

UF Senior Vice President Charlie Lane
Remarks/Campus Earth Day
Wednesday, April 8, 2015 (11:30 a.m.)
Plaza of the Americas

I want to start by recognizing some special guests. We have with us today President Kent Fuchs and his wife, Linda. Kent and Linda would you stand so everyone can see you? Thank you! We're also honored to have the leader who did so much to found and guide sustainability at UF, Former First Lady Chris Machen. Chris would you stand? Thank you!

Finally, I'll note that we had with us (up until about 30 minutes ago) about 20 three-year-olds on a field trip from Baby Gator Child Development Center on campus. I'm proud to say one of those children is my daughter, Hope, and she has remained behind to hear her daddy talk about sustainability today.

Having the kids with us as we celebrate Campus Earth Day makes me think of how much has changed since I was their age.

I spent my childhood in the small town of Warrensburg, Missouri, 50 years ago. Growing up in Warrensburg, we pretty much tossed everything into the trash and used as much water as we wanted. As teenagers driving our parents' cars, we burned all the gas we could get away with. And why not? It was about 36 cents a gallon. None of us thought about the heat or the lights, and our parents only worried about it when the bills came due.

And . . . this may seem odd to bring this up in a sustainability speech, but trust me, it's key . . . bullying was alive and well when I grew up . . . and even accepted to some degree. If you looked different or expressed a different point of view, there was a good chance that you would be subjected to some form of aggressive behavior in verbal, social, or even physical terms.

Fast forward—my daughter and her classmates will never know a time when families didn't separate trash from recyclables. They'll have no memories of the 13-mile-a-gallon gas guzzlers we all used to drive, or how their exhaust often filled the air with smoke. They'll pay attention to how much water and energy they use and where their food comes from, and they'll use less water and eat healthier food.

In 1959, when I was three years of age, cars averaged about 14 miles per gallon. In 2016, cars will average about 36 miles per gallon, a nearly 150 percent increase. When my daughter turns 16 in 2028, they will get at least 55 miles per gallon under the latest federal standards.

Americans my age are estimated to generate about 136,000 pounds (or 68 tons) of waste during their lifetimes. Because of lifestyle changes, Hope and her classmates will generate 86,000 pounds (or 43 tons).

Three-year-olds today will grow up with parents and schools that look out for bullies and intercede to protect their children. They will live in a country that is trying to accept and celebrate people of different races and sexual orientations, rather than one that rejects and shuns them.

My point is that our homes, vehicles, cities, and personal practices are not the only aspects of sustainability. The concept of sustainability is built on four pillars: nature, economy, society and wellbeing. It doesn't make sense to work on a low-energy, low-carbon future if our human institutions are not also sustainable – more fair, egalitarian, and kinder.

Our challenge as a public research university is to continue this transformation . . . first through how we behave as an institution . . . and second, through what we give to, and ask of, our students.

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Let me first address the university's part in achieving this grand challenge.

Over the past 11 years, UF has built far-more-energy efficient buildings, substantially grown campus bus ridership and other alternative transportation, and greatly increased recycling.

These steps made us an early national leader in sustainability. As other universities have caught up, we need to push harder, so that UF's green leadership reinforces our larger goal of joining the very best universities in the nation.

I want to quickly describe five ways we are stepping up our commitment this year.

First, we will add electric vehicles to our growing fleet of biodiesel and hybrid vehicles, with the goal of electric vehicles composing 10 percent of UF's fleet within the next 5 – 10 years. Perhaps we can install enough solar power to charge those same vehicles.

Second, we will create new tools for faculty and staff to eliminate unwanted junk mail, significantly reducing the four-million pieces of mail that are delivered to campus every year.

Third, we will expand composting on campus, boosting the half-million pounds of compost collected from three dining halls in the past year.

Fourth, we will increase our successful ride-sharing services, including Campus Cab, adding to the more-than 11,000 passengers last year who chose Campus Cab over their own vehicles.

Fifth, I'm happy to say that we are expanding our campus student gardens and building a food pantry to make available food for students in need.

As these efforts reduce costs, they bring down waste and energy use, saving natural resources and cutting carbon emissions. But what's really important is that students who recycle, ride the bus or learn about composting will embrace these actions throughout their lives.

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This gets me to the second part of our university's challenge, the human one of continuing the cultural transformation that has made Hope's world greener, more egalitarian and kinder than the world of past generations.

I majored in biology as an undergraduate in the mid-1970s. The EPA had been established in 1970, and the environmental movement was active and visible, but my classes focused on science rather than public policy. I can't remember discussing our role as people in addressing the problems being raised by the green movement.

Today, our students have those opportunities, and they're steadily expanding. Undergraduates can major or minor in sustainability, and they're more likely to encounter sustainability concepts in seemingly unrelated majors. Nearly 400 courses touch on aspects of sustainability spread across many degree programs.

I'm thrilled to add, we're piloting a course on climate change as part of the development of a core academic program for undergraduates. When this class becomes a core class next year, new UF students earning bachelor's degrees will spend at least one semester learning about climate change.

Since most of our graduates remain in the state, this is surely welcome news for Florida, which is uniquely vulnerable to climate change and accompanying sea level rise.

As we further infuse environmental sustainability into our university operations and our academic curriculum, we also want to steep students in the related elements of human and cultural advancement.

This is woven into the "What is the Good Life?" class for all undergraduates, but it goes beyond the classroom to strongly advocating for good causes, standing up for the less-fortunate and service to others.

If you saw his recent column in *The Alligator*, you know that our new president, Kent Fuchs, has put this concept of thinking and acting for others at center stage. With him leading by example, and with our students' already strong commitment to service and volunteering, I can only imagine the profoundly positive changes our students can bring to our campus, community, and country.

As I wrap up, let me briefly return to my childhood in Warrensburg.

As untroubled as we were about environmental issues in the early 1960s, my parents always had a garden. In fact, they often had two or three gardens. They harvested and canned the vegetables for our family, and we had a compost pile that my 91-year-old mother uses to this day.

I have to admit that as conscious as my family now is about recycling, turning off the lights, and not wasting water, we haven't had a garden or a compost pile. I recently decided to change this fact, and started one in our back yard. When Hope and her five-year-old sister, Grace, are a little older, we'll use this compost to fertilize and plant our first garden together.

I want to end on that note – with a very simple and straightforward challenge to everyone here today. What is just **one thing** you can do to further positive environmental, social, or cultural change?

Is it bringing a mug to Starbucks rather than using a paper cup? Is it riding your bike rather than hopping on a scooter? Is it helping your child and her peers expose a bully at school and helping her to change? I bet you already know the answer, but if not, there is lots of information here at Campus Earth Day to help you find out.

If we all take this step toward that **one thing** that we're probably already aware of, we further the path to a more sustainable future, and we help ensure that Hope and her classmates follow our lead.

Making progress together ... individuals, families, institutions ... This is the only way to the world-changing transformation that will make the world better for the environment – and for people too. Thank you and Go Gators!

###END OF REMARKS###