Center for Sustainable Communities

Working on sustainability projects has rounded out my experience at Luther. I get to apply what I learn in my classes to real-world projects, enhancing my work both in and out of the classroom.

—Emily Dufford ’16

Luther is proud to be recognized as one of the most sustainable schools in Iowa and the nation. The Center for Sustainable Communities coordinates all sustainability initiatives at Luther College. The mission of the center is to promote sustainability and be a catalyst for change on campus and in the region. Focus areas include energy and climate, food and wellness, land stewardship, and education.

Immersion Program
The New Student Immersion Experiences take place the week immediately preceding new student orientation. These weeklong community-building adventures are designed to connect incoming students with each other, upper-class peers, and the natural environment. For more information visit www.luther.edu/immersion.

I highly recommend the immersion trips to all incoming freshmen. I made friendships that will last a lifetime and the trip made my transition to Luther so easy.

—Immersion program participant

Work Study
Students are encouraged to get involved with sustainability at Luther College through a work-study position. The center hires more than 40 students to recycle, compost, grow food for the college, implement zero-waste projects, package excess food for the Cafeteria to Community Program, coordinate communication and marketing efforts, and promote sustainability in the residence halls.

Pre-College Environmental Studies Program
This in-depth weeklong experience takes place amid the uniquely beautiful and rare ecosystems of the Driftless Area of northeast Iowa and southwest Wisconsin. Learn from distinguished faculty and gain valuable field experience, all while having fun, meeting new friends, and delving into the college experience. This program is geared toward high school students and takes place during the summer. For more information visit www.luther.edu/pre-college-environmental-studies/.

Internships
Internships are a valuable way for students to investigate various career paths while making professional connections and gaining experience in a field of interest. Luther offers support to students pursuing sustainability-related internships through an internship grant program and connecting current students with alumni working in the field. Internships provide a way for Luther students to gain the experience that will make them competitive in the job market after graduation. Internship placements have included Organic Valley Cooperative, Second Harvest Heartland, Lutherans Restoring Creation, Gunderson Health System, The Wilderness Society, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, and many more.

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Sustainability in Practice

Luther’s 1.6 MW wind turbine produces 27% of the college’s electricity.

While at Luther, students have the opportunity to live in Baker Village, the largest net-zero energy residential facility in the state. It is powered by the earth and sun.

Over 20% of food served at Luther is from local producers. Current food purchasing goals include to source 75% dairy, beef and pork, 20% poultry, and 35% fruits and vegetables locally.

Luther owns and manages nearly 1,000 acres on which students have the opportunity to research and recreate.

Luther is working to reduce solid waste 90% by 2025. Student rooms are equipped with recycling bins and composting is available across campus.

A moveable high tunnel at the college farm allows student gardeners to grow food later into the fall and early in the spring for use in the cafeteria.

Luther has cut its carbon footprint 50% from peak emission levels in 2003–04 and plans to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Luther is working to reduce solid waste 90% by 2025. Student rooms are equipped with recycling bins and composting is available across campus.

Every month nearly 1,000 pounds of excess food is packaged and donated to a local food pantry.

Each year 10 students are selected to live in Luther’s Sustainability House, where students explore what it means to live sustainably in community.