

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



Wells College has been added to the global *Race to Zero* campaign, to mobilize leadership and support from businesses, cities, regions, investors, and higher education institutions for a healthy, resilient and fair, Zero Carbon recovery that prevents future threats, creates decent jobs, and unlocks inclusive sustainable growth. The *Race to Zero* effort currently represents 450 cities, 21 regions, nearly 1000 businesses, 38 large investors and over 500 colleges and universities across the globe. Campaign members commit to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest. Wells has already reduced carbon emissions by over 50%.

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## Fall semester Sustainability Events and Activities

All our Fall 2020 sustainability-related presentations will be delivered online on the Zoom platform and recorded for later viewing. You may access the event links on the Upcoming Sustainability Events page on our website, and afterward, access the Zoom recording on the Sustainability Events archive. **Sustainability Perspectives** series talks are offered on Mondays at 12:30PM.



### September 26 **Climate Change and Sports**

Sandra Steingraber, environmental toxicologist, author of "*Living Downstream*"

Dr. Steingraber's presentation will examine how exposure to air pollution from fossil fuel combustion affects lung development and athletic performance in youth athletes; the rising incidence of heat stroke in outdoor sports, such as long-distance running; the leadership role that surfers, skiers and snowboarders are playing in the fight for a renewable energy future; and the ways in which sports psychology can serve as a useful tool in overcoming fear and anxiety about climate change. Photo credit: [www.laurakozlowski.com](http://www.laurakozlowski.com)

### October 5 **Supporting Energy Democracy with Local Carbon Offsets**

Gay Nicholson, founder, *Finger Lakes Climate Fund*

The climate policy battles ahead may take quite a long time to achieve a carbon tax and a redistribution of resources to assure energy democracy. In the meantime, local communities can provide leadership toward including everyone in the transition to a clean energy economy. The *Finger Lakes Climate Fund* works to promote renewables and energy efficiency projects while strengthening our regional economy and assisting local families in need. Carbon offset donations are used for grants to fund energy improvements that would not otherwise be possible in low- to moderate-income households in the Finger Lakes region. These grants help pay for insulation, air sealing, solar PV, energy efficient heating and cooling, and other upgrades to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.



### October 19 **What Does Toxic-Free Look Like? The example of PFAS in Food Packaging**

Bobbi Wilding, co-founder and Deputy Director, *Clean and Healthy NY*

When we don't consider health and environmental impacts when seeking to meet people's needs, we end up with harmful chemicals in places people never expect. We'll look at the example of how PFAS chemicals ended up in food packaging, and what kind of solutions we can move to from there. We'll also zoom back out and discuss the kind of economy we need to prevent these kinds of harmful mistakes.

### October 26 **Sustainable Tourism on a Finite Planet: Pre- and Post-COVID-19**

Megan Epler Wood, managing director, Sustainable Tourism Asset Management Program (*STAMP*), Center for Sustainable Global Enterprise, *Cornell University*

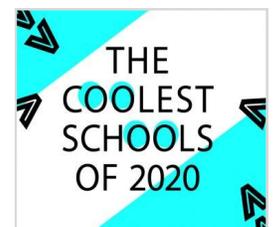
Sustainable tourism has a short history in the field of sustainability, launched as a field only in the early 1990s. Most hospitality and travel and tourism schools do not have robust sustainability programs, and the large majority of professionals in the field are self-trained.



*(continued page 4)*

## Wells College among the Sierra Club's Top 100 "Cool Schools"

Since 2007, the Sierra Club has been ranking North American colleges according to which ones offer the most sustainability-focused courses, ecofriendly dining offerings, and carbon-neutral land and energy policies, as well as the most opportunities to engage with the environmental movement. Since Sierra began ranking colleges in this way, sustainability measures that once seemed cutting-edge have become the norm, and Sierra reports seeing schools effect real change across their communities, regions, and states. This year, in its 14<sup>th</sup> annual *Cool Schools* ranking, a record 312 schools vied for recognition as the eco-savviest academic institutions. Wells College was ranked at #100 on this "Cool Schools 2020" list. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year that Wells College has been named a "Cool School" by the Sierra Club, whose ranking methodology is based on re-weighting of subcategory scores (Curriculum, Public Engagement, Energy, Investment & Finance, and so on) using the college's reported data from the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) developed by the *Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education* (AASHE). Wells College earned a Silver STARS rating in 2015 for its broad-based integration of sustainability in over 65 different criteria and advanced to a Gold Rating in its subsequent STARS evaluation in 2017. Sierra does ask some supplemental questions about schools' fossil fuel investments, something Sierra Club members are particularly passionate about.



## Faculty Accomplishments



**Niamh O'Leary**, professor of environmental science, continued her sabbatical project on nearby Fall Creek and submitted an article, titled "Water Quality Data for Fall Creek, New York, USA: 1972-1995" to the peer-reviewed journal *Hydrological Processes*. This article was co-authored with D.R. Bouldin.

### Jackie Schnurr

professor of biology and environmental science —



along with 40 coauthors from colleges and universities across North America — published a paper in *Conservation Biology* called "Correlates of Bird Collisions with Buildings across Three North American Countries." The data that were included in the paper were collected by students in the fall 2012 *Ecology and Evolution* course (BIOL 119) - this is the second publication resulting from that work.

**Marian Brown**, director of the *Center for Sustainability and the Environment*, was an invited panelist for a virtual webinar titled "State of the Industry: Sustainability," organized by Ithaca College's Office of Career Services. The three panelists, IC graduates from various disciplines, offered advice to viewers on preparing for a sustainability career. Brown provided the perspective that, regardless of academic background, one can become a "sustainability intrapreneur" within organizations.



## Sustainability Learning

Senior **Dana Grover '21** (at left in photo) completed her required Sustainability major internship this summer, working as a Clean Energy intern for *HeatSmart Tompkins*, a grassroots effort that "works to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Tompkins County by promoting the deployment of solar and wind energy and by facilitating the adoption of home insulation, sealing, and heat pump technologies for heating and cooling." As a member of the *HeatSmart* team, Dana provided program support, researching and writing case studies of successful projects and helping deliver educational webinars. Dana plans to use what she learned about heat pump technologies and available funding programs to complete her Sustainability Capstone project this fall, researching the possibility to integrate heat pump technology into proposed upgrades of Dodge residence hall and perhaps the Long Library, both of which are heated (but not cooled) with less efficient electric resistance systems.

Sophomore Sustainability major **Feleesha Jones '23** (at left in photo below) completed a fascinating summer internship as part of the program staff for *Sailing Ships Maine*. Her responsibilities in the intensive 4-week camp period included teaching students enrolled in an AP High School Environmental Science course during the first 2-week "land-based" camp period, when everyone was quarantined to ensure that none had COVID. Feleesha led her campers through activities in land and shoreside science, physical activity, meal prep and astronomy. Feleesha then successfully completed a two-week, 600+ nautical mile sail training cruise aboard the iconic, 131-foot tall ship *SSV Schooner Harvey Gamage*. After four days of dockside training to literally learn the ropes on this tall ship, the crew got underway. Under the direction of Chief Scientist Erika Stafne (Feleesha's internship site supervisor), sail trainees studied marine science, stood watch, learned to trust themselves, each other, and their ship while enjoying phenomena like marine phosphorescence. Trainees spotted finback whales, mola mola, tuna, dolphins, porpoise, seals, humpback whales, minke whales, and squid. The crew avoided shore excursions in ports to protect the integrity of their "pandemic pod," however, they did visit uninhabited islands to study wildlife. What an unique and amazing internship experience!



How can YOU support more sustainable action on campus?

This Fall, due to COVID, freshman Orientation was held mostly virtually, with pre-recorded presentations offered on what we want them to know and do at Wells. The *Center for Sustainability* director was invited to present to first-years on how to support the campus' sustainability efforts. This marked the first time we were asked to participate in Orientation, so we appreciate the opportunity, if not the reason for it (COVID). Since new students get a lot of info thrown at them during Orientation, and they need time to absorb and digest that content, this same virtual presentation was reprised in a learning module in WLLS 100, the required class for first year students.

## Educating Future Teachers about Sustainability

New faculty member **Jennifer Suriano**, visiting assistant professor of Education, is integrating her personal interest in sustainability into the design of her EDUC 345 *Adolescent Methods Practicum II* course. Jen reached out before the Fall semester to discover how the *Center for Sustainability* could support enhanced sustainability learning among her potential secondary teachers by equipping them with interactive learning activities they could possibly adapt for use in their own future high school curricula. *Sustainability Center* director Marian Brown provided a lecture on current waste management challenges and then led the class in an



In a second sustainability educational activity, Brown led Jen's class in *EarthCafe 2050*, a demonstration of "ecological footprinting" using colored blocks to



interactive "trash sort" activity, to identify possible educational reasons for the "mis-cycling" of waste materials by some in our campus community.

represent one's consumption of natural resources used for housing, transportation, food, consumer goods, and waste production. Based upon completing a "menu" questionnaire, participants receive a cafeteria tray along with their "serving" of blocks representing their natural resource use. Participants must stack up their blocks within a "normal" footprint—each tier representing the annual use of one Earth's worth of natural resources if everyone else used those same resources like the participant. The colored blocks are useful in highlighting aspects where one might "lighten" their footprint.

### Welcoming New Faculty

The Center for Sustainability director was invited to virtually meet new faculty during their “on-boarding” session; she followed up with all our “newbies” by delivering to their office an in-office recycling basket, recycling information, a reusable beverage mug, and a copy



of our *Employee Sustainability Guide*, filled with tips and advice on being an active and supportive member of our more sustainable campus community.

### Summer Trash2Treasure Collection

This year’s student move-out collection was very different than in past years. Due to the COVID campus closure in March, students had to make an appointment to briefly return to campus during the summer to retrieve their student room belongings. This minimized the amount of time they had to sort through items they didn’t want to keep, so our collection was much reduced from years past. We placed T2T collection bins in each residence hall, so students could divert still-usable items they didn’t want to take home, keeping them out of landfill trash dumpsters. Nonetheless, we still received over 500 pounds of material, including school and office supplies to refill the RUMPUS Room, as well



as still-usable room furnishings, housewares, costumes, and arts & crafts supplies to stock the Bargain Basement. As usual, we received a fair amount of clothing and footwear, most of which we do not retain —fortunately, about the same time we were accumulating those items, area thrift stores began accepting donations again, a practice suspended during the early months of the pandemic.

### Annual PrintReleaf Impact

We received our annual report from **PrintReleaf**, the reforestation program offered by Toshiba, our print management service provider. During fiscal year 2019-20, we printed over 173,000 pages, which was way down from our count of 447,000 pages in the prior year, when 54 trees were planted in our name. Based on this count - reduced due to our COVID campus closure - the US-based indigenous forestry partner planted 21 trees on our behalf.. Maybe as we all become more comfortable with virtual technology for academics and operations, we can continue to keep our print volume way down this year, so we don’t need so many trees to supply our network printing paper.



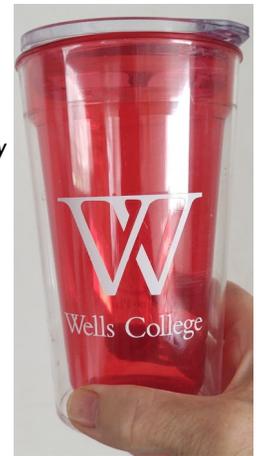
### GOTCHA Changes

Due to COVID-related food service restrictions, student GRIND Café baristas are unable to handle reusable beverage containers for coffee drink sales. In response, we modified our GOTCHA card program. Usually, if Wells Campus Greens members spotted campus members using their reusable beverage mugs, “re-users” were rewarded with this card good for a free cold or hot coffee refill dispensed into their own mug. We modified our GOTCHAs to offer a flat \$1.00 off on any drink prepared by a GRIND employee and made these Fall 2020 GOTCHA cards good through the entire part of the semester when classes are offered in person.



### Reusable Mugs

We collaborated again this Fall with the Division of Student Affairs to cost-share to purchase reusable beverage mugs for all incoming students and new employees. We made these mugs available along with our *Student Sustainability Guide* for hand-out during first year orientation events. The reverse of these double-walled containers that accept both cold or hot beverages reads: *Sustainability at Wells – There is no Planet B.*



### Fill ‘er Up!

Due to COVID-related regulations that ordered the disabling of shared water fountains for health and safety reasons, this situation added impetus to get additional water bottle fill stations installed across campus. The hands-free water dispenser in these fill stations can be safely used by those presenting their own reusable beverage containers. In September, a new water bottle fill station was installed in the “Esophagus” hallway of the Main Building—that unit tracked more than 667 “fills” in less than a month. That second Main building unit brought the campus total of these popular water bottle fill stations to eleven; four more units remain in inventory. Facilities is prioritizing getting those water fill stations—which dispense chilled, filtered water - installed in the remainder of our residence halls. Our long-term goal is to get at least one fill station in each campus building and to replace all the older style drinking fountains. These Elkay EZH2O units track the number of disposable water bottles eliminated from the use of the fill stations; collectively, the current units have avoided the equivalent of over 145,000 single-use plastic bottles.



### Wells Aids EPA Data Effort

Wells is participating in the EPA’s Energy Star Higher Education Benchmarking Initiative (HEBI), a way for colleges to understand how their campus energy performance compares with that of peer institutions. EPA, sponsoring agency for Energy Star programs, hopes that increased access to benchmarking information will spur efforts to reduce building energy use, typically the main source of greenhouse gas emissions at a college. Each participant will receive a scorecard showing how its campus-level energy use ranks against participating peer campuses in their group and an anonymized summary of the performance and characteristics of all HEBI campuses.





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Wells Center for  
Sustainability and  
the Environment



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On September 25, the campus hosted its annual peach tree planting ceremony in a grove next to the president's home. Among those taking part was Dan Hill, a member of the Heron Clan of the Cayuga Nation and the caretaker of the Cayuga Strengthening Haudenosaunee–American Relations through Education (SHARE) farm in Union Springs. Hill, who teaches *First Nations and Indigenous studies* courses, also planted a peach tree with his class at the SHARE farm. Aurora sits on the site of a once-thriving Cayuga village, destroyed in 1779. That indigenous village is believed to have contained 1,500 peach trees, so the peach tree ceremony educates about this shared history, the Cayuga culture and its connection to the land upon which Wells College and Aurora sit.

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

### Fall Sustainability Events and Activities, *continued:*

The industry has supply chains which are difficult to track and are all dependent on public and private systems for management, frequently overlapping. In the past 20 years, the industry has become highly digitized, accelerating the ease of travel, but not solving any of the sustainability challenges. Aspirational goals have been high but achievement of real measurable outcomes are low. This lecture will review some of the key lessons from the speaker's book, *Sustainable Tourism on a Finite Planet*, and how they can be applied in terms of global scenarios before COVID 19, at present and in the future.



#### November 16 **Three Birds, One Stone: Ending One Small City's Food Insecurity, Social Isolation and Economic Stagnation**

Tanzania Roach '99, founder, *Happy Camper Compostage*

This Wells alumnus will share her experience developing *Happy Camper Compostage*, an ambitious young project that aims to create a simple infrastructure to redirect food & biodegradable wastes from landfills. They look at food waste as a resource and use low-tech, human-powered solutions to address the problem of food insecurity, social isolation and economic stagnation. Key to their vision is being a business that models integrity, purposefulness and relevance.

We are again partnering with the *Sullivan Center for Business and Entrepreneurship* to bring in two speakers in our shared **Sustainable Business** speaker series, offered at 7:00PM.

#### October 27 **"Imagine This!"**

Jennifer Porter '98, vice president, *GBB Inc.*

The presentation examines current methods that municipalities in the United States are using to integrate the circular economy model in solid waste programs to fulfill waste diversion objectives and develop local/domestic capacity for waste management. Ms. Porter will cover current solid waste, recycling and composting industry myths, what's working in the municipal and waste processing sectors, and what public and private sector leaders -- along with technology developers -- can do to promote sustainable solutions. Examples of innovative projects in Michigan, Virginia, and the Northwest will highlight upstream/producer responsibility as well as contracting, public-private partnership and outreach techniques that can move the needle toward a new paradigm for sustainable solid waste management in the decades to come.



#### November 17 **"The Eco-Economics of Sustainable Manufacturing"**

Bob Bechtold, president, *HARBEC Inc.*

*HARBEC* is a contract manufacturer of 3D printed metals and plastics, and machined or injection molded components and assemblies. The company's journey to eco-economic sustainability came about from the personal desire of its owner, Bob Bechtold, to be environmentally responsible. *HARBEC* developed an internal Eco-Economic model for evaluating the costs and benefits of all technologies, equipment, and projects that relate to business objectives for achieving carbon neutrality. This Eco-Economic model also ensures that the business achieves financial value from its investments, so that goals for environmental, energy, social, and sustainable impact do not interfere with the ability to achieve desired financial performance. *HARBEC* has saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in energy costs by offsetting what they would have paid for energy if they had not made Eco-Economic analytical choices on energy improvements.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions on campus gatherings, we suspended **Sustainability Film** screenings for this semester.

### Wells Again Named a "Green School"

Wells College is once again included in the *Princeton Review's* 2021 *Guide to Green Schools*. Like Sierra Club's *Cool Schools* ratings (see page 1), the *Princeton Review* (PR) utilizes the same data we reported for our AASHE STARS Gold rating, but weights assessed categories somewhat differently. When ranking their top "Green Schools", PR calculated each of the 416 reviewed school's Green Rating—Wells scored a **93** out of a possible 99 points. PR looks for these key factors:

- \* whether students have a quality of life on campus that is both healthy and sustainable
- \* how well a school is preparing students for employment in an increasingly green economy
- \* how environmentally responsible a school's policies are

Unlike *Sierra* or AASHE STARS, *Princeton Review* includes student ratings of how sustainability issues influenced their education and life on campus; administration and student support for environmental awareness and conservation efforts; and the visibility and impact of student environmental groups, like *Wells Campus Greens* and *F.O.R.C.E.S.* (Friends of Recreation, Conservation and Environmental Stewardship), our partnership with the New York State Parks and Historic Preservation department.

