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Contributors:
Jenna Bessette
Diana Dos Santos
Diana Phillips
Nat Walts

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The Office of Sustainability completes an assessment called STARS every other year to gauge our progress in this field. Part of that work involves identifying sustainability related and sustainability focused courses. In the most recent assessment, the university altered our methodology for determining courses and by aligning them with the United Nations’ seventeen Global Goals. Using an existing course database, the descriptions for both undergraduate and graduate courses were reviewed. The goals were divided into “Social” (1-5, 17), “Economic” (8-12) and “Environmental” (6-7 and 13-16) categories and rated accordingly. A course would be considered sustainability-related if it included two of the categories and sustainability-focused if it included three of the categories.

Preliminary results showed that the goals addressed the most were #3 Good Health and Well-being, #8 Decent Work and Economic Growth and #15 Life on Land. The least addressed goal was #2 No Hunger. Of those listed in the undergraduate and graduate bulletin, 7.5% of the courses were deemed sustainability related and 2.5% were deemed sustainability-focused courses. If departments would like a breakdown of their unit, email us at gogreen@albany.edu.
As RecycleMania has come to an end, we are highlighting students’ involvement in the collection process. A competition was initiated to increase the amount of recyclables collected. This involved student organizations collecting bottles and cans from members for the Office of Sustainability to include in UAlbany’s count. Two groups in particular, Albany Outreach for Animals (AOA) and Women Excelling in Business (WEB), contributed to the highest collection.

Each group informed their members about the initiative and chose one meeting to have their members bring in their recycled materials, which in turn resulted in a contribution to our school’s total. The total amount collected by AOA members was 56 bottles and cans and 278 by WEB members. Thank you to all who participated and helped us break our goal of 175 items to commemorate the 175th anniversary of UAlbany.
According to the EPA, environmental justice (EJ) is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

There are many local examples of EJ including the ANSWERS waste incineration plant in Sheridan Hollow back in 1990’s, water contamination in Hoosick Falls and concerns about diesel truck traffic and the transport of oil by trains affecting the Ezra Prentice Homes in Albany’s South End.

Concerns are growing that the transition to a green economy be a just one, making sure that those who can’t afford efficiency upgrades, renewable energy, alternatively fueled vehicles or rebuilding projects are not left behind. This sentiment can be found in the Green New Deal resolution and the Governor’s recent State of the State address. Currently there are bills pending in both houses of the State Legislature to ensure that 40% of the state’s clean energy investment be targeted to the frontline communities that are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change damage.

On Monday, April 15th, a dozen faculty members came together to discuss the formation of an Environmental Justice Collaborative. This group strives to become informed about local needs and share their experiences in teaching and researching EJ issues. This workshop was a first step in the process of coming together. By learning about what each other is doing and what is going on in the community, it reduces the chance of duplicating efforts or assuming the needs of our community. Next, the group will learn more about those needs and seek ways to incorporate students interested in researching and working this field. If you are interested in joining this effort, please email us at gogreen@albany.edu.
On Friday, April 12th, four students from UAlbany’s Students for Sustainability (USS) group visited Woodland Hill Montessori School. They presented to 4th, 5th and 6th grade classes about the harmful effects of landfills and how recycling and composting can reduce these detrimental impacts. This included lessons on recycling and composting, why it’s good for the environment, and ways the students can be more sustainable.

A highlight of the visit was a sorting game where the kids had to decide if they should put items in the landfill, recycling bin or compost and it seemed to be an enjoyable experience for them. The UAlbany students finished each presentation with a team quiz on the PowerPoint that was presented earlier in the lesson, and the participants did an amazing job at remembering the information. To help demonstrate sustainability in action, the USS group gave each student a recycled denim pencil, and the winning team from each session received reusable sandwich bags.
Earth Day in the Pine Bush

*Saturday, April 27th: 9:00 AM at Albany Pine Bush Preserve, 195 New Karner Rd.*

Celebrate Earth Day by volunteering on a conservation project. Equipment will be provided and volunteers will have the opportunity to work in different parts of the preserve. Reservations: call 518-456-0655 or visit www.AlbanyPineBush.org/events

4th Annual Spring Festival

*Saturday, April 27th: 9:00 AM at Saratoga Farmers’ Market, 65 South Broadway*

Free admission. Celebrate the blossoming of spring with workshops, live music, family activities, and delicious local food. Learn about beekeeping, gardening, and fermentation.

Down to Earth – Practical Actions You Can Take to Heal Our Planet

*Tuesday, April 30th: 5 PM at First Universalist Society of Albany, 405 Washington Ave*

Free Admission. Learn about environmental actions you can take through mini-presentations, including reducing waste with Gary Feinland of DEC. Register by visiting https://www.facebook.com/events/263416447896650

Leading Green, Part 2: Strategic Planning and Organizational Preparedness

*Friday, May 3rd: 8:30 AM at Milne Hall, UAlbany Downtown Campus.*

Join local, national, and international preparedness experts for a conversation about the long-term strategic and preparedness plan your organization will require in the age of climate change disruption. $25 per registrant, $20 for additional registrants.

71st Annual Tulip Festival

*Saturday, May 11th and Sunday, May 12 that 11:00 AM in Washington Park*

Enjoy Albany’s signature spring event including an art show, delicious food, live entertainment, and more than 140,000 tulips of 150 different varieties.
1. What year did you graduate?
2018

2. What was your major/minor?
Major: Environmental Science
Minors: Mathematics and Business Administration

3. What was your co-curricular and student organization involvement on campus?
UAlbany cheerleader, Albany Business Leaders Emerging (ABLE), Program Intern with the Office of Sustainability, and an Energy Management internship with UAlbany Facilities

4. What are you doing now? Where do you live?
I am living and working in Boston, Massachusetts in the field of environmental consulting for a company called Energy Solutions. Our mission is to create large-scale environmental impacts by providing market-based, cost-effective energy, carbon, and water management solutions to our utility, government and commercial customers. In my role, I work to implement energy efficiency programs in the Northeast for a range of technologies from high efficiency restaurant equipment to LED lighting upgrades.

5. How have you applied your experience with the sustainability movement on campus and involvement with the Office of Sustainability into your post-college life and career?
Sustainability remains a huge influence on my life post-grad. I am lucky to work with a group of really amazing, passionate people who share my commitment to creating a more sustainable future. I practice sustainability outside of work by composting my food waste, buying second-hand clothing, and taking public transportation whenever possible. I am extremely grateful for my experience at UAlbany in the field of sustainability and would encourage any students who are interested to get as involved as possible!

The Office of Sustainability is proud of the successes of our sustainability alumni! They were essential in the early stages of the sustainability movement at UAlbany and have shaped where it is now.