

Concordia College's Vision for Sustainability

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VISION

Concordia College will embrace a concern for sustainability that is rooted in the responsibility to ensure the environmental, economic, and social health of the college and of our global community. Concordia College's sustainability vision is interwoven with our commitment to global learning, with our faith tradition and abiding commitment to ethical deliberation, and with the values and practices of the liberal arts.

More specifically, we envision Concordia as a place where:

- College operations have as little negative ecological impact as possible.
- The principles of sustainability – environmental, economic, and social – are fundamental in all decision-making processes.
- Conversations about sustainability are a regular part of community life.
- Insights into the sustainability challenge and ideas about creating sustainable ways of living are constantly generated and explored.
- Students, faculty, and staff develop the perspectives and skills needed to work for sustainability in the wider world.

As a global liberal arts college of the church, Concordia can have a distinctive approach to fulfilling its commitment to sustainability. Most fundamentally, since we are an institution of higher education, everything that we do to advance sustainability should involve the promotion of learning and student success. Concordia College will thus work to advance sustainability in ways that harness and develop synergies between education and operations. Indeed, meeting the sustainability challenge presents an extraordinary opportunity to enrich and enhance the educational experience of students. Placing the intersection of ecological, economic, and social concerns front and center will invigorate the work of the College, making Concordia stronger, more relevant, and more vibrant.

This vision of a sustainable Concordia is profoundly consistent with our established identity and will allow us to achieve a new level of scholarly excellence, global engagement, moral deliberation, and ongoing relevance.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following fundamental principles guide us in this journey:

- We have a moral responsibility to preserve the integrity of the ecological systems on which life depends. This responsibility arises from love for people, love for all creation, and love for God. This responsibility is especially salient for a college of the ELCA.
- Responsible stewardship of the environment and natural resources is necessary to ensure the long-term economic health and vitality of Concordia College, both the residential liberal arts college and the language villages.
- Living more sustainably requires both that individuals change their behaviors and that organizations create an environment that facilitates and rewards positive changes.

- The pursuit of sustainability must be grounded in local communities and involve meaningful collaboration with partners in the Fargo-Moorhead and Bemidji regions.
- Sustainability must be approached from a global perspective. Attention should be paid to the global systems of which our actions are a part, the effects of our actions on people in other places, and how cultural traditions inform thinking about sustainability.
- Environmental sustainability is deeply connected to concerns for justice and the good of all humanity. Work on sustainability needs to involve critical reflection on systems that hinder movement towards more sustainable and fulfilling ways of life.

The challenge facing humanity is that of learning to live in ways that preserve the ecological integrity of the earth, enable all people to live in dignity, and facilitate the creation of just societies. Our challenge is to ensure that the ecological systems on which we depend remain healthy even as we seek to thrive economically and in community. This is the vision set out by the concept of sustainability, which recognizes the interdependence of ecological systems, economic systems, and social communities. It is a vision based fundamentally on hope and a sense that we now have the opportunity to rethink current practices and to build a better world for ourselves, other people, and future generations.

RATIONALE

Concordia's sustainability vision is built on our identity as a global liberal arts college of the church.

- Concordia College is focused on preparing students for their lives as professionals, citizens, and people of faith. Through the shared search for knowledge and understanding, deep conversation about fundamental questions, and careful attention to the pressing issues facing societies and our global community, members of the Concordia community work together to create positive change. Students emerge from the Concordia experience equipped to be responsibly engaged in the world, pursuing their interests and using their talents to live a meaningful life.
- Concordia College is concerned with and responsive to the needs of the world beyond the boundaries of the college and the language villages. Concordia engages collaboratively with local, national, and international partners of divergent views on issues of shared concern. The college endeavors to foster productive dialogue and research on both promising and disturbing developments around the world.
- Concordia College has an historic and enduring commitment to the responsible stewardship of resources and to long-term strategic planning. Concordia's unwavering attention to careful fiscal management and the prudent use of resources reflects the values of its founders. The commitment to the responsible use of natural resources so as to conserve the bounties of creation is rooted in our identity as a college of the ELCA, which has declared that "care for the earth [is] a profoundly spiritual matter."¹

Given who we are as an institution and a community, recent global trends compel us to articulate a vision for the future that embraces sustainability as a core principle and value. Most fundamentally, our concern for sustainability stems from the simple yet profound observation that the earth is our home. It arises from the conviction that we have a sacred duty to protect the earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty. In so doing, we work for the well-being of all of humanity, for the good of people living now as well as future generations.

¹ *ELCA Social Statement on Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (August 28, 1993).