus.

**University Housing:** University Housing is committed to creating a culture of sustainability among its students and staff. Current housing construction projects including the new residence hall at East Campus and upgrades to Family & Graduate Housing units are seeking LEED certification as a tangible display of this commitment. University Housing sponsors educational programs such as an online sustainability newsletter, an environmental film series, building waste audits, participation in the Green Cup competition and a sustainable living pledge for residents and staff members.

**Green Cleaning:** In 2006, UGA implemented an award-winning, Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) Certified (with honors) Green Cleaning Program on campus. The program reduced the previously used 351 cleaning chemicals to only three non-toxic cleaning products. The program saves money through purchasing fewer supplies in bulk, creates healthier interior environments, and reduces absenteeism due to health concerns such as asthma and headaches.

**Purchasing & Procurement:** Currently, UGA has defined preferences for purchasing recycled paper and healthy, ergonomic cleaning supplies. In addition, third-party standards for energy savings, such as Energy Star and Green Seal, are considered when purchasing supplies and equipment for campus use.

**Printing Services:** UGA Printing offers a wide range of high-quality printing services. In addition to offering recycled paper and vegetable-based ink options, UGA will now offer 100% recycled business cards printed with soy-based ink. The first cards printed through this process were for the UGA Office of Sustainability.
Goals

Near-term (FY 2010)

- Establish the Office of Sustainability and develop a five-year Strategic Plan.
- Establish a campus-wide Committee on Sustainability comprised of students, faculty and staff to coordinate, communicate and advance existing and new sustainability initiatives on campus.
- Create a centralized website with consistent “branding” to highlight and communicate campus sustainability efforts.
- Collaborate with the University Visitors Center to incorporate sustainability into campus tours.
- Work closely with Go Green Alliance and others to promote sustainability initiatives with meaningful student involvement.
- Collaborate with departments across campus – as well as colleagues across the state and region - to develop and promote sustainable operations including energy and water conservation and waste reduction.
- Develop a program to select, administer and assess small start-up grants for deserving sustainability initiatives by students, faculty and/or staff, as funding is available through the Student Green Fee.
- Coordinate The University of Georgia responses to external campus sustainability surveys.
- Establish a visible presence through participation in sustainability events on campus and in the community.

1-Year Plan (FY 2011)

Water

- Continue water conservation efforts and develop a standard for rainwater harvesting systems through coordination with the Office of University Architects, PPD Energy Services and PPD Operations & Maintenance.
- Enhance on-campus research opportunities in the area water resource conservation and improvement.

Energy & Climate

- Partner with Physical Plant divisions and departments across campus to target reduction in electrical energy use through facility improvements, education and behavior modification.
- Work with academic and operational departments to inventory UGA greenhouse gas emissions and develop a plan for reduction.

Waste Reduction

- Collaborate with PPD Services Department and others to minimize landfilled waste and increase the campus recycling rate to 50%.
- Partner with UGA Athletic Association, student groups and others to enhance the Gameday Recycling program.
- Collaborate with UGA Food Services, PPD Services and Grounds Departments to implement a pilot food waste composting program.
- Collaborate with University Architects and PPD to coordinate and enhance construction demolition and debris recycling.
Green Building
- Collaborate with University Architects and the Physical Plant Division to continue to enhance and implement cost-effective and sustainable design guidelines for new construction and building renovation projects.

Purchasing
- Work with UGA Procurement and others to develop environmentally sensitive purchasing standards that promote the use of regional, energy-efficient and environmentally responsible products, materials and equipment.

Transportation
- Collaborate with Parking Services and others to enhance commuting options that reduce carbon emissions on campus, including campus bicycle and rideshare programs.
- Partner with ACC Leisure Services, PPD Grounds Department, University Architects, and others to further enhance the Greenway Network.

Food
- Collaborate with students, academic and operational departments to plan and implement a campus demonstration garden.
- Partner with UGA Food Services to continue and enhance water, energy and waste conservation efforts.
- Engage with UGA Food Services, students, and academic departments to research and communicate benefits of local and sustainable food systems.

Education
- Implement a Green Labs and Offices program in collaboration with the Odum School of Ecology, PPD Services and others to minimize water and electricity consumption and reduce waste.
- Partner with University Housing to develop and implement educational and incentive programs to encourage sustainable living practices among campus housing residents.
- Collaborate with academic departments and the Office of Service Learning to enhance and develop sustainability-related and service-learning courses and programs.
- Collaborate with University Architects and PPD Grounds Department to develop and begin to implement a standard for sustainability signage in campus buildings and grounds.
- Develop and host an annual sustainability symposium.
- Provide an annual report to track progress of campus sustainability initiatives.

5-Year Plan (through FY 2015)
- Continue collaborative efforts to restore natural systems, reduce consumption of water and energy, and generate less waste.
- Partner with academic departments to continue to enhance sustainability education.
- Secure financial support for the Office of Sustainability and funding for initiatives through external grants and other sources.
- Engage with the campus-wide Committee on Sustainability and others to evaluate effectiveness of sustainability initiatives and mid-term progress toward meeting the University’s sustainability goals outlined in the Strategic Plan 2010-2020.
Strategic Plan 2010-2020

Excerpt from Strategic Direction VII: Improving Stewardship of Natural Resources and Advancing Campus Sustainability

Strategic Priorities:

a) Demonstrate and promote leadership in sustainable living and learning—contextualizing the local as part of the global in sustainability.
b) Use natural resources as efficiently as possible.
c) Provide examples to other organizations and communities on how to integrate sustainability into existing and new operations.
d) Integrate sustainability into the student experience through curricular and co-curricular means both in the classroom and beyond.
e) Establish a coordinating body to oversee sustainability efforts and maximize awareness of the university’s activities to both external and internal audiences.
f) Maximize the use of state resources by increasing non-state funding revenue sources and leveraging state resources to the fullest extent possible.
g) Encourage the further development and use of mass transportation to and on campus.

Illustrative Benchmarks:

1) Reduce university consumption of energy by 20 percent, potable water by 40 percent, and divert waste stream from landfills by 65 percent.
2) Establish a coordinating body to oversee sustainability efforts and maximize awareness of the university’s activities to both external and internal efforts.
3) Reduce the number of automobiles on campus by 20 percent, and increase by 20 percent the number of faculty, staff, and students who commute to campus using alternate modes of transportation such as mass transit, bicycles, or walking.
4) Calculate the university’s carbon footprint, develop attainable goals for improvement, and implement strategies to significantly reduce carbon emissions.
5) Annually evaluate and update the university’s sustainability performance in instruction, research, public service, campus development, and operations activities.
6) Increase the endowment through a more proactive interaction with alumni and other constituencies.

Summary

The Office of Sustainability was initiated in 2010 as part of a strategic directive to enhance conservation of resources and long-term sustainability at the University of Georgia. The University of Georgia is serving as a living laboratory where sustainability is researched, taught, practiced, and constantly refined. In the pursuit of a more sustainable university, UGA students, faculty, and staff improve natural resources and enhance quality of life at UGA, in their communities, and throughout the world.