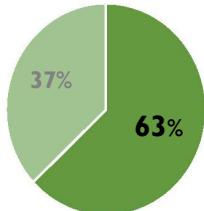


Newsletter of the **Center for Sustainability and the Environment** at Wells College.



The 2018 *Princeton Review's Hopes & Worries* survey of 9,345 prospective students asked: *If you had a way to compare colleges based on their commitment to environmental issues (from academic offerings to practices concerning energy use, recycling, etc.), how much would this contribute to your decision to apply to or attend a school?* Most students responded that an institution's commitment to sustainability would influence their selection decisions.

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## Wells' sustainability efforts cited by two national organizations

Again this year, Wells College was included among the highest-performing colleges and universities for our sustainability efforts. Using results from our comprehensive Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) assessment, developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), for which we earned a Gold rating in December 2017, the *Sierra Club* annually develops a list of what it calls "Cool Schools", schools with strong commitments to environmental action. Sierra "cherry picks" our STARS data and applies a different weighting system than the STARS program uses so we don't do as well in Sierra's eyes in some categories as we do in STARS. This year, among 268 schools Sierra evaluated, Wells ranked #74 as a Cool School. In 2017, Wells scored 150 out of 227 Cool Schools. (Last year, Sierra drew data from our earlier AASHE STARS Silver rated assessment). The main areas pulling us up as a Cool School include:

### AMERICA'S GREENEST SCHOOLS

Sierra's annual "Cool Schools" ranking

**Curriculum** - we moved into position #31. We inventoried the number of classes that have some content related to sustainability and found **20% of our catalog** offers this kind of curricular exploration.

**Air and Climate** - we moved up into position #49, due to the progress on our now 10-year-old Climate Action Plan. We have far exceeded our 2020 interim goal of 10% reduction from our baseline – we currently have **reduced emissions by more than 50%** from 2008 levels.

**Food & Dining** – we moved into position #16, using data from when Wells Dining was in charge of our dining program. This category looks at purchases of organic and/or local foods as well as foods that have third party certifications (like humanely raised meats and seafood from responsibly managed fisheries). In our 2017 STARS Gold assessment, Wells Dining procured **20% of food products classified as more sustainable**. We are working with Hallmark, our new food service contractor, to meet and perhaps even exceed this percentage, which is quite respectable compared with other institutions in Upstate NY.

**Purchasing** – we moved into position #28 for our sustainable purchasing policy and our own internal mandates to purchase 30% post consumer recycled content paper for offices and computer labs, EPEAT certified computers, Energy Star rated equipment and WaterSense certified bathroom fixtures.

**Grounds** – we ranked as #41 for our sustainable landscape management practices.



We were notified in mid-Fall that the Princeton Review, which also uses our AASHE STARS assessment data, included Wells in its 2018 Guide to Green Schools. They "scored" 399 schools based on their performance in several categories, but their reviewers also apply different weighting schemes to some categories than does the STARS rating system. The Princeton Review team also factors in opinions of current Wells students, but how large a response pool they had, what questions they ask our students, and how this factor is applied

to our final score is unclear. At any rate, Wells moved up in their estimation; our Sustainability Score rose from 90 in 2017 (using our AASHE STARS Silver data) to 92 out of a possible 99 points.

Princeton Review favorably noted our sustainability academic program and courses with sustainability learning objectives, our Climate Action Plan, our Sustainability Advisory Committee overseeing a full-time sustainability officer, and some of transportation-related activities, like our anti-idling policy, campus shuttle service, and ride-matching program. Princeton Review "dings" us for not having carshare or bikeshare programs. The bikesharing idea is one we could explore further but carshare programs only work cost-effectively for larger institutions.



While we may quibble with how the Sierra Club and the Princeton Review evaluate our efforts, we do appreciate that both organizations recognize our steady forward movement to become more sustainable.

## Wells shares a valuable learning opportunity

Last spring, we partnered with Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3) to win support from the Fulbright Outreach Lecturing Fund (OLF) to bring an international researcher to both campuses. That effort was considered so successful, Fulbright OLF staff strongly encouraged us to reapply. This time, OLF funded a three-way collaboration among Wells, TC3 and Ithaca College. In late October, this scholar residency brought Jussi Nikula, head of the Environmental Footprint Program for the World Wildlife Fund in Finland, to our respective campuses for class guest lectures in environmental science and sustainability classes, student and faculty meetings, and here at Wells, a Sustainable Business talk titled "From Ecological Overshoot to Future-Proof Businesses". Mr. Nikula's Fulbright award is for studying regenerative economies at the Capital Institute in CT.



## "Virtual" Speaker

In September, we used the videoconference setup in Zabriskie 106 to "virtually" bring in our *Sustainable Business* series speaker, Gavin McIntyre, co-founder of and chief scientist for Ecovative Designs. We have been intrigued for years with the company's innovative use of mushroom mycelium to fabricate biodegradable packaging materials. Video Cloud enabled Gavin to interact with our audience and deliver his presentation. This way, we fit into his very busy schedule, learned more about his products and business model, and reduced his carbon footprint.



**Sustainability Learning**  
In October, Marian Brown, Sustainability Center director, keynoted a workshop hosted by SUNY Geneseo faculty Karleen West and Suann Yang, recipients of minigrants from our Finger Lakes Project sustainability curriculum development workshop in 2017. West and Yang used their FLP funding to develop modules on sustainable foods to use in a variety of disciplinary courses. Brown led workshop attendees through an explanation of what sustainability literacy means and how to create supportive curricula.

Students in the *Intro to Sustainability* class did a "trash sort", identifying issues with proper separation of recyclable items and strategizing solutions.

## Wellspring

## Sustain-a-Cell

Biology professor Christina Schmidt again assigned lab teams in her Biology of Organisms class to develop cell models using "found materials" from around campus. The Center for Sustainability director provided instruction to the class on what "found materials" are and where to locate them on campus (e.g. in trash and recycling bins) and offered to incentive the best efforts with *Dining Dollars* cash rewards. The teams had to create their cell models entirely using recycled materials, describe the cell organelles' functions, and identify

the material used to create each cell component and where it was found on campus. The Grand Prize winners (below left) creatively repurposed a drink carton for their cell membrane and used such interesting "found" elements as bubble wrap, used popsicle sticks, dryer lint, K-cup parts, and plastic fork tines. The



winners of the Best Use of Natural Materials category represented their plant cell model with Styrofoam sheet fragments surrounded by used kraft paper, and filled it with organelles represented by various fruits (lemon, orange peel, and grapes), sticks, pine needles and cones, and seed pods collected around campus.



## Sustainability-related Internships

At the start of the Fall semester, students who conduct summer internships are required to present a poster on their projects.

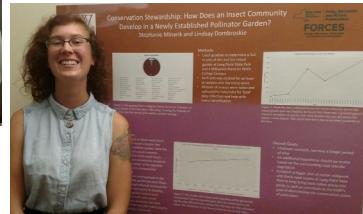


Curtis Davis '19 worked with NY Department of Environmental Conservation wildlife technicians to conduct a black bear population survey. Curtis helped the team set up 36 test sites, bait them with sardines and bear scent and check them later to collect photos and bear hair for DNA analysis in order to track bears' movement around the state.

Leah Jezer-Nelson '21 worked with a SUNY-ESF researcher to

study willow trees as a rapidly renewable biomass source.

Stephanie Minarik '20 (below) assessed increased insect activity in a pollinator garden the FORCES student organization has created at Long Point State Park near Aurora.



Dana Grover '21 (below) did a summer internship in conjunction with her work as the 2018 Aurora Farmers Market manager. Dana, who is studying both sustaina-



bility and business management, investigated ways to improve market vendor and patron participation. In her manager position, Dana also oversaw the Fall market internship of business major Stephanie Marte '19 (below right) who studied ways to improve marketing of the farmers market, especially to our campus community. Between Dana and Stephan-



nie's efforts, the Aurora Farmers Market enjoyed a 20% increase in market vendor participation over 2017, significant improvements in vendor diversity, and steady patron attendance this season.



Students in Kinga Hill's *Intro to Environmental Science* lab conduct ecology experiments aboard the *Discover Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom* vessel out on Cayuga Lake.

Anthropology and Religion professor Ernie Olson guides students in his *Intro to Gardening* class on how to "charge" biochar with bacteria to make it an effective fertilizer.



This newsletter is printed on 30% post-consumer-recycled-content paper; please be sure to recycle when you finish reading it.



## Upcycling success story

Thanks to Jacobs Press in Auburn NY for going above and beyond to help the College's sustainability efforts. The Office of Advancement had boxes of outdated letterhead they didn't want to throw away, so Kelly Brown (photo) found a way to "upcycle" it. During a visit to the college, Jacobs Press CEO Mike Trapani, married to alumna Molly Fandrich Trapani '79, told Kelly he would take the paper (which Jacobs had originally printed) and cut it down

into notepads at no cost. Several cases worth of notepads have been given out around campus and to visitors during our Fall Weekend/150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration.



## Filling in the gaps

We were able to take advantage of a special offer to purchase an additional four new Elkay EZH2O water bottle fill stations. The first unit went in on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Stratton Hall (replacing an older drinking fountain that had failed). The second unit was installed near the Writing Center on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Long Library, becoming the first drinking fountain of any kind in the Library—it's a very welcome addition. Partial funding for this latest round of fill stations came from the Hagedorn Foundation which underwrote the creation of the Writing Center. The remaining two fill stations will be installed soon, one in the Dining Hall to support the Pizza3/5 concept, and the other in Zabriskie Hall, another building that lacks drinking fountains.



## Sustainability? Suck it up!

The Office of Admissions has been devising new ways to message to prospective students about our campus sustainability efforts. They have begun issuing reusable drinking straws to campus visitors and to students attending recruitment events. These heavy-duty straws are imprinted with our Sustainability URL and are extra-cool, as they change color from white to red when cold liquid is pulled up through them. Admissions campus tour guide Adonis Douglas demonstrates how to make the straw change color! Cool indeed!



Wells College [wells.edu/sustainable](http://wells.edu/sustainable)

## Doubling our efforts

We received our third grant from the College Council of the New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling (NYSAR3), this time to purchase outdoor recycling containers. We bought three Max/R combination trash/recycling units to place in prominent areas on campus to try to capture recyclables that until now were discarded in landfill trash bins, the only waste collection option we offered outdoors. OK, Wells, now pitch in!



## A banner year for Admissions

Our Admissions team must have heard enough of our grousing about the use of disposable red and white helium balloons for wayfinding for campus events. Enrollment Services VP Kishan Zuber (in red) partnered with the Center for Sustainability to share the cost to buy a stock of attention-getting, reusable standup banners to put by buildings and along pathways to guide visitors to their destination. Thanks, folks, for your support.



## Speaking of new employees...

We created an employees' guide to being more sustainable, modeled on the student sustainability guide we give to first year students when they check in. This guide, given to new employees in their on-boarding session with Human Resources and to new faculty during their Orientation session, offers helpful tips to being

more sustainable in the workplace, including our Sustainable Procurement Policy, how to conserve energy and water, and how to properly recycle and compost at Wells.

**You can!**

*Whooooooo can become more sustainable?*

**Orson the Wells Owl**

**Employee Sustainability Guide**

Welcome to Wells College. We have a strong culture of support for more sustainable decision making and action. We expect every member of our campus community to be a leader in our sustainability mission.

As a direct result of our campus community pulling together, Wells College has been nationally recognized by these organizations for our sustainability leadership:

## Ground-breaking Agreement to Save Energy

The college has entered into an Energy Services Agreement (ESA) between Wells, Trane and Metrus. This project is Metrus' first energy efficiency-as-a-service transaction with a higher education customer. The energy-saving work to be performed on campus over the next year will include upgrades of interior and exterior campus lighting to LEDs, building envelope improvements (air sealing, weatherstripping, insulation), replacement of numerous faulty steam traps, and the integration of new HVAC controls, including room-level thermostats in several spaces. Where we have building automation systems in place, these will be connected to a direct digital control system that will allow for remote changing of temperature set points and scheduling of setbacks, as well as provide more reliable signaling of HVAC system problems. Over the 15-year life of this ESA, Metrus will recoup its investment through the energy cost-savings the upgrades are designed - and guaranteed! - to produce. After that, the college will enjoy the ongoing energy savings from the upgraded equipment and systems. These efficiency improvements are projected to result in about a 14% reduction in total campus electricity use and a 28% drop in fossil fuel (propane and fuel oil) consumption. Trane, a global provider of indoor comfort systems, will be responsible for the installation and monitoring of the energy efficiency upgrades. At press time, Trane is bidding out the component elements of the ESA work. Let the energy savings begin!



**Outreach****Center for Sustainability and the Environment**

Marian Brown, Director  
Wells College  
170 Main Street  
Office: 213 Zabriskie Hall  
Aurora NY 13026  
Phone: 315-364-3304  
E-mail: mbrown@wells.edu or sustainability@wells.edu

We're on the Web:  
[www.wells.edu/sustainability](http://www.wells.edu/sustainability)

Like Wells Center for Sustainability and the Environment  
 @Wells Sust Center

Marian Brown, Sustainability Center director, presented a poster at the *Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education* conference in October. Brown's poster explained three programs Wells has developed to address food system issues: the *Aurora Farmers Market*, employing student market managers; our *Wells College Seed Exchange*, supporting gardeners and growers throughout the county (including farmers market vendors); and *FOOD 201 Intro to Gardening* class, which is team-taught by faculty from different disciplines, including Psychology professor and certified Master Composter Deb Gagnon, Anthropology professor Ernie Olson (see more page 2), and assistant Chem prof Lindsay Burwell.



**Sustainability** is a decision-making framework for continuous improvement that mindfully takes into account the social, environmental, and economic impacts of our choices.

**Different ways to reach out about Sustainability**

Wells was among 21 New York State colleges and universities to participate in the annual *Campus Crunch*, a celebration of *National Food Day* and our opportunity to encourage our campus community to consume fresh fruits and vegetables. *Hallmark Dining* collaborated with the *Center for Sustainability* to offer the *Campus Crunch* in the dining hall on October 24. More than 120 members of our campus community who made a pledge to eat healthier were rewarded with a free, locally-grown apple to "crunch" into then or later. *Hallmark* also offered apple crisp and apple cider from *Beak & Skiff Orchards* near Syracuse.



To encourage use of our free, regional *Finger Lakes Rideshare* network, for the month of September, we incented our campus community with prizes to sign up in the system and post a ride request or offer a ride to another member of the Wells family. For those participating, we offered a package of *Zimride* branded items, including a totebag, insulated lunch bag, and notebook. 14 members of the community won prizes.

*Hallmark Dining* includes sustainability-related information in its monthly calendars posted in the dining hall. Along with their support for the *Campus Crunch* (above) and the *Eco To Go* reusable container program, *Hallmark* includes activities such as their *Weigh the Waste* campaign to educate patrons about the issue of food waste.



Schedule conflicts prevented us from hosting the field trip for SCCS teacher Simone Lanning's 7th graders in the Sustainability Center this fall; we provided our set of interactive water-related activities for her students to do in science class before their excursion aboard the *Discover Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom*, embarking from our College boathouse.



The *GRIND Café* regularly messages about its commitment to sustainability: they now offer biodegradable paper straws and only make them available upon request from the baristas, to encourage going "strawless". The *GRIND* continues

 to support the *GOTCHA* card program, in which *Campus Greens* club members reward those spotted using reusable beverage containers (like those given to "newbies" - see more page 3) with a card redeemable for a free beverage refill dispensed into their reusable container.

*Wells Campus Greens* held a campus clean-up; they reported the amount of collected litter was much lower than in the past.



*Greens* offered their popular apple pie sale, obtaining apples from the *SHARE* (Strengthening Haudenosaunee American Relations through Education) Farm, an entity with which Wells maintains a relationship through our *First Nations and Indigenous Studies* academic program. Pie sale proceeds will benefit the *SHARE* Farm.

 "Be careful what you wish for": Center director Brown was pleased to be asked to present on sustainability to first year students in *WLLS 100*, not aware this meant delivering the same lecture to six sections of the course plus three make-up sessions for individual students who had class conflicts! Yowza!

**Campus Sustainability Culture Assessment**

Wells College was one of six NY institutions to pilot a Sustainability Culture Assessment instrument developed by a doctoral candidate at SUNY-ESF. We distributed his survey on campus last spring; the researcher provided our assessment results this Fall. The survey included questions about behaviors related to general sustainability, energy, waste reduction, transportation, and food choices. The survey questioned perceptions of Wells' sustainability efforts (organizational climate for sustainability), attitudes and social norms toward sustainability behaviors, and perceived behavioral control related to desired behaviors. Respondents reported fairly high levels of sustainability behaviors (5.53 on a 7-point scale). Waste reduction scored highest (6.10) followed by energy conservation (5.80). Turning off lights was the highest single behavior reported (6.47), followed by recycling (6.38), and using a reusable container (6.25). These results demonstrate that our efforts to promote energy conservation and waste reduction have been successful. Food choice behaviors scored lowest among behavioral categories (4.21) followed by alternative transportation choices (4.29). Staff (5.34) and administrators (6.87) had statistically significant higher perceptions of our sustainability efforts (organizational climate for sustainability) compared with faculty (4.90) and students (5.08), indicating that more outreach to those groups could increase awareness. The researcher summed up our overall results: *This sustainability culture assessment demonstrates that there is a strong culture of sustainability at Wells College.*