

# **ALBRIGHT COLLEGE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**

## **I. MISSION STATEMENT & OBJECTIVES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AT ALBRIGHT COLLEGE**

Albright College recognizes the College's responsibility for stewardship of our environment and the importance of working to sustain the environment both on local and worldwide levels.

This commitment to environmental stewardship and care of the earth is one of the core values of the College, stemming from our United Methodist heritage. The College seal depicts the lamp of knowledge, books and the words "truth and justice." These signify not only the value we place on wisdom and knowledge, but the interrelatedness of all things and our belief that the search for knowledge should not be separated from the search for wise and just solutions in human affairs and in the conservation of the natural world.

Although Albright may not have the largest carbon footprint, it has a very large educational footprint. Our mission to prepare our students to be aware and socially responsible citizens and leaders includes an understanding and respect for the natural world.

With this understanding, President McMillan created the President's Committee on Sustainability and Stewardship to lead our commitment to make decisions and take actions that recognize our obligation to stewardship, respect for our resources and sustainability and improvement of our environment.

Environmental stewardship and sustainability is a strategic objective for the College. While it may not always be possible that every decision in College operations is also the optimal environmental decision, the College is committed to making sustainability and stewardship a key factor in decision making and policy setting. However, sustainability and stewardship efforts by the Albright community should particularly take place in all of the following areas:

**A. Energy Use – Albright will strive to reduce the amount of energy used and the amount of emissions produced.** We will also be cognizant of the multitude of ways that energy development, transmission and use can be detrimental to the environment and we will make decisions that attempt to increase the overall positive impacts on the environment, both locally and globally. This should result in consideration of using alternative forms of sustainable energy.

**B. Waste disposal –** Waste can include emissions into the air and water as well as solid municipal and toxic or hazardous waste. **Albright will strive to adopt the strategy that is most beneficial to the environment in terms of each type of emissions.** Each of these types of waste requires a different approach in order to minimize their impact on the environment. In many cases, this requires an examination of the processes involved in the creation of waste so that we can minimize the use of a substance and thereby minimize its emissions. Sometimes reuse of a substance is most beneficial environmentally, while in other cases recycling may be the appropriate strategy.

**C. Purchasing – Albright will strive to purchase materials, which have more beneficial effects on the environment.** For instance, Albright has the choice of using recycled as opposed to non-recycled materials, non-toxic versus toxic substances, or energy-efficient versus less energy-efficient machines. Because of the decentralized ordering system at Albright, a concerted effort will be required to contact decision makers to emphasize that it is a priority to consider environmental issues in their decision-making process. The long-term goal is to have a more centralized purchasing system in place and enable one individual to ensure that all purchases include environmental considerations.

**D. Education/Communication –** Education can come in many forms--through courses, institutional programs, special events, residential policies, informal communication among professors, administrators, staff, students, etc. The presence or absence of certain programs or policies sends a message to all members of its community. In all these venues, **Albright will work to educate all members of its community about the importance of actions, both as individuals and as an institution, that are environmentally beneficial locally and globally.**

In addition, we encourage faculty to enhance courses so that students can gain insights into the environmental problems that we face both locally and globally. Finally, faculty should strive to

connect their educational programs with other activities on campus such as facilities, food service, etc. so that their students can witness first hand how Albright College is affecting the environment as an institution.

**E. Food Production, Consumption, Disposal – How we prepare our food, as well as how we consume and dispose of it, can have significant effects on the environment.** All individuals responsible for food production, including directors, managers and staff should strive to manage food production, consumption and distribution at Albright in a manner beneficial for the environment.

**F. Residential Life –** Students make up the majority of the community at Albright College and their **residential life can have significant impact on the environment.** Therefore, policies and infrastructure in the residence halls and other aspects of residential life should be made with two general goals in mind. First, decisions and policies that promote environmental sustainability should be actively fostered as part of the education of students who are making daily decisions about living in an environmentally sustainable or non-sustainable manner. Second, the direct impact of students on the environment should be considered and factored into policies, programs, etc. in order to promote more beneficial environmental effects. Finally, environmental sustainability objectives should be promoted through training of RAs.

**G. Construction/Renovation – How a building or structure is constructed or renovated can have a significant impact on the environment** not only in terms of the materials and processes used, but also in future operational efficiencies. Albright will strive to construct and renovate in ways that are most beneficial to the environment. The new Science Center is being built to qualify for LEED certification, and this certification, along with other environmentally responsible practices, should be a consideration for all future buildings and renovation projects.

**H. Facilities/Buildings/Grounds –** The facilities program at any institution plays a major role in that institution's overall environmental impact. **The Facilities Department at Albright College will naturally be a primary guardian of the objectives laid out in this document and will make decisions with consideration of the environmental consequences of all choices.**

Whenever possible, the solution, which most benefits the environment, will be given equal or higher priority.

**I. Personnel** – The College’s **environmental objectives should be communicated to all employees of Albright College** so that they understand that Albright College, as an institution and community, is committed to environmental sustainability. This objective should be reflected in their work and interactions. Through this process a culture of sustainability in decision-making will be established in the Albright College community.

**J. Assessment** – As part of the commitment to environmental integrity, **Albright College believes that it must have some means of assessing decisions and actions.** Periodically (annually or every two to three years) the College should conduct a review of each of the areas above to determine how well we are achieving our mission of creating a more sustainable environment. The first assessment will be a baseline that can be used to determine areas that need additional sustainability measures going forward.

## **II. IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES AT ALBRIGHT COLLEGE**

Implementation of the objectives in this plan is based on a process that will involve individuals making decisions, which could have either beneficial or detrimental effects on the local or global environment. Each vice president will be asked to produce a plan for incorporating environmental decisions into their particular division. They will also produce biannual reports to document environmental benefits.

The hope is that this procedure will be flexible enough to enable different divisions to develop procedures to address environmental concerns in a manner most appropriate for their department and activities. In addition, the reports will encourage ongoing environmental considerations as well as provide a means for monitoring improvements.

- A. Identify the areas of decision-making on campus for which we need to promote environmental considerations.
- B. Send division/program directors/coordinators/supervisors the list of environmental objectives and request that they not only read it themselves, but go over it with all faculty and staff in their areas.
- C. Request that the heads of the areas of concern develop a written plan for addressing environmental considerations and submit the plan to CSS for review and approval. The plan should specifically explain how the group will ensure that environmental considerations are considered in their decision-making as an important factor along with financial, educational, and other concerns. (We could include some of the suggestions above as a means of achieving the desired results – check-list, general guidelines, etc.)
- D. Biannual environmental reports should be completed and submitted to the CSS for review. These reports should document area progress in considering environmental issues as well as changes, which have had positive and/or negative effects on the local or global environment. A divisional representative from each of the three academic divisions (natural science, social

science, humanities & fine arts.) should serve on the CSS and act as the liaison between the CSS and the departments in their division. (See “F” below.) These representatives will put together the biannual reports that reflect beneficial or detrimental environmental activities in their academic divisions.

- E. The CSS will supervise and direct the sustainability plan. CSS will be responsible for monitoring overall sustainability efforts on campus – initially by supervising the completion of the STARS review on a yearly basis. CSS responsibilities also include assessing sustainability reports and working to make improvements in these areas.

CSS will be charged with the task of identifying new areas of need and initiating new actions to improve environmental sustainability on campus. Finally, CSS will continue to report biannually to both the president and the Property, Land, and Equipment subcommittee of the Board of Trustees.

- F. CSS members should come from each of the areas identified in Part I of this plan. There should be a representative from student government as well as the student environmental club on campus. At least four faculty members should also be on the committee, with three representing the disciplinary perspectives of their academic divisions (natural science, social science, humanities & fine arts.) At present the CSS will continue to be chaired by a faculty member or administrator devoted to the ideals of this plan, however, the long term goal is to create the position of Sustainability Coordinator who will serve as Chair of the CSS and promote and manage environmental sustainability as outlined in this plan.

### **III. ASSESSMENT & MONITORING OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AT ALBRIGHT COLLEGE**

Assessment of any facet of a community is difficult and often time-consuming. These problems are increased when the criteria for the assessment of a particular facet have wide-reaching implications and connections across the entire community. In addition, the problem can be complicated when the community is composed of diverse units and has no staff position for conducting the assessment. This is precisely the problem the CSS faced when attempting to develop a plan for assessment of the state of the environment at Albright on an ongoing basis.

We have developed a two-point plan to deal with these challenges. The first part helps to create uniform criteria by using a college sustainability assessment framework from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE.) Their Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) appears to be a well conceived checklist and scoring rubric which will enable colleges to assess their level of environmental sustainability. To complete the process, data will have to be collected from different departments. Based on an initial review, it appears as though the data can be collected without overtaxing personnel who are involved.

For \$1,400 Albright can send the data we collect to STARS and have them post a score for Albright College. Because of the cost, and because this data will be our first effort to create a benchmark, we are reluctant to post our scores right away. CSS recommends that we use the STARS assessment tool on a trial basis over the next year, administering and scoring it ourselves. After the trial basis, we will determine the feasibility of continuing to administer the instrument ourselves, pay the fees and have STARS provide an overall sustainability score, or cease to use it and search for a new assessment tool.

The second part of our assessment plan would incorporate the annual/biannual review(s) of the environmental reports requested as part of the Implementation Plan. These would be reviewed to determine how well environmental decisions are being made. In addition, a review of progress in environmental activities would be made. This data would be included in a qualitative review of the College, which could complement the more quantitative assessment of the STARS tool. Combined,

these assessment frameworks will provide the college with not only a measure for success in sustainability efforts, but also the ability to highlight the areas that are most in need of additional support and guidance.