

Green Team Gathering

August 24, 2016

The purpose of this gathering was to provide Green Teams with a sense of the current projects being managed by the Office of Sustainability.

Recap and Notes

Review of UF Greenhouse Gas Inventory (GHGI)

by Megan Walker-Radtke

- Noted that energy is the largest component of our footprint, but employee/student transportation combined makes up the next biggest piece. Employee commuting accounts for about 6% of UF's total carbon footprint.
- The GHGI summary is not yet on the website, but will be in the near future.
- There were questions as to why the data is from 2013-2014 and not more recent: In order to get a complete picture, Megan needed data from a complete year, and 2013-14 was the most recent year that had a complete data set. The goal is to continue to update each year moving forward.

Overview of the Neutral UF Coalition initiative

by Megan Walker-Radtke

- Handed out brochures to attendees with an overview of information
- Program is designed to be a way for faculty/staff employees to have a direct impact on reducing UF's carbon footprint by offsetting their personal commute via voluntary payroll deduction
- \$1 per pay period is the average offset amount (determined by GIS of employee addresses and commute distances)
- Offsets are created locally by our non-profit partner, We Are Neutral, in the form of native tree plantings on conservation land, and through energy retrofits in low-income housing in the community.
- 100% of the voluntary deduction amount funds these offsets
- Questions as to whether this will turn people off from using alternative transportation (i.e. if someone can offset their car commute, will that make them less likely to use the bus system?)
 - We don't anticipate that this will turn people off from using alternative transportation
 - The hope is that, as a coalition, this group will be able to potentially mobilize efforts toward improving alternative transportation options. For instance, if enough people can show that they care about our carbon footprint and are trying to take action, we can potentially leverage that to ask for things like increased bus routes to areas where employees reside.
- Questions as to whether the program is currently active and how many people have signed up:
 - Yes, the program is active and any employee can go in and start their voluntary deductions. We have a step-by-step guide on our website as well.
 - There are not many sign-ups yet since we have not 'officially' launched the program with a big marketing push yet. The members are mostly Office staff and a few other employees that we've been working with on this program
- Question as to whether the program could instead be an add-on option to the parking decal order screen

- We have not been able to make that process work logistically yet, but the goal would be to eventually have that as an option
- One benefit to separating the deduction from the parking decal process is that it gives employees control over starting, changing or stopping the deduction ANY time – instead of just during decal renewal windows.
- Megan also pointed out that she is a bike commuter with no parking decal, and having a separate process allows her to offset a vehicle even when she doesn't have a parking decal or use a car to commute to campus. She noted that this program is flexible in that you could offset not only yourself, but other people as well.
- Question as to who determines what the offsets are used for (would the Coalition ever be the deciding organization for this)?
 - We Are Neutral has a standing program by providing offsets through tree plantings and energy retrofits in low-income housing, so the plan is to continue to create offsets through those programs.
 - We Are Neutral also offsets UF Athletics (the first carbon-neutral athletics program in the country), as well as all of the UF commencement ceremonies. They are a trusted partner and have been for some time at UF.
- Question as to what we hope the end result of this program is:
 - To reduce our net carbon footprint
 - To shrink the employee carbon footprint
 - To engage employees across campus by giving them a way to directly reduce UF's carbon footprint and help UF reach carbon neutrality by 2025.

Quick overview of the Green Recognition for Offices and Workspaces (GROW) program

by Liz Storn

- Have had a few pilot offices complete the program, and are currently working to expand the scope
- Right now, the program is still in a pilot phase but the hope is to start rolling it out gradually in offices across campus

Overview of Sustainable Event Certification

by Allison Vitt

- Reminder that the Event Certification program is open to students and employees who are hosting events, no matter the size
- Trying to expand participation
- Recently revised the program and have an entirely online guide and application that is more in-depth than the previous PDF checklist

Overview of other Office priorities

by Matt Williams

- AASHE STARS (national reporting system for sustainability tracking in Higher Ed)
 - Goal is to reach STARS Gold; we are at silver currently (and have been silver previously).
 - Will be reviewing gaps and areas that we can improve our score, and using those metrics as a planning tool

- Green Teams will get a summary of where we stand compared to our peers and what the Green Teams can do to help us improve for next time
- Matt noted that at one point, UF was among the leaders in sustainability in higher ed, but now that other schools are catching up we are starting to fall behind. We need to be playing catch-up in order to stay on top of the field.
- Zero Waste Plan
 - Working toward outward-facing compost collection in the Reitz
 - Re-evaluating the Zero Waste by 2015 goal in order to see what is really achievable in the near future
- Existing Building Program
 - Matt talked a little bit about energy models for various buildings and how that might help those buildings' employees better understand their footprint
 - Working with John Lawson to get additional energy modeling on buildings
- Academic and Operational collaborations
 - Working on improving the ways that sustainability is integrated into the curriculum
 - Ron Chandler (Academics Liaison) has been working on a mapping tool that shows connections between class projects and course outcomes in order to find links between different courses
- Question was brought up about the paper towel restroom composting program
 - Run by PPD, should now be in all buildings that are maintained under E&G
 - Paper towels are important in adding carbon into the compost stream, which until now has been mostly food waste
 - Contamination is not a huge issue, since the compost facility needs less than 5% contamination; PPD has been helping to pull items out that are not compostable, and anything else that might end up in there is not usually enough to cause a contamination issue
- Question about whether UF is considering moving to hand dryers and eliminating paper towels
 - One issue is energy use – not necessarily a sustainable alternative
 - Some studies are showing that hand dryers can actually spread fecal bacteria
 - People like to use paper towels to open doors (complaints come in when there are no towels/receptacles near the entry/exit of a restroom)
 - Paper towels actually provided a needed carbon component for our compost stream

Re-establishing the Green Team Listserv

- In response to comments about the need for a communications network, we have re-established the previous listserv – SUSTAINABLEUF-L for our Green Teams to use as a tool for communicating about issues, asking questions, sharing best practices, etc.
 - Even if you were a member previously, you'll need to join the listserv again
 - You can find the listserv by going to <https://lists.ufl.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=SUSTAINABLEUF-L> and clicking "Join or Leave SUSTAINABLEUF-L"