Sustainability at Carleton

Carleton College has a long tradition of sustainability efforts, dating back at least to the first Earth Day in 1970, where students and faculty planted 40,000 trees in the campus Arboretum. Since signing the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment in 2007 and writing a Climate Action Plan in 2011 which targets net zero carbon emissions by 2050, Carleton has reduced overall emissions by 18%. After current projects are completed, Carleton will have reduced its total carbon emissions by 35%, well beyond its original 2020 interim goal of a 21% reduction.

Carleton is home to three LEED Gold buildings and the first college-owned commercial-scale wind turbine, which was installed in 2004 and serves the public grid. Carleton’s second wind turbine, installed in 2011, is tied to the campus grid and directly provides one-third of Carleton’s annual electricity use. Together, the two wind turbines produce over half of the electrical usage of the campus. Most campus lighting systems have been or will soon be converted to LED or fluorescent.

Carleton is also making history by becoming one of the first colleges to build a campus-wide heating system with low-temperature hot water and geothermal heat pumps as its main source of heating and cooling, enabling the campus to completely transition off of steam heating by 2022. The geothermal system will begin serving the east side of campus in fall 2019.

The Sustainability Office now has two staff members dedicated to advancing Carleton’s Climate Action Plan initiatives, and each year, 10-12 student Sustainability Assistants (STAs) conduct projects to further advance Carleton’s sustainability goals for waste, food, outreach, energy, and events. Carleton’s Sustainability efforts are also integrated into the Carleton Community and Civic Engagement programs where students work with local NGOs and the schools to help with outreach and education more broadly. Carleton staff are also playing leadership roles in the planning for a Northfield city-wide Climate Action Plan.

Continuing this long tradition of sustainability efforts, Carleton has always worked to reduce waste. In every campus building, there are “trash bins” that co-locate compost, recycling, and landfill options. A crew of Custodial Waste Busters monitor waste on a daily basis, and a Zero Waste Task Force promotes waste reduction across campus. Currently, 95% of Carleton’s standard waste stream is diverted from the landfill.

But there is still work to do. Carleton is engaging with students, campus, and community on various waste initiatives, and exploring paths to “zero waste.” Carleton is focusing on moving from a linear consumption model to a circular one.

Reduced annual hauling fees by $10,000 because of monitoring and consolidating outdoor waste bins by our Custodial Waste Busters.

The Comprehensive Student Recycling and Composting Guide provides essential information to all students.

Lighten Up Garage Sale
An annual event that diverts much of the waste left over from student move-out each spring. Profits go to three community non-profits.

In 2018, the sale diverted 23 tons of stuff and raised over $39,000 for charity.

Food Recovery Network
In 2017, an average of 15 tons of food per 10-week term was recovered and donated to 8 community partners.

68 FOOD RECOVERY NETWORK VOLUNTEERS
9.5 TONS OF FOOD RECOVERED BETWEEN 2014-2017

Repair Fair
Community members, students, and staff can receive assistance in fixing and mending household items and learn about reuse and repair alternatives.

Carleton has over 20 water filling stations on campus to reduce the use of disposable plastic bottles.

65% green cleaning products purchased annually

Compostables Store
An easy way for departments to purchase compostable plates, napkins, utensils, etc. for campus picnics and events.

Legend: ● = student initiative ● = department initiative

Carleton
For more information: go.carleton.edu/sustainability

Contacts:
Fred Rogers
Vice President and Treasurer
frogers@carleton.edu
Martha Larson
Manager of Campus Energy and Sustainability
mlarson@carleton.edu
Alex Miller
Sustainability Program Coordinator
amiller3@carleton.edu