

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

AMERICA IS ALL IN

In November, President Jon Gibraltar re-committed Wells College to this multi-sector collaboration of governors, tribal leaders, mayors, state legislators, local officials, higher ed institutions, businesses, investors, faith groups, cultural institutions, and health care organizations to reaffirm our commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change and pledge to partner with the incoming Biden-Harris Administration, which has made ambitious commitments to tackle the climate crisis. Wells joined over 125 other higher education institutions in this recommitment to robust climate action. (see below)

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Spring Sustainability Events

All of our Spring semester 2021 sustainability-related presentations will be delivered online on the Zoom platform and recorded for later viewing. You may access the event links on our *Upcoming Sustainability Events* page on our website and/or later access the event recordings on our *Sustainability Events Archive*.

With the generous support of the *National Fenestration Rating Council*, we offered the latest event in our **Sustainability Speaker** series, which brings in nationally recognized presenters:

February 16 **"Be the Change"** (recording available)

Rob Greenfield, adventurer, environmental activist, humanitarian, and difference-maker. You're just one in 7 billion people in a very confusing time on Earth. Is it possible for you to make a difference? Is it worth trying? Rob Greenfield's answer to these questions was a resounding "yes!" - he shared why and how you can be the change you wish to see in the world.



Our **Sustainability Perspectives** series talks are offered on Mondays at 12:30PM.



March 1 **Climate Change Vulnerabilities in the Finger Lakes: What We Can Do About It**

Dr. David Wolfe, professor, school of Integrative Plant Science, *Cornell University*

Dr. Wolfe discussed local changes in the timing, frequency, intensity, and variability of crossing temperature and hydrological thresholds with negative (or positive) impacts on Finger Lakes terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. He presented individual and collective actions we can take to adapt to these challenges, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration.

March 15 **Sustainability and Waste—Moving Beyond Diversion and Recycling**

Abbie Webb, Sustainability director, *Casella Waste Systems Inc.*

Ms. Webb will explain how this waste management industry leader is using a multi-stakeholder perspective to more deeply align its impacts with broader societal goals and environmental limits. Casella's sustainability report lays out ten goals for 2030, including increasing waste reduction and recycling, renewable energy production, and fleet fuel efficiency, and lowering greenhouse gas emissions.



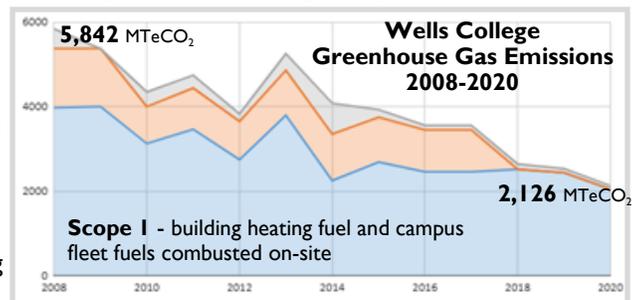
March 22 **How to "Green" Your Wardrobe**

Beth Fiteni, founder and director, *Green Inside and Out*

Featuring highlights from Fiteni's book, *"The Green Wardrobe Guide – Finding EcoChic Fashions That Look Great and Help Save the Planet,"* learn about natural fabrics, how to extend eco-fashion to housewares and body products, and where to find sustainable eco-fashions. (continued page 4)

How Low Can We Go..?

This is a purely rhetorical question since Wells is a *Climate Commitment* signatory, meaning we already established a goal to reduce our annual carbon emissions to zero by 2050 (and hopefully, well before then!) To track our progress toward that goal, we annually inventory our campus greenhouse gas emissions, so a more accurate question is: How low *did* we go this year? We recently completed our greenhouse gas emissions inventory for FY 19-20, and noted significant reductions. The chart shows our annual emissions since we started in 2008—over 12 years, we have reduced our emissions by nearly 65%. We fully recognize that our 2019-20 figures may merit an asterisk, as Spring 2020 was greatly impacted by COVID, which forced the college in mid-March into remote learning through the end of the year. Campus boilers were shut down early with buildings largely vacant and electrical consumption also dropped dramatically. We had to factor in study abroad air miles (part of Scope 3 with landfill trash), as participants still flew to their international destinations despite their COVID-related early returns. Our purchase of 100% "green" power continues to "zero out" our Scope 2 purchased electricity emissions and we are seeing declines in heating fuel consumption (Scope 1) from measures undertaken through our *Metrus Energy Services Agreement*. Our progress is impressive, but we have much work to do to get to zero emissions. Facilities continues to work aggressively to implement energy conservation and efficiency measures and we keep investigating options to switch to lower-carbon fuels, like electrifying buildings and some of our fleet vehicles.



Faculty Accomplishments

Niamh O'Leary, professor of environmental science, recently participated in two local Cayuga Lake Watershed conferences: one on toxic harmful algal blooms (HABs) and one on hydrilla, an invasive aquatic plant. Dr. O'Leary joined the board of directors of the *Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, Inc.* Established in 2003, this not-for-profit corporation is comprised of representatives from Cayuga, Seneca and Tompkins counties.



Jackie Schnurr, professor of biology and environmental science, served as a panelist for the *National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program*, reviewing grant applications for ecology.



Erinn Ryen, assistant professor of business, published an article with her collaborators titled "Thematic exploration of sectoral and cross-cutting challenges to circular economy implementation" in the *Journal of Clean Technologies and Environmental Policy*.

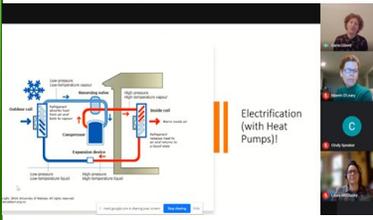


Marian Brown, director of the *Center for Sustainability and the Environment*, was invited to present the Sustainability Leadership Awards for the *State of NY Sustainability conference*, held virtually in December. On behalf of the conference planning committee, she presented the awards for student sustainability leadership and sustainability practitioner leadership, the latter of which Brown herself received at the 2019 conference. Brown also virtually presented a talk titled "Sustainability: What It Is and Why it Matters" to the Ithaca Rotary Club in February.



Student Sustainability Presentations

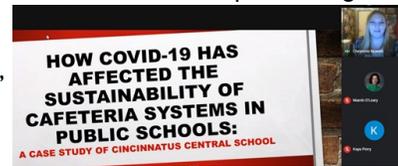
Three Sustainability seniors completed and presented their capstone projects in a virtual event for invited faculty and guests, synthesizing what they have learned in their years of sustainability study.



generation from the conversion to

Dana Grover expanded upon her earlier *HeatSmart Tompkins* internship with a very technical presentation, exploring opportunities for Wells College to integrate heat pump technology to "decarbonize" campus buildings.

Cheyenne Nowalk worked with staff and administrators at the Cincinnatus School District, to explore the impact that COVID had on costs and trash



all disposable food serviceware.

Kaya Perry surveyed campus and local community members about their sustainability attitudes and practices depending upon one's perception about the degree of economic privation they experienced in childhood. Students in **SUS 101 Introduction to Sustainability** each had to devise a behavior change campaign for their peers to try to shift them away from unsustainable actions. Students presented their ideas to Professor Marian Brown virtually in early December,



after the college went fully remote.

Anna Olson '24 produced several short YouTube videos on reducing electricity waste. **Benjamin McMonagle '23** encouraged his peers to consider joining him to become *Sustainability Vigilantes*, modeling desirable behaviors. **Naijely Garcia '23** explored options for reducing water waste at home.

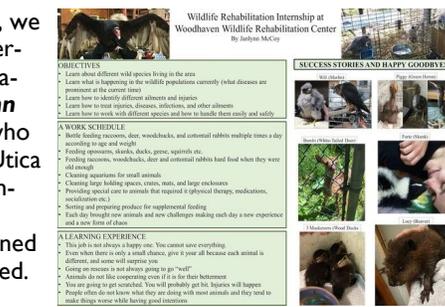
- Leaving the water running in the bathroom while brushing teeth
- Long showers
- Leaving the tap on while washing dishes
- Pipe leaks
- Over watering your lawn



During the virtual Fall Internship fair, we noted this interesting presentation by **Janlynn McCoy '21**, who



interned at a not-for-profit wildlife rehabilitation center near Utica NY. She learned how to work with a wide variety of species, including herons, ducks, owls, hawks, skunks, raccoons, beavers, rabbits and deer. An environmental science major, Janlynn learned the hard way that not all animals can be successfully rehabilitated.



Sustainability-related Courses Approved

PSY 212 Cultural Psychology

Dr. Mikel Moss

This course will explore psychological aspects from the perspectives of cultures other than the predominantly Western ones that most research has been conducted with, and offer both cultural and cross-cultural approaches to the view of psychology, as well as Indigenous perspectives. We will wrestle with the dominant perspectives of psychology and how they can help shed light on universal human behaviors as well as highlight when the western paradigm fails to be culturally competent.

ARTH/BKRT 285/385: Art & Activism

Instructors: Tara Kohn and Leah Mackin

Team taught by an art historian and a studio practitioner, the course will be centered around artistic projects inspired by a study of the history and theory of activist art. The class will focus on the book arts and publishing/distribution + dissemination of information as the central strategy of social change.

BUS 306 Business Ethics

Instructor: Erinn Ryen

This course invites you to learn and apply core ethical concepts and frameworks to ethical and moral issues faced in businesses. The manner in which business corporations and government leaders are addressing or failing to address ethical and environmental issues has been the forefront of political and business news cycles and disrupting organizations and industries. Future business leaders and managers need to understand the complex ethical issues facing businesses, as a new era of ethical leadership is needed. Students will discuss cases, debate issues, and research/present papers on how corporations are handling recent topics in ethics. Topics may include corporate social responsibility, utilitarianism and Kant's categorical imperative, sustainability ethics, ethical supply chains, and workplace/employee issues like inclusion and diversity, sexual harassment, discrimination, privacy, and whistleblowing.



That's Snow Joke!

Earlier this winter, Grounds replaced their tow-behind salt spreader with a Western Stryker 2-cu yd model featuring electric motors that run off the truck battery. Replacing a 20-year-old piece of equipment, this unit eliminated a gasoline engine. Jim Button, Grounds Foreman, reports that this new machine allows his staffers to spread their salt/sand mixture on campus surfaces much more accurately - they are already using significantly less snow-melt product.



More Bookstore "Green" Products

It seems like every time we go into the campus store in Zabriskie, we find that store manager Rich Kloster has stocked yet another cool, sustainable item. Items we noticed recently (in order from left to right): Burt's Bees personal care products, Deconstruction Sketchbooks (recycled paper); Environotes notebooks, EcoNotebook and Landmade planners, House of Doolittle recycled planners, Biobased notebooks, and a colorful assortment



of Deconstruction and Recycled notebooks and notepads in kicky, interesting patterns and colors. Check 'em all out next visit!

Seed Exchange 2021



Due to the truly outstanding efforts of Sustainability Program assistant and Seed Exchange coordinator **Kaya Perry** '21, our 2021 Seed Exchange was bigger

and better than ever before. We opened on February 1st with more than 6,000 packets of seeds donated by over a dozen seed companies. Because of COVID, we are exclusively virtual this year, with seed patrons able to access our inventory lists online and submit orders electronically. At press time, in just over a month, we have already distributed 80% of our inventory to gardeners, growers, food pantries, teachers, 4H leaders, community garden organizers and many others over a MUCH wider territory than usual.

Campus Crunch

On *National Food Day* in late October, *Hallmark Dining* offered fresh local apples and apple cider, as well as a delicious baked harvest apple bar, all to help Wells participate in the annual *Campus Crunch*, a state-wide celebration of local, fresh produce. Diners could take an apple to "crunch" into, choosing between two locally grown apple varieties, McIntosh and Empire, the two favorites from our "virtual" Apple Picking activity.



CICU Energy Committee

Marian Brown is representing Wells in a new collaboration between the *Council of Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU)* and the *New York State Energy Resource and Development Authority (NYSERDA)*. This Energy committee includes other private NY institutions: Bard, Clarkson, RIT, Pace, Univ. of Rochester, NYU, Cazenovia College, Mercy College, Adelphi University and NY Institute of Technology. Brown is chairing the group's Resource Library subcommittee which plans to curate an online repository of information for private institution representatives about clean energy technologies, including best practices, planning document templates, case studies, and links to webinars and other educational information from a variety of expert sources.



Leach Hall Fill Station

Due to COVID-related regulations that ordered us to disable shared water fountains for safety reasons last Fall, this situation added impetus to get additional water bottle fill stations installed across campus. The hands-free water dispenser in each fill station can be safely used by those presenting their own reusable beverage containers. Facilities is prioritizing getting these water fill stations—which dispense chilled, filtered



water - installed in the rest of our residence halls. The latest fill station, installed in Leach Hall in February, brings our campus inventory to 12. We understand from Facilities that units in Dodge, Weld, and Glen Park are coming "soon".

Campus Energy Use Down

To calculate our annual greenhouse gas emissions for Scope 1 (fuel combusted on-site for building heating and to run campus vehicles and grounds equipment), we access purchase records maintained by Facilities. For Fiscal Year 2019-20, we consumed the following fuels (and show % comparisons to 2018-19):
 Liquified Propane (LP): 318,682 gallons (24% ↓)
 #2 Fuel Oil: 33,536 gallons (723% ↑*)
 * more fuel oil used as backup boiler fuel
 Gasoline: 1,190 gallons (14% ↑)
 Diesel: 9,598 gallons (67% ↓)
 See page 1 for more on how our fuel consumption equates to overall greenhouse gas emissions. Different fuels have different global warming impact, so the gallons above are converted to the common measurement unit of *metric tonnes of CO₂ equivalents*, short-handed as *MTECO₂*.

Green Power Partner

Wells has actively engaged for several years now with the EPA's *Green Power Partnership* that recognizes entities that purchase a significant portion of their electricity from "green" sources - Wells purchases 100% wind-generated power. We reported our calendar year electricity purchase to EPA—we bought 3,039,991 kWhs last year, which is a 22% decline from our calendar year 2019 purchase of 3,888,098 kWhs, which again goes to show just how much the COVID pandemic impacted our utility consumption this past year.





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GRITS

Wells was invited to beta-test the revamped GRITS Goals platform, an energy- and emissions-reduction tracking and goal-setting platform developed by the *Sustainable Endowments Institute*. Other beta-testers included Cornell, Tulane, American University, Vassar, Williams College, Macalester College and several others. We provided useful feedback to the developers to improve the system.

ENERGY STAR® HIGHER EDUCATION
BENCHMARKING INITIATIVE



Wells College was one of 90 institutions that participated in the first round of data collection for the *Higher Education Benchmarking Initiative* (HEBI), sponsored by the Department of Energy's *EnergyStar* program. The intent is to establish a database of comparable institutional energy usage to help colleges know if the energy use intensity of their campus - and eventually, of individual buildings - is in line with similar campus building types or if it exceeds benchmark energy levels.

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

Spring Sustainability Events and Activities, *continued from page 1:*



March 29 **Changing the Way America Eats—The Challenges and Potential of Plant-Forward Dining**

Taylor Reid, assistant professor, Applied Food Studies, *Culinary Institute of America*

This presentation will explore the data around consumer preferences for plant forward dining, innovations and strategies for transitioning to more plant forward cuisines, and the challenges and opportunities inherent in moving the American diet toward healthier and more sustainable options.

April 19 **Permaculture—Systems Thinking and Scalable Holistic Design—Stories of Transitioning to a Culture of Care, Resilience, and Regeneration**

Mandy Merklein '82, co-founder of *Permacultura Mediterranea*

This Wells alumna will explore how permaculture, systems thinking, and holistic design can be applied to our own lives, communities and bioregions to help guide us towards a more resilient and regenerative future. Mandy will share on-the-ground examples of the permaculture movement at work in regenerative agriculture, climate change mitigation projects, community and education programs, in organizational power structures, and in personal lives.

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



March 11 **Making the Business Case For Sustainability? It's the Wrong Question.**

Martin Wolf, director of Sustainability & Authenticity, *Seventh Generation, Inc.*

When proposing sustainability initiatives, managers are often asked, what is the business case? It's the wrong question. The proper question is, what's the case for running our business *unsustainably*? Mr. Wolf is responsible for creating frameworks for the design of sustainable products for this major brand manufacturer of ecological household and personal care products.

At press time, we are still working to schedule a second *Sustainable Business* speaker, probably in April. Check our *Upcoming Sustainability Events* page for details.

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

All Sustainability Center-hosted events are free and open to the general public,

More External Recognition



The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) sent us our 2020 Achiever badge for our efforts as a REV Campus Challenge participant. *Sustainable Tompkins*, a regional grassroots sustainability effort, sent us this nice acknowledgment that the Wells College Center for Sustainability and the Environment has been included on their online *Sustainable Finger Lakes* resource map of like-minded regional enterprises.



Marian Brown, director of the *Center for Sustainability and the Environment*, co-presented a Lightning Talk session titled "A Dynamic (Electrification) Partnership" for the virtual conference of the *Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education* in October. Along with Jordan Kearns, CEO of *Medley Thermal*, Brown pre-recorded the pair's presentation in which they discussed the potential to substantially reduce both energy costs and carbon emissions as a result of integrating the proposed dynamic electrification demonstration project in our Facilities central heating plant. In the planning stages for better than a year, the implementation of the project was stalled this year due to statewide COVID restrictions on building projects, but we hope to have the system up and running in 2021. Wells College will provide a scale demonstration of this exciting technology to automatically switch steam boilers from propane-fired to electrically powered at times when the grid electricity pricing is lowest, which should save us significantly on propane consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. There is great interest in *Medley Thermal's* concept among utility and governmental organizations within New York State and nationally. Lots of eyes will be watching to see how our project pans out.

Global Conference on Sustainability in Higher Education
presents

A Dynamic
(Electrification) Partnership

