

2022 - 2023 Annual Report



UW
SUSTAINABILITY

Overview

It's been an exciting year for sustainability at UWL, to say the least. With a new full-time position dedicated to sustainability, this was clearly the start of a new era at UWL.

The following annual report outlines a compilation of highlights and successes achieved over the year. These pieces of progress help paint a picture of sustainability at UWL that, while still needing refinement and further advancement, does align with the mission and vision of sustainability at UWL.

The success found this past year would not have been possible without a campus community excited and ready to elevate sustainability to the next level. A special shoutout is needed for some amazing students who worked in the background of many of these successes, those being: Grace Lopez Johnson, Cassandra Ziegler, Erika Holen, and Blythe Pollard. Thanks for your exemplary work this year!

-Andrew Ericson, Sustainability Program Manager

UWL Sustainability Mission and Vision

Mission:

The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse will provide students, faculty, staff, and the community with the knowledge and skills to be environmentally responsible and involved citizens who understand and consider the global effects of their actions and the actions of others. The University will strive to use and implement sustainable best practices while minimizing its carbon footprint.

Vision:

- The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is a campus where:
 - Education and research prepare students, faculty, staff, and surrounding communities to engage in dialogue and positive action around sustainability.
 - University leadership is committed to sustainability and will direct adequate resources toward the development of sustainability expertise and best practices on campus.
 - Minimizing the adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts of university operations is a priority.
 - Understanding and concern for sustainability issues provides the foundation for dynamic campus collaboration and community for students, faculty, and staff.

Mission and vision prepared and approved by the UW-La Crosse Joint Committee on Environmental Sustainability on December 6, 2013. Also approved by the UWL Student Association (December 11, 2013), Academic Staff Council (December 10, 2013), and Faculty Senate (February 13, 2014).

Highlights

UW-La Crosse hires first sustainability program manager



On July 25th, 2022, Andrew Ericson started in UWL's first full-time sustainability position. Ericson '22 (B.S. Chemistry: Environmental Science) had been a sustainability leader during his time as a student at UWL, including serving as the student Green Fund Coordinator and the Chair of the Joint Committee on Environmental Sustainability. The headline above is taken from the La Crosse Tribune article posted on August 12th, 2022, acknowledging this important hire for the university. Ericson is quoted as saying:

"I'm very excited to be here, but more broadly, I think the creation of this position is an excellent step for the university"

On December 15th, 2022, the La Crosse Tribune picked up the below article outlining the reduction in UWL's carbon footprint from heating and electricity-related emissions. This article was written in partnership between Brad Quarberg (University Communication) and Andrew Ericson (Sustainability).

LACROSSETRIBUNE.COM THURSDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2022 | A3

HOMETOWN

UW-L lessens carbon footprint

Since 2005, UW-La Crosse has reduced heating and electricity emissions by about 30% – despite growing in building space by about 40%.

The additions included Centennial Hall, Eagle Hall, the Student Union and Prairie Springs Science Center. Centennial, Eagle and the Union are Gold LEED buildings, an indicator of environmental responsibility and efficiency.

Those numbers are important to the university's new sustainability coordinator, Andrew Ericson, who began the new position on campus in July.

"It was reassuring that we are in fact responding," says Ericson. "At the same time, I started questioning how we got there and, more importantly, how do we keep this trend going?"

Ericson says three factors drove

Three factors drove the improvement: switching from coal to natural gas in the Heating Plant, greening of the grid, and energy efficiency upgrades.

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UW-L's Heating Plant used to burn coal and switched to natural gas, with a diesel fuel backup. While natural gas is a fossil fuel, it has a higher energy density, so less is needed to produce the same amount of heat, emitting less carbon.

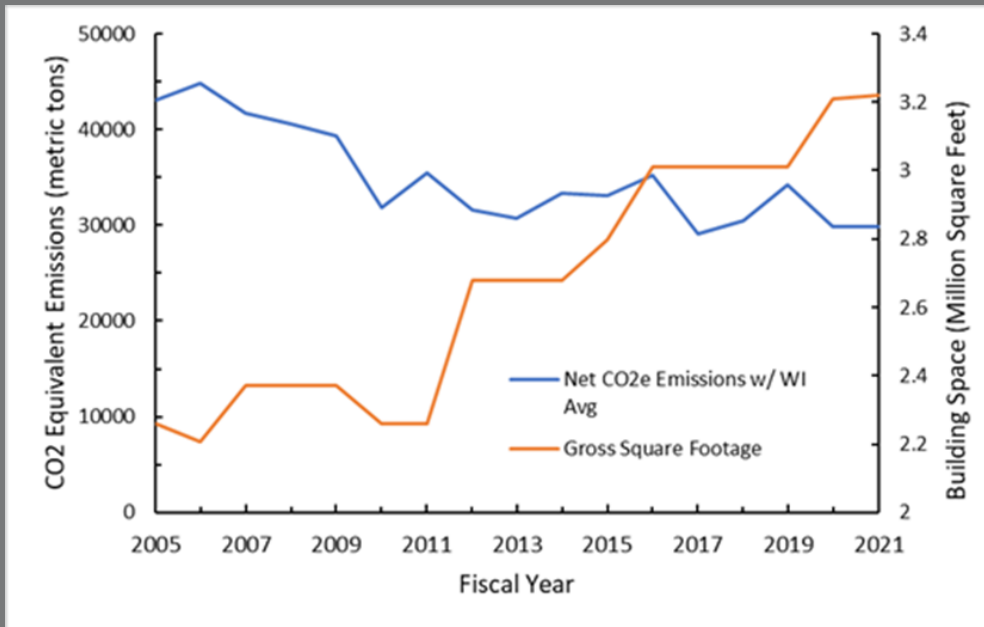
"Greening of the grid" refers to electricity becoming cleaner or reducing the carbon emissions generated via electricity production. Xcel Energy, UW-L's electricity provider, when compared to other utility companies in the state is far cleaner by transitioning from coal to natural gas as a fuel source, efficiency upgrades and the addition of wind and solar power.

Energy efficiency upgrades have come in a range of areas. Among the recent improvements: changing to LED lights, updating building automation systems, using sustainable building designs and changing to low-flow plumbing fixtures, along with upgrading to high-efficiency boilers and modernizing building façades.



UWL's new Sustainability Coordinator, Andrew Ericson, says the campus has reduced heating and electricity emissions by about 30% – despite growing in building space by about 40% since 2005. "It was reassuring that we are in fact responding," says Ericson. "At the same time, I started questioning how we got there and more importantly how do we keep this trend going."

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The above graph highlights the findings of the campus carbon footprint analysis. Notably, UWL has seen a reduction in carbon emissions from heating and electricity production sources by roughly 30% despite increasing building space by 40% since fiscal year 2005!

10 ways to celebrate Earth Day



Posted 3 p.m. Friday, April 7, 2023



A student paints on a UWL Student Union window for Earth Day celebrations in 2022.

Campus and area events celebrate the Earth this month from marsh clean-up to 'Earthapalooza'

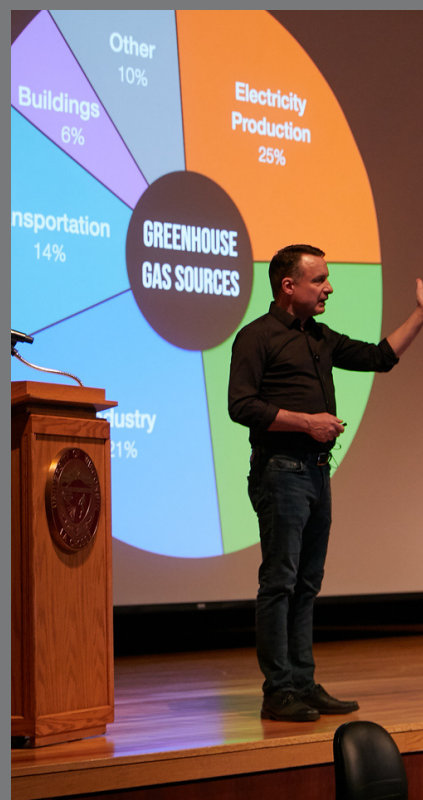
By Andrew Ericson, UWL sustainability program manager

UWL celebrated Earth Day in style with something for everyone. The following events were highlighted in the campus connection article:

- 2023 Prairie Springs Lecture Series - Jonathan Foley - Tuesday, April 11
- Defending the environment and community lands in West Africa and Costa Rica - Gray and Taylor Tappan - Friday, April 14
- Environmental Health Bingo - Monday, April 17
- Photographic History of the La Crosse River Marsh - Richard Frost - Monday, April 17
- The Campus Thread Fashion Show - Wednesday, April 19
- Urban nature, wealth, and implications for green infrastructures - Bonnie Keeler - Thursday, April 20
- Earthapalooza - Friday, April 21
- Neighbors Day 2023 - Saturday, April 22
- La Crosse River Marsh Clean Up - Saturday, April 29
- La Crosse Earth Fair - Sunday, April 30

Climate expert to speak at UWL Prairie Springs Lecture Series

Dr. Jonathan Foley, a world-renowned climate scientist and the executive director of Project Drawdown, "The World's Leading Resource for Climate Solutions," visited UWL as the year's Prairie Springs Lecturer. His lecture, "Achieving Drawdown - A Hopeful, Science-Based Plan to Address Climate Change," drew roughly 300 in-person attendees, and the online recording (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU-7oYsDqME>) has received additional views.





Recent graduate Veronica Sannes, and Biology Professor Dr. Tisha King-Heiden received the student and instructor Prairie Springs Environmental Leadership Award for 2023, respectively. They were celebrated for this achievement during the Prairie Springs Lecture Series event.



Drift Cycle, the La Crosse Community Bike Share program, launched their 3rd season with an event on the UWL Student Union Lawn. UWL celebrated the opening of their second station near the Whitney Dining Center through a funding partnership between the UWL Green Fund and the La Crosse MTU.



Maddy Calarco, pictured with a UWL-branded Drift Cycle bike, is a student in the College of Business Administration and served as a Programming Intern for Drift Cycle.



Tis' the season of good cheer! Let's make sure our holiday celebrations are also good to the earth!

Meet UWL's brand new Sustainability Program Manager, Andrew Ericson. You will learn more about upcoming sustainability initiatives and how you can get involved. Andrew will also provide us with some tips and tricks during the holiday season to make sure we are considering our impact on the planet during our festive celebrations!

You won't want to miss learning more about sustainability at UWL and during the holiday season. **We look forward to seeing you on Dec. 14 12 - 1pm.**

While there is no cost for this session, we ask that you register so we know how many guests to expect. In addition you will have the opportunity to submit questions to the presenters when you register. (All questions will remain anonymous).

The session will be recorded and shared with everyone who registers.

Register for the event [HERE!](#)



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University of Wisconsin - La Crosse Foundation
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For the December 2022 edition of the UWL Alumni Association's "What's New Wednesday?", Andrew Ericson (UWL's Sustainability Program Manager) was the guest speaker. He discussed where UWL stood on sustainability, what was coming up next, and how to be more sustainable during the holiday season.



Students for Sustainability Co-Chairs Erika Holen and Blythe Pollard collaborated with Chelsea Wyman-Green (Associate Professor – Murphy Library) to create a display in Murphy Library to celebrate the Earth. This display ran from mid-April to the end of the academic year. A total of nine gallery boxes were filled with images and books.

Additional Success

- Facilities Management invested capital in brine equipment for campus winter maintenance. They will begin using brine on campus during the 2023-24 academic year.
- The Environmental Studies Program began the process of changing its name to the Sustainability and Environmental Studies Program.
- The Department of Geography and Earth Science began the process of changing its name to the Department of Geography and Environmental Science and offering an Environmental Science major.
- Over the course of the 2022-23 academic year, Andrew Ericson (Sustainability Program Manager) made 17 class visits as a guest speaker. These visits included First Year Seminars and classes in Environmental Studies, Public Health, and Sociology. In addition to these class visits, he was also a guest speaker for the University Staff Council, Academic Staff Council, and Student Senate.
- The UWL Sustainability homepage (<https://www.uwlax.edu/sustainability/>) was redone and includes facts about sustainability success at UWL.
- The bylaws for both the Joint Committee on Environmental Sustainability and the Green Fund were revised and updated.
- In collaboration with UWL student Green Fund Coordinator Cassandra Zeigler and UWL Student Association Sustainability Director Grace Lopez Johnson, a new student job was created for social media and marketing. Four candidates were interviewed for the role, and Hillary Haarstad, a first-year business student, was selected in the end for the role.
- In partnership with Facilities Director Scott Brown, two campus-wide projects were initiated.
 - The first was the Fleet Electrification Advisory Program in partnership with Xcel Energy, which will provide tracking software and data analysis for 50 of the campus vehicles. This program will provide information on the suitability of vehicle electrification, along with outlining financial and carbon savings.
 - The second was the Strategic Energy Management program through Focus on Energy, which unlocks additional financial incentives for energy savings.
- UW-La Crosse was included in the State of Wisconsin Clean Energy Plan Progress Report.
 - “UW-La Crosse is leveraging previous investments in metering (each campus building has steam, electricity, natural gas, and chilled water meters) and building automation systems to drive energy efficiency. By enrolling in Strategic Energy Management through Focus on Energy, the university will be able to tap into technical knowledge and drive efficiencies that can be implemented across the campus.” (Pg. 22)
- The following Green Fund grants were awarded this academic year:
 - Sports Club Solar Lights for North Campus Fields – \$15,000
 - Drift Cycle Extension and Expansion - \$20,400
 - Robin Wall Kimmerer Event – \$2,000
 - Prairie Springs Lecture Series 2023 - \$2,000
 - Sustainable Supplies for Students - \$3,399.34
 - Sustainability Social Media and Marketing Manager (Student Position) - \$3,000
 - Parking Garage Bike Storage - \$4,999

- The @uwlgreenfund Instagram was renamed to @uwlsustainability to encompass a broader array of content.
- Over the 2022-2023 academic year, UWL dining services diverted 31,850 pounds of organic waste from entering the landfill through a partnership with Hilltopper's.
- A WiSys-led partnership, including UWL, won a \$1 million NSF grant to lead sustainable agriculture.
- The city of La Crosse's Common Council unanimously passed a Climate Action Plan in January 2023. A letter of support for this plan was submitted by UWL in June 2023.
- JCES formed four subgroups over the academic year to bolster progress in specific areas. The groups were: Bike Storage and Theft Prevention (lead: Derek Norby), Sustainability Classes (lead: Brandon Anderson), Native Plantings and Sustainable Landscaping (lead: Blythe Pollard), and Campus Engagement (lead: Grace Lopez Johnson).
- JCES members, led by Zack DeBroux, and UWL Wellness and Health Advocacy created an environmentally themed "Stall Seat Journal" for the April Edition.
- The Community Transportation Academy (CTA) started on campus. The CTA was the result of a collaboration between 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, AARP Wisconsin, and UWL. The CTA was designed to help bridge the gap between community advocates and transportation planning entities. Community members and UWL Students participated in this 10-week course.
- UWL Sustainability was present at all of the START resource fairs, providing information on both general sustainability initiatives ongoing at UWL, and the sustainable transportation options available to students in La Crosse.

Coming Next

The 2023-24 academic year is shaping up to be a year that will tap into progress made in 2022-23 and one where continued growth of initiatives and engagement will be made. The following items appear to be some of the areas of focus:

- Increased presence on social media, with goals of increasing reach and engagement.
- Promotion of sustainable transportation through social media and campus engagement to increase the modality shares of non-car options for the campus community.
- Pursuit of no-cost or low-cost energy efficiency measures that can reduce energy use and carbon emissions while larger scale efficiency and carbon emission reduction plans are made.
- Planning for the UW System Sustainability Conference, which is set for October 12th and 13th at UWL.
- Engagement with UW System Sustainability Coordinators and peers on UW campuses to strategize opportunities for tapping into the Inflation Reduction Act.

This is not a comprehensive list, and may change as the 2023-24 year progresses. To stay up-to-date consider attending a JCES meeting, reaching out to aericson@uwlax.edu with ideas or questions, or following us on Instagram [@uwlsustainability](https://www.instagram.com/uwlsustainability).