
NORTHERN
2020
SUSTAINABILITY
PLANNING FOR A
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

What is the Sustainability Plan?

Northern Michigan University's Sustainability Plan outlines a foundation for Northern's performance on projects related to environmental, social and economic sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

Northern Michigan University's initial Sustainability Plan provides guiding principles building a foundation for improving Northern's performance as a leader in campus sustainability in the region. Recommendations made in the Sustainability Plan are based on data gathered in a comprehensive inventory of current sustainability practices, input from the campus community, and best practices in the field of sustainability in higher education. The goal of this plan is to help Northern manifest its core values, mission and vision through strategic, sustainability-informed decisions.

Background

In June 2016, President Erickson worked with students, staff, and faculty to create a Sustainability Advisory Council. The purpose of the Council is to advise the President and the senior leadership on issues related to sustainability. Specifically, the group was tasked to investigate current and new sustainability-related opportunities regarding academics, campus operations, and possible funding sources and mechanisms for supporting sustainability efforts.

In order to develop strategic recommendations for the future, we need to have a firm understanding of our past and present. Members of the Council used the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS) reporting tool to conduct a comprehensive inventory of current sustainability-related practices on campus. Using STARS to organize data is widely accepted as the best tool for coordinating sustainability efforts on university campuses in the United States.

To support sustainability planning on campus, two members of the Sustainability Advisory Council, Dr. Jessica Thompson (CAPS) and Dr. Sarah Mittlefehldt (EEGS) proposed a Project Innovation Fund project in 2016. The purpose of the PIF project was to use the data gathered in the STARS process, in combination with input from the campus community, to create Northern's first-ever Sustainability Plan. This plan contains highlights of the positive things that Northern is already doing in terms of sustainability, and offers data-informed recommendations for advancing sustainability at our institution.

Structure of the Sustainability Plan

This initial sustainability plan presents strategic objectives for building a foundation to foster sustainable decision-making in the short-term (next 3 years). Upon approval, the Council will work with the appropriate staff to draft a strategic implementation plan to outline more specific measurable objectives for the longer-term (5-10 years).

The Sustainability Advisory Council gathered input through multiple sources and activities in order to best develop this plan; including surveys (n=983; 675 students; 111 faculty; 181 staff), campus forums

(4 listening sessions and one sustainability summit; with more than 100 participants) and the STARS inventory research. We sifted through hundreds of recommendations and to identify 50 of the most feasible action items for our campus (See Appendix A: 50 Ideas to Improve Sustainability at NMU). At the first annual Campus Sustainability Summit (March 2017) more than 50 campus stakeholders helped to prioritize the list. This plan is the result of rigorous integration of the campus community's input and ranking of priorities.

We begin with a brief summary of the AASHE STARS inventory results and then present the five main recommendations: 1) Institutionalize Sustainability, 2) Cultivate Sustainability Leadership, 3) Invest in Energy Innovations, 4) Promote Sustainable Transportation, and 5) Purchase Local Foods; Support Local Farms. The Council based the development of these recommendations on AASHE's STARS inventory categories: 1) Academics & Research, 2) Engagement, 3) Operations, 4) Planning & Administration and 5) Innovation. The strategic objectives presented serve to build a foundation for sustainability on campus and improve NMU's sustainability performance by 2020.

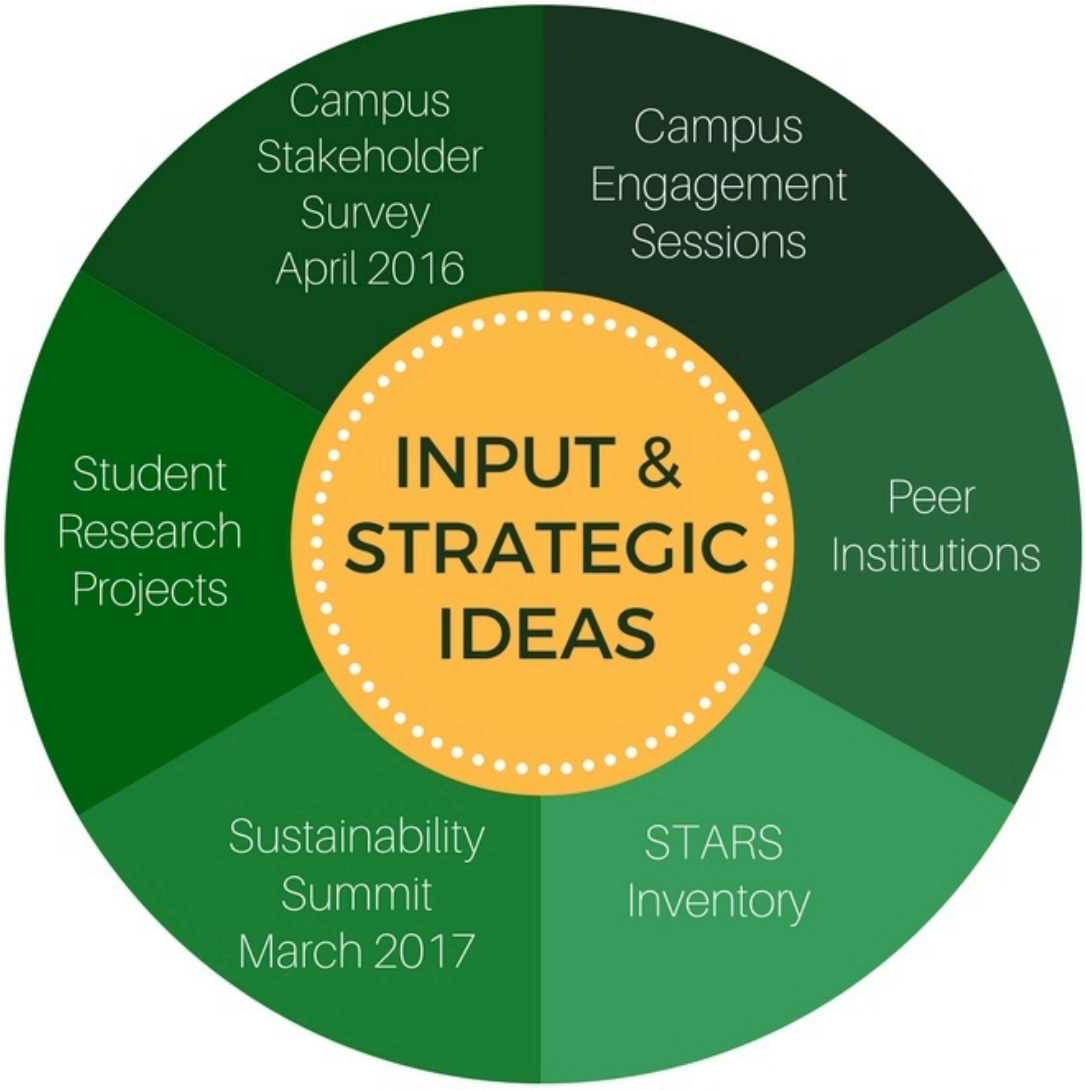


Figure 1: Data sources used to inform the sustainability strategic planning process.

STARS INVENTORY

NMU earned a Bronze Award in the AASHE's STARS inventory process. Where did NMU earn the most points? Academics, which includes curriculum and research, accounted for half of NMU's sustainability effort. NMU's complete STARS report is available at www.AASHE.org.

STARS CATEGORY	POINTS EARNED	POINTS POSSIBLE
Curriculum	19.41	40
Research	13.31	18
Campus Engagement	10	21
Public Engagement	9.79	20
Air & Climate	.5	11
Buildings	1.5	8
Energy	4 (pending)	10
Food & Dining	1.38	8
Grounds	.93	3
Purchasing	1.76	6
Transportation	1.97	7
Waste	1.37	10
Water	2.32	6
Coordination & Planning	2	8
Diversity & Affordability	5.58	10
Investment & Finance	0	7
Wellbeing & Work	3.57	7
Exemplary Practice	0	.5
Innovation	2	4
PROVISIONAL STARS RATING: BRONZE		

Sustainability Performance at Peer Institutions

How does NMU compare to other institutions of similar size and scope in terms of sustainability performance? NMU is one of 245 institutions in the United States that has completed AASHE's STARS inventory. Forty-four of those are colleges and universities with enrollments between 5,000-9,999. Places where NMU is performing above the national average are indicated with an asterisk.

	Percentage of possible points NMU earned in this category	Average of 44 comparable institutions' percentage of points earned
Curriculum*	**49%**	**39%**
Research*	**74%**	**55%**
Campus Engagement	48%	66%
Public Engagement	48%	52%
Air & Climate	.05%	37%
Buildings	19%	31%
Energy*	**40%** (pending)	**33%**
Food & Dining	17%	26%
Grounds	31%	51%
Purchasing	29%	60%
Transportation	28%	50%
Waste	14%	50%
Water	39%	47%
Coordination & Planning	25%	45%
Diversity & Affordability	56%	86%
Investment & Finance	0%	1%
Wellbeing & Work	51%	61%
Exemplary Practice	0%	4%
Innovation*	**50%**	**38%**

Universities and colleges included in the comparison include: Belmont University, Bentley University, Coastal Carolina University, College of William & Mary, Elon University, Frostburg State University, Georgia College & State University, Illinois Central College, Indiana State University, Ithaca College, Joliet Junior College, Keene State College, Lehigh University, Onondaga Community College, Pittsburg State University, Princeton University, Raritan Valley Community College, Rice University, Santa Clara University, Seattle University, Slippery Rock University, Sonoma State University, SUNY-Cortland, SUNY-Fredonia, SUNY-Geneseo, SUNY-New Paltz, Thompson Rivers University, UC-Colorado Springs, University of Denver, UNC-Pembroke, University of Rochester, University of West Georgia, UW-Green Bay, UW-La Crosse, UW-River Falls, UW-Stevens Point, UW-Stout, Villanova University, Wake Forest University.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Institutionalize Sustainability.
2. Cultivate Sustainability Leadership.
3. Invest in Energy Innovations.
4. Promote Sustainable Transportation.
5. Purchase Local Foods. Support Local Farms.

INSTITUTIONALIZE SUSTAINABILITY

Create and provide support for a Center for Sustainability and staff, including a director, part-time coordinator and administrative support.

We propose a multi-phase implementation strategy to establish an innovative Center for Sustainability within the Academic Affairs division. The Center would communicate and coordinate sustainability efforts across campus. The staff would be responsible for developing, enacting and evaluating the strategic implementation plan and all related projects and actions. They would also be responsible for sustainability accounting, future STARS inventories, and special project cost-benefit analyses. Most importantly, the Center would be a centrally-located office, accessible to all students, staff and faculty, and help to link learning to practice. A Center for Sustainability is foundational to building a more sustainable NMU.

A 2015 survey conducted by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education found that of 489 schools with an expressed institutional commitment to sustainability, 76% had some kind of sustainability office. Most schools had a sustainability director, coordinator, or manager who helped to oversee and coordinate sustainability initiatives. The average pay for a sustainability staff person ranged from $20,000 for a part-time sustainability coordinator at a small resource-constrained institution to $160,000 for a sustainability director at a large research university. The salary range for sustainability officers in the Midwest was $45,758-$77,455, which was similar to the range for mid-sized, masters-granting schools (AASHE, 2015 Higher Education Sustainability Staffing Survey).

The most common way that schools fund sustainability centers and sustainability directors is through the institution's general fund or operating budget (69%). A smaller percentage rely on student sustainability or "green" fees (9%), external grants (5%), revolving funds (4%), fee for service (3%), sustainability-related endowments (2%), and alumni or private donations (2%).

We propose a 3-phase model for launching the Center, with opportunities for re-visiting and ramping up the process as resources are available.

PHASE 1

1. Designate a physical space to serve as the Center for Sustainability.
2. Hire a highly-qualified expert to serve as the Sustainability Director (we suggest a national search for a sustainability administration specialist; ideally a professional who has built a similar office or center at a comparable university.)
3. Provide part-time administrative support for the Director.
4. Director works with the Sustainability Advisory Council to complete the Sustainability Strategic Implementation Plan.
5. Director coordinates with individual departments and divisions to integrate sustainability planning with other campus initiatives and documents.
6. Continue annual events and programming (e.g., Zero Waste Challenge, Campus Sustainability Summit, EcoReps), and develop week-long fall semester sustainability event during October, AASHE's university sustainability month (e.g. "Green & Gold" week).

PHASE 2

1. Hire a part-time Outreach Coordinator to build a training mechanism for student employees, interns and volunteers to participate in institutional sustainability initiatives.
2. Hire work-study students to assist in the Center and work on specific implementation plan projects and Center programming and special initiatives.
3. Hire Graduate Assistants to take on specific projects and liaison with academic departments for programming and other learning-outcome related initiatives.

PHASE 3

1. Expand administrative support hours as necessary.
2. Conduct second STARS inventory.
3. Continue to develop and evaluate Center programming and initiatives.

Designating a physical space, a Center for Sustainability, on our campus, and providing support for a Sustainability Director is paramount to a sustainable foundation at NMU. The next four recommendations in this plan benefit, and some rely directly upon, this level of institutional commitment to sustainability.

CULTIVATE SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Provide financial support for a student educators program ("EcoReps") where students receive formal training on how to conduct peer outreach and develop sustainability leadership skills.

Perhaps the most important function of Northern Michigan University is to empower students with knowledge and experience to solve future problems. An *EcoReps* program, will provide students opportunities to develop local solutions to global sustainability challenges. An EcoReps program would provide a higher level of institutional support for the many existing student organizations related to sustainability, and would help to centralize and coordinate sustainability work on campus.

Student sustainability leaders would be trained on a range of topics such as how to reduce energy in the residence halls, decrease food waste in the dining halls, communicate effectively to change behavior and conserve resources. The EcoReps would use their training to educate their peers through programming across campus.

We propose that the EcoReps program be housed in the Center for Sustainability and be supervised by Northern's Sustainability Director. Although members of the Sustainability Advisory Council will help to lead training sessions, a designated Director and eventually Outreach Coordinator would be necessary to oversee the training schedule, work one-on-one with the EcoReps, monitor progress of the program, evaluate impact, and explore opportunities for program expansion.

An annual budget of $10,000-15,000 would help cover the cost of training, promotional materials for the EcoRep program (stickers, posters, etc.), and annual recognition of the EcoReps for their contribution to campus culture and environment. This funding could come from collaboration with other campus departments (housing, dining, facilities, athletics, or a relevant academic departments)

as well as funding requests made to the Student Finance Committee. It is recommended that the EcoReps program have a modest base budget, approximately $6,000 to cover the annual cost of an undergraduate student employee (aka EcoRep Chairperson), similar to how the Special Events Committee hires a student worker to help organize Homecoming and Winterfest activities.
The EcoReps program could also begin as a student organization. After a couple of years of successful programming, they could apply to the Student Finance Committee for Earmarked Fund Group status, which would define a portion of student activity fee funds that they would receive each semester.

Additionally, EcoReps volunteers could earn Superior Edge credit for their service. With the addition of a "sustainability-related" option box on the Superior Edge web portal, students could track their sustainability hours and the Center could better account for and evaluate students engagement in sustainability.

Other specific recommendations to cultivate sustainability leadership on our campus include:

1. Incorporating university-wide sustainability-related learning outcomes for all graduates through the General Education program course offerings.

2. Expand the number of academic programs that have explicit sustainability learning outcomes.

3. Develop Sustainability Certificate program(s), drawing upon the list of more than 65 current course offerings, the Center could manage the creation of specialized academic sustainability certificates (e.g., Renewable Energy Technology, Sustainable Resource Management, Sustainability Education and Communication, Sustainability Leadership and Program Development).

We believe these recommendations are important and should be part of long-range sustainability planning, but we believe they cannot be maintained without the infrastructure of a Center for Sustainability and Director to oversee the details of implementation and continued management.

INVEST IN ENERGY INNOVATIONS

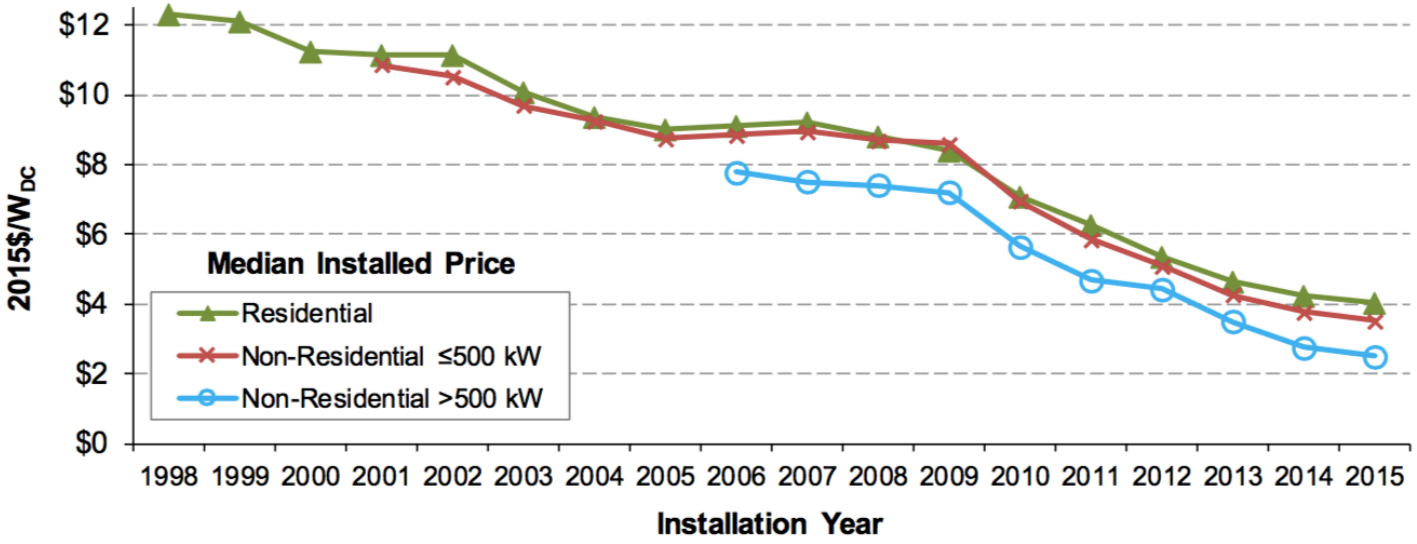
Increase energy efficiencies, promote reduced energy consumption and investigate renewable energy options.

Energy costs are increasing, with our annual electrical bill increasing by $800,000 to over $1 million for a total around $4.5 million for fiscal year 2017. As the largest energy consumer in our region, NMU has an opportunity to lead the U.P. into a more sustainable energy future. First, we need to actively promote energy conservation and lead by example by using less electricity on our campus. Second, we need to identify opportunities to maximize energy efficiencies within our current energy infrastructure. Third, and most important we need to innovate our energy system by actively investigating and investing in renewable energy technology (e.g., solar, wind, microturbines, drain-water heat recovery, wave power, etc.).

The cost of installing renewable energy infrastructure has dropped significantly over the past 20 years. According to Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, the price of photovoltaic energy has dropped more than 75% since 1998 (see figure 2). This makes solar power not only the environmentally responsible choice, but also an economically sound one. As our energy bill from the Marquette Board of Light and Power (MBLP) increases, having solar technology on campus can help to offset rising energy costs from conventional sources and will serve as a powerful symbol of Northern's commitment to sustainability.

We recommend that Northern invest in a small, instructional solar-powered demonstration site in a high visibility area. This solar site could serve as an on-campus renewable energy education lab as well as stop on the Campus Tour. Our research indicates that a 100 kW site would cost about $220,000 to $250,000. The demonstration site could be smaller and could be co-constructed with NMU students and faculty.

Figure 2: Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory Reports: *Tracking the Sun IX*, August 2016.



Finally, we recommend that in the next three years NMU create an energy innovation fund, similar to a green-revolving fund, this account would provide seed money for renewable energy projects on campus. Members of the campus community could submit innovative ideas for sustainable energy consumption and production. The criteria for funding projects would include: 1) the economic payback for the investment, 2) the projected efficiency of the proposed project/system, and 3) the potential for high exposure and education opportunities related to having the project site on campus.

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION

Encourage sustainable modes of transportation by creating a campus-wide policy that sets standards for safe non-motorized travel to, from and on campus (e.g. a "complete streets" or bicycle accommodation policy).

Currently NMU has two standing committees (the Parking and Traffic Committee and the Campus Master Planning Committee) that could collaborate with the Sustainability Advisory Council to improve alternative modes of transportation for students, faculty and staff. These improvements may include: 1) new or improved connecting paths from the existing city bike trail and sidewalk network, 2) improved signage marking existing routes and 3) improved on-campus parking and storage facilities. Working together and with the City of Marquette and the Noquemanon Trails Network (NTN), the institution could create a sustainable transportation policy that would include specific actions to improve non-motorized commuting safety and accessibility. For example, creating a Campus Commuter Trailhead in the Academic Mall area with a space for student gathering, maps of safe city bike routes and local trail systems, and a small bike repair station.

Within the City of Marquette, there are nearly 20 miles of multi-use paths (with more being created every year) ideal for commuting to campus. Longer distance commuters might ride the Iron Ore Heritage Trail, which provides 48 miles of multi-use paths throughout Marquette County, connecting Republic to Harvey. Additionally, these paved paths and bike routes throughout the county and city also link to nearly a 100 miles of regionally-renown singletrack mountain biking trails. Although the city recently created a bike lane on Third Street to help connect Northern Michigan University to the broader systems of trails and green space, more work is needed to develop connections between NMU and the extensive trail systems at our doorstep.

PURCHASE LOCAL FOODS. SUPPORT LOCAL FARMS.

Increase our purchases of local food products and grow our support of local farm businesses.

Although the Upper Peninsula's remote, northern geography presents challenges in terms of food production, recent surveys of the NMU's community indicate that interest in local food and farms is high. Currently, Northern contracts up to 90% of its food purchases through Reinhart Food Service; about 4.25% of Northern's food purchases are from local vendors such as BSB farms (eggs), Superior Angus (beef), Thill's (fish), Dancing Crane Farm (vegetables), and the North Farm. We recommend increasing that 4.25% to 10% by the year 2020.

One of the biggest challenges for increasing the percentage of local food purchases is the lack of capacity of local farmers to produce a large, reliable quantity of food that Northern demands. We recommend a two-fold strategy to achieve the goal of increasing local food purchases and supporting local farms. First, we recommend that in the next round of contract negotiations with large food suppliers or in the CFP, Northern specifies that our contractor tracks percentage of food and beverage items that have been verified under recognized sustainability standards or includes local and community-based food items, for example contracting with Fifth Season Coop in Wisconsin would provide more local and organic food options for our campus.

Second, we recommend that Northern continue to help build the capacity of our local food system. Historically this has been done by cultivating one-on-one relationships between local farmers and dining services staff at NMU. We recommend that Northern continue to educate its students, staff, and faculty on key issues such as food waste, and consider developing a certificate program in community food systems.

Third, we recognize that food insecurity has been identified as a major threat to our community. We recommend that Northern launch a local chapter of the Food Recovery Network on campus and recover food to donate to food banks and shelters. As NMU Dining continues to follow the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy to achieve more sustainable food management they can also work toward diverting food scraps to feed animals, waste oil for industrial use and then composting. By promoting awareness of the food we waste, students, staff, and faculty will become more thoughtful consumers.

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT: THE ZERO WASTE CHALLENGE

The challenge was on and off the court this year at the NMU vs. MTU men's and women's basketball games on January 30, 2017. Northern Michigan University hosted the first annual Zero Waste Challenge – challenging all attendees to participate in minimizing event waste. During the event members of the Sustainability Advisory Council and 49 student volunteers instructed attendees to sort their waste by compostable, recyclable and landfill items. NMU partnered with Marquette County Solid Waste Management Authority to remove, weigh and appropriately dispose of the event's waste. We successfully diverted 93% of the event's waste; 75% of the waste was compostable and only 5 pounds of trash went the to landfill! In a single night, the Zero Waste Challenge demonstrated all of Northern's core values: Community, Opportunity, Rigor, Environment, Inclusion, Connections and Innovation.

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT: AQUEOUS OZONE CLEANING

Sustainability initiatives are not only good for people and the environment; they are also good for the pocketbook. For example, NMU spends an average of $10.30/gallon on a range of specialized cleaning products (e.g., glass cleaner, floor cleaner, disinfectants, general-purpose cleaner, etc.). Since October 2016, the NMU Facilities Department has been conducting a pilot program in the West Science Building and has switched to a widely applicable aqueous ozone cleaning system that costs less than $0.25/gallon. This on-demand cleaning system combines tap water with ozone gas (O_3) to create a liquidized ozone solution that is 50% stronger than chlorine bleach and safe on all surfaces. The Facilities Department plans to expand this process to all of its buildings in 2017. The environmental impact reaches far beyond just reducing chemicals in our buildings; it will reduce an estimated 500 gallon bottles annually from being recycled or entering the landfill, reduce on-site chemical inventory costs, and reduces training costs for employees.

STUDENTS SUPPORT SUSTAINABILITY

In a recent campus-wide survey (n = 535), 91 percent of respondents stated that “campus green space affected their interest in attending a college or university” and 82 percent of respondents said that they are "more apt to attend" or that it is "influential" if a university has solar panels or other renewable energy visible on campus.

Most importantly, 73 percent of respondents stated that NMU's growing commitment to sustainability has increased their loyalty to the university and 57 percent agreed that sustainability efforts have inspired them to continue their education at NMU.

APPENDIX A
50 IDEAS TO IMPROVE CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY AT NMU

1. Offer incentives for developing sustainability courses and additional sustainability-focused programs.
2. Create an interdisciplinary mechanism to coordinate sustainability-related curriculum such as Sustainability Certificates.
3. Incorporate university-wide sustainability-related learning outcomes through the General Education program; and/or expand the number of programs with sustainability learning outcomes.
4. Create ongoing program to encourage faculty from multiple disciplines or academic programs to conduct research in sustainability-related areas.
5. Develop a Sustainability Literacy Assessment for graduating students.
6. Develop graduate program(s) in sustainability.
7. Provide financial support for an "EcoReps" program; students receive training to conduct outreach and earn credit for developing sustainability leadership skills.
8. Create a regular column about Sustainability in *The Northwind.*
9. Provide employee orientation materials related to sustainability, such as a flyer that explains campus sustainability efforts.
10. Develop an employee sustainability educator program; employees receive training to conduct outreach to other employees.
11. Offer professional development opportunities and sustainability-related training for staff.
12. Provide support to conduct a GHG inventory (including Scope 1, 2 and 3).
13. Create policies or guidelines to improve outdoor air quality and minimize air pollutant emissions from mobile sources on campus.
14. Make a campus policy that all new construction will be LEED certified.
15. Develop specific energy conservation policies and measures.
16. Conduct an assessment to identify endangered and vulnerable species with habitats on institution-owned land; and/or assess to identify environmentally sensitive areas on institution-owned land.

17. Encourage sustainable modes of transportation by creating a bicycle and pedestrian plan or policy that sets standards and practices for campus streets to enable safe access for all users.

18. Encourage sustainable modes of transportation to campus by providing secure bicycle storage, shower facilities, and lockers for bicycle commuters.

19. Create car/vanpool or ride sharing program and/or offers reduced parking fees or preferential parking for car/vanpoolers.

20. Create a mechanism for systematically assessing waste minimization and diversion efforts on campus.

21. Create a climate action plan and sign President's Commitment to American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC).

22. Consider investing in carbon offset programs.

23. Consider investing in solar energy technologies, and possibly other forms of renewable power.

24. Perform Life Cycle Cost Analysis (LCCA) as a matter of policy and practice when evaluating energy- and water-using products, systems and building components (e.g. HVAC systems).

25. Incorporate alternative fuel and power technology in the campus fleet of vehicles.

26. Install Level 2 or Level 3 electric vehicle recharging stations that are accessible to student and employee commuters.

27. Reduce employee commuting by developing a telecommuting program and/or consider a condensed work week.

28. Work with dining services or a contractor to conduct an inventory of food and beverage purchases that have sustainability attributes (third-party verification for things like organic, fair trade, humanely raised, local or others).

29. Increase our purchases of local food products and grow our support of local farm businesses.

30. Promote to customers through our Dine Responsibly program food items in our dining locations that have been purchased from a local farm.

31. Develop a program and/or use a food waste prevention system to track and improve food management practices.

32. Offer smaller plates in more of our dining locations to reduce food consumption.

33. Launch the Food Recovery Network at NMU and start recovering food to donate.

34. Replace equipment with energy star, high efficiency units.

35. Grow our relationship with and purchases of local food products from Upper Peninsula farm businesses.

36. Increase our food purchasing percentage within the local 400-mile radius.

37. Work toward following the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy to achieve more sustainable management of food in our dining locations.

38. Develop a campus farm with an explicit focus on growing food in marginal environments, climate resiliency, etc.

39. Create a systematic, institutionally-supported composting system.

40. Provide cultural competence trainings and track proportion of students, staff and faculty who participate in the trainings.

41. Create a campus climate scorecard to assess the attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of faculty/staff/students; assess outcomes related to diversity, equity and success of underrepresented groups; share results with campus.

42. Gather data upon graduation about students debt obligations (what percent of students graduate with no interest-bearing loans?).

43. Since NMU offers 89% of employees a living wage; it would be advantageous to make a formal commitment to pay a "living wage."

44. Create a policy to support sustainable purchasing across campus (preference for post-consumer recycled or bio-based content, intent to support disadvantaged businesses, etc.).

45. Purchase office paper with post-consumer recycled, agricultural residue, and/or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified content.

46. Support divisions and departments in sustainability planning for individual units.

47. Seek endorsement from other signatory bodies: The Earth Charter, The Higher Education Sustainability Initiative (HESI), Second Nature, etc.

48. Create a committee on investor responsibility to analyze and make recommendations for socially and environmentally responsible investments.

49. Provide investment disclosures once a year.

50. Work with NMU Foundation to seek sustainable investments.