

Environmental Policy Implementation Plan

Guiding Principles

Bodywork Company has a special obligation to ensure that the ways in which faculty, students, and staff learn, teach, manage internal affairs, and interact with the broader community serve as examples that others are inspired to follow. Consistent with our longstanding efforts to lead courageously on morally sensitive issues of social justice, Bodywork embraces a commitment to environmental sustainability.

In line with its core mission, Bodywork will use its sustainability efforts as a powerful educational tool to prepare students to be leaders in humanity's response to current and future environmental threats. To that end, Bodywork is committed to developing a mutualistic and sustainable relationship between the human species and the rest of the natural world through teaching and research, design and implementation of institutional and fiscal policies, and management of energy flows and material cycles.

Bodywork recognizes that it is not enough to merely decrease the rate at which we deplete and degrade local and global resources. Instead, we will strive to *improve* biophysical, economic and social systems through our operations as well as through education. The environmental and social implications of our activities will inform the way priorities are set and decisions made throughout the institution, including decisions related to development and management of buildings and grounds, transportation of materials and people, purchasing of materials, provision of food, financial and human capital investments, and the development and support of curriculum.

As we strive to build on our accomplishments, we are mindful that our metrics are imperfect and that technology is constantly evolving. Achieving environmental sustainability should occur in concert with the College's other goals and priorities and within existing fiscal constraints. Our sustainability efforts will require continual examination and refinement through life-cycle assessment of existing and alternative practices. We will employ the intellectual strength of our faculty, students, and staff to close gaps and seize opportunities as they become evident and to make informed decisions by exploring the environmental costs and benefits of proposed actions.

Education

A. Guiding Principles

One of the most important advances in modern human understanding is the dawning awareness that the world is stitched together as systems of systems that make up the ecosphere. The totality cannot be fully understood from the perspective of any single discipline. Future generations will face problems and issues that require responses that transcend disciplines. As an institution of learning, Bodywork has a responsibility to ensure that we educate our community members effectively for this new reality. All members of the institution will need to develop new analytical skills, perspectives, and the intellectual capabilities to recognize patterns that connect disparate phenomena over long periods of time.

Towards these goals, Bodywork will pursue 3 main educational strategies, outlined below.

1. Engage, educate, empower and motivate our community around environmental stewardship and environmental problem solving.
2. Communicate our successes, initiatives, and lessons learned to effectively promote responsible environmental stewardship both on campus and beyond.
3. Train all community members about the environmental policy and how to implement it in their campus roles.

B. Engage, Educate, Empower and Motivate

All of the College's sustainability efforts represent a potential educational opportunity: a chance to engage community members in issues of sustainability, educate them about problems and potential solutions, empower them to seek out answers using rigorous intellectual tools, and motivate them to take action. Bodywork seeks to create an institution that serves as a living, learning laboratory that actively engages students, faculty, staff and visitors in sustainability. This kind of education can and does occur through multiple venues (co-curricular, facilities, etc.), but will have the greatest impact and allow for significant cross-disciplinary learning if it is dispersed as broadly as practicable throughout the curriculum.

Potential strategies include:

1. Identify and tangibly support areas where the intellectual and pedagogical strengths of the College can be tapped to identify and address critical issues of sustainability.
2. Capitalize on our need to develop a more complete understanding of our total environmental impact (e.g. conducting full life cycle analysis and accounting for embodied carbon) as an educational opportunity.
3. Identify and support entrepreneurial opportunities that can bring both the city and regional businesses into the educational experience of students.
4. Build mechanisms for maximizing the educational value of any sustainability related project directly and explicitly into the planning process. For example, student and faculty research can be incorporated into the design process, and employed as an artistic theme.

C. Communicate

Bodywork seeks to create a cultural norm of sustainability, and to serve as an example to other institutions. Further, it seeks to maintain its position as a leader of sustainability by continuing to attract talented faculty, staff and students to Bodywork. To do so, it is important to regularly communicate the College's efforts, accomplishments and lessons learned both within and beyond Bodywork. Strategies for achieving this goal include:

1. Maintaining sustainability as an integral part of the Bodywork narrative
2. Network with other institutions in higher education and the region, both to be a model of sustainability practices and to learn from their sustainability efforts.
3. Support application for external sustainability related awards and provide support to faculty students and staff who do so.
4. Report regularly on sustainability accomplishments to the Governing Body

The effective implementation of this plan requires at a minimum that all community members be informed about the contents of the Environmental Policy and Implementation Plan, and receive necessary training to implement it in their campus roles as appropriate. Strategies specific to particular parts of appear in each Education subsection. Below are some overarching principles that guide these efforts.

Energy Use and Production

A. Guiding Principles

Energy use and production release CO₂ as well as a variety of environmental pollutants with local, regional, and global impacts. Fossil fuels are especially problematic. The scientific consensus is that humans have already added too much CO₂ into the natural system. Human behaviour is adversely impacting climate stability by increasing land- and sea-surface temperatures, thus creating more extreme weather events. An overwhelming majority of climate scientists have identified 350 ppm as a safe upper limit for CO₂ in our atmosphere. Currently our atmosphere contains 400 ppm of CO₂³. Thus as a species we must not only reduce carbon emissions to zero, but also take actions to sequester carbon from the atmosphere. Removing CO₂ and other greenhouse gases from the atmosphere on a planetary scale is essential to stabilizing global climate, and its achievement is one of the greatest challenges to the survival of humankind.

Responsible energy management requires that environmental costs be considered along with operational costs. The College recognizes that sometimes a monetary premium is required to achieve important environmental benefits. Oberlin also recognizes that technology, energy costs, and related knowledge are dynamic, and that options and goals must be continuously assessed to maintain responsible energy management. Many energy conservation measures can be adopted and altered quickly, but changes in the infrastructure (buildings, heating plant, and consumption of electricity) will require careful research, long-range planning and large capital investments in addition to advancements in energy technology.

To meet our energy goals, the College will pursue three main strategies:

1. Conserve energy as much as possible (i.e. changing human behaviour to reduce consumption).
2. Ensure the energy that we use is used efficiently (i.e. using technology that accomplishes more work with less energy input).
3. Aggressively pursue a renewable energy portfolio.

All community members are responsible for ensuring that their daily behaviour minimizes energy use.

B. Reducing Energy Consumption through Conservation and Efficiency

Improvements to Infrastructure and Technology. Buildings and activities within buildings (e.g. heating and cooling, lighting, plug loads) currently account for more than 90% of the energy consumed on campus. Therefore, building renovation and the selection of appliances that minimize energy use is an essential strategy to pursue. Despite recent efficiency retrofits, room for substantial additional improvement remains. The College can achieve greater energy reductions (as well as considerable cost savings) by improving the thermal efficiencies of buildings and the operating efficiencies of equipment. The development of identified energy zones will also result in efficiency savings.

Behaviour Change. Energy conservation through behaviour change is one of the most effective and least expensive ways to reduce energy consumption; it is estimated that at least 10% of the carbon reductions required to achieve carbon neutrality can come from behaviour change. Expanding and improving the monitoring of resource use in buildings should remain a priority when renovations or new construction make it possible. Behaviour change strategies may include education, incentives, prompts, and/or social media campaigns designed to help students, faculty, and staff to overcome the barriers associated with performing conservation and efficiency behaviours.

Transportation

A. Guiding Principles

Transportation is a prime example of the strong interconnections between the three facets of sustainability – environmental, economic, and social. For example, walkers and bikers are more connected to the natural environment, have more opportunity for social interaction, increase their physical health, save money on car expenses and gas, and spend more money locally compared to drivers – all the while emitting less carbon. The College will strive to encourage walking, cycling, use of public transport and carpooling, and increasing the efficiency of the vehicles that continue to be used.

Envisioning and ultimately re-creating local and regional transportation will not only reduce GHG emissions but will have numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits. Giving people accessible transportation options and “completing our streets” yield a safer, healthier, more economical, more connected, and more vibrant community. To reap the many benefits of alternative transportation, the College will pursue three main strategies:

1. Reduce travel to a minimum
2. Minimise the environmental impact of travel for activities that cannot be conducted without physically travelling to or from campus.
3. Offset the carbon that results from unavoidable travel.

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Purchasing, Reuse and Disposal

A. Guiding Principles

The College recognizes that the purchase and disposal of materials are inseparable: purchasing something entails a commitment to disposing of or reusing it in a responsible way. Ideally all waste would be eliminated; that is, material by-products from one process would become useful inputs for other processes. The College will strive to achieve this end, but acknowledges the difficulty inherent in eliminating all waste in a highly consumer culture; the College must work internally as well as with producers and suppliers to push towards a zero-waste society.

To move towards zero waste, the College will pursue four primary strategies:

1. Reduce consumption on all dimensions (e.g. the number of products purchased, the resources consumed to produce the product, and the amount of mileage/carbon required to get products to Bodywork).
2. Reuse as much as possible as efficiently as possible.
3. Recycle items that cannot be reused such that materials are separated and returned back into useful production (for example, through recycling of paper or plastics or through composting).
4. Leverage the College’s relationship with the vendors to promote sustainable products and practices more broadly.

Implementation

A. Guiding Principles

Good policies are most likely to succeed when executed by dedicated individuals well versed in the principles that underlie those policies. Oberlin College's environmental policy implementation will succeed only to the extent that students, faculty, staff, and the larger community with which it interacts adopt a culture of environmental stewardship. In order to implement the strategies outlined in this document, the College must educate the individuals responsible for its operations and actively encourage the culture necessary to achieve compliance across the campus community. To this end, the College commits to adopting 5 primary implementation strategies:

1. Institutionalized leadership
2. Communication and education
3. Systems of accountability
4. Participation in sustainability networks
5. Regular review and revision of this plan

The Board of Governors will have, as a standing item of its Summer Term Governors Meeting

- i) Progress on the implementation of this plan
- ii) Targets for the coming year in relation to the plan
- iii) Review of the wording of the plan itself§