

Center for Sustainable Communities

LUTHER COLLEGE



What we do

The Center for Sustainable Communities coordinates Luther's campus sustainability initiatives and community outreach. Launched in 2013, the center serves as an umbrella for existing programs and an opportunity for new initiatives. Focusing primarily on four aspects of sustainability—energy, food, education, and land stewardship—our mission is to be a catalyst for sustainable change.

Our vision

Luther College will play a vital role in bringing about sustainable change while providing unique opportunities for students and giving them the skills and abilities to meet sustainability challenges.

Strategic Plan 2013–16 Goals and Strategies

Our process

In January 2013, Luther launched a participatory process to shape a multiyear strategic plan for the center. Forty individuals—a mix of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community members—met in four planning groups to brainstorm ideas and shape a vision for this new center.

The result of the six-month process is this strategic plan, which sets out a vision and clear priorities for the Center for Sustainability Communities for its initial three years.



1 Integrate and embed sustainability into the mission and operations of the college.

- Enrich the curriculum and cocurricular opportunities so sustainability is a part of every student's learning experience.
- Model stewardship and sustainability in all aspects of college operations.
- Broaden research by engaging Luther faculty and students in addressing sustainability issues in the community.
- Engage students, faculty, staff, and community members with information and leadership development opportunities related to sustainable communities.

2 Develop an energy and climate program with emphases on education and community energy systems.

- Facilitate climate action planning and implementation to meet Luther's carbon footprint goals.
- Educate constituencies about energy and climate issues and opportunities.
- Stimulate investment in energy efficiency and development of locally owned, community renewable energy projects.
- Collaborate with partners on energy and climate projects and identify opportunities where Luther's expertise can be best utilized.

3 Enhance Luther's land stewardship program with increased emphasis on community education and collaboration

- Explore land stewardship community education programs using pilot programs to determine needs and fit with Luther's resources.
- Increase visibility of Luther's land stewardship initiatives through web and other media.
- Collaborate with partners on land stewardship projects and identify current gaps in the wider community where Luther's expertise can be developed and used.

4 Sustain food and wellness programming with strategic growth in food production and education.

- Enhance sustainable food choices and operational sustainability in campus dining services.
- Establish and manage a college farm with a balance of education, research, demonstration, and food production.
- Expand educational offerings in the areas of food systems and nutrition to faculty and staff.
- Increase student education opportunities related to food.
- Serve as a catalyst for growth in the regional food system.

5 Expand and deepen outreach initiatives to serve as a catalyst for sustainability in the region.

- Engage K–12 schools, their educators, and community stakeholders to promote sustainability, wellness, and student learning.
- Enhance environmental and outdoor education programs with special emphasis on high school students.
- Develop and implement models for sustainability planning and promotion with regional businesses and local governments.
- Explore new avenues for influencing sustainable community development including consulting, convening of experts, publications, and advocacy.
- Provide leadership to regional campus sustainability initiatives through the Upper Midwest Association for Campus Sustainability (UMACS), Associated Colleges of the Midwest, and informal collaborations.

6 Fully endow the center and create a structure for long-term fiscal and organizational sustainability.

- Secure endowment to ensure the ongoing operation of the center.
- Develop a communications plan to enhance programmatic work and increase visibility of Luther's sustainability initiatives.



“This strategic plan is an exciting step for Luther in our sustainability journey. It focuses the work of the center, provides unique opportunities for students, and solidifies Luther’s position as a sustainability leader.”

—Jon Jensen, director, Center for Sustainable Communities

Center for Sustainable Communities Program Areas



Land Stewardship

Significant accomplishments:

- Developed and approved a comprehensive Land Stewardship Plan for the College's 800+ acres of natural lands.
- More than 2,000 student hours have been spent on land stewardship projects, including invasive species removal, habitat protection, and prescribed burns since 2010.
- 120 acres of Luther's land along the Upper Iowa River has been permanently protected through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program. This land is being planted to forest and prairie to provide models of best practices in ecological restoration.

Contact: Molly McNicoll, assistant professor of biology and natural land manager, mcnimo01@luther.edu



Energy and Climate

Significant accomplishments:

- The President's House, Baker Village Commons, and the Sustainability House are all powered by the sun. In addition, the college leases a utility-scale, 280 kilowatt (kW) solar photovoltaic array that powers Baker Village.
- More than 40% of Luther's electricity-related emissions are offset by wind energy.
- The college is on target to meet carbon footprint reduction goals of 50% by 2015, 70% by 2020 and carbon neutrality by 2030.
- Water use has decreased 24% since 2010 and additional investments in water conservation are reducing consumption even further.

Contact: Jim Martin-Schramm, professor of religion, energy and climate coordinator, marschja@luther.edu



Food and Wellness

Significant accomplishments:

- In 2013, 20% of Luther employees participated in two food education events, such as cooking classes and farm tours, as part of the college's Community Supported Agriculture Reimbursement Program.
- The college and Sodexo surpassed the 35% local food goal when 36.3% of the college's food was sourced from local producers over the course of the 2012–13 academic year.
- More than 1,000 pounds of food are donated each month to local food pantries through the Cafeteria to Community Program.
- Edible landscapes, increased production at the college farm, cooking classes in residence halls, and farm visits have provided students with hands-on food education experiences.

Contact: Maren Stumme-Diers, sustainable foods educator, stumma01@luther.edu



Education and Outreach

Significant accomplishments:

- As a core partner of the Northeast Iowa Food and Fitness Initiative, Luther has worked with 16 area school districts to create healthier school environments.
- Hundreds of children every year receive transformative environmental education experiences through Discovery Camps and Environmental Outreach programming.
- Student learning opportunities around sustainability have increased, both in and out of the classroom through curriculum development initiatives and programming in residence halls.
- Since 2006, Luther has provided continuing education experiences for teachers and students to further wellness, sustainability, and environmental awareness.

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Support the Center for Sustainable Communities

Funding for the Center for Sustainable Communities comes from private donations, endowment earnings, and grants. Luther has an initiative currently underway to build a \$5 million endowment that will support personnel and programs for the center. For information on making a donation to support the Center for Sustainable Communities, please contact Jon Jensen (jensjo01@luther.edu), director of the Center for Sustainable Communities or Keith Christensen (chriskei@luther.edu), vice president for development.