

Sustainability and Green Initiatives

USCA is committed to creating a sustainable environment across the campus. As part of its effort to ensure an attractive, user-friendly campus that supports and accommodates the needs of students, faculty and staff, the university embraces the values of environmental stewardship. The university has earned special national recognition for our contributions in this area.

Objectives of the Sustainability and Green Initiatives Task Force

- Increase information on sustainability initiatives at USC Aiken;
- Create a campus-wide sustainability plan that advances our goals to be a green and sustainable university;
- Continue to advance the Arbor Campus (Tree Campus USA) designation; and
- Engage the campus community in a series of green activities, events, and awareness around waste reduction, recycling, and energy conservation measures,
- Learning about campus alternative transportation
- Enhance the campus gardening initiative

Initiatives that Have Been Completed or Currently Being Implemented

- Replacing old HVAC systems with high-efficiency models.
- Reduced purchased electric and thermal energy by lowering the allowed building set points (heating at 69, cooling at 75 – after hours 55 and 80)
- Reducing building energy usage by not heating/cooling after established hours
- Reducing building energy usage by going an alternate work schedule during summer months
- Reduced computer energy use with automatic reduced energy standby mode
- Whenever possible, execute paperless operations (online newsletters, advisement folders and course registration) – PACER TIMES is a leader in advancing this initiative by going to an online version.
- Use of building lights is more efficient (Convocation Center, classroom buildings, student housing – lights out when rooms not in use)
- Infrared motion detectors in classrooms shut off lights when classroom is empty
- Replaced incandescent light bulbs with LED lights
- Heat the Natatorium pool water with solar energy – pool temperature lowered to 80 degrees
- Utilize pool cover reheat boiler process
- Energize Pacer Crossing lights with solar energy
 - Surprisingly, conversion costs are very expensive, and thus, not economically feasible at this time. The facilities department will continue to seek viable opportunities for green energy options for Pacer Crossing, keeping an eye on the costs involved. As more companies get into this business, the hope is that prices will come down.

- Energize emergency notification sirens with solar energy
- Use electric utility vehicles for campus maintenance and IT operations
- Use LP gas for forklift operation
- Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Geology have reduced hazardous waste enough to qualify for a “conditionally exempt small quantity generator”
- Housekeeping and Housing have reduced hazardous waste by switching to “green cleaning” and “blue cleaning” products and methods
- New construction is required to be LEED certified
- New dormitory equipped with energy reduction ventilator (ERV) reducing heating/cooling energy consumption by 40 – 60%
- Maintenance replacing old science building chillers with modern energy efficient units reducing energy consumption.
- Aiken ‘Best Friend’ bus station pick up is on campus
- Old windows at Pacer Downs replaced by energy efficient windows
- When replacing old appliances, replace with Energy Star certified appliances
- Turn breaker off for empty student apartments at Pacer Downs – no electricity is used
- Tank-less high efficient water heaters at Pacer Downs and other areas where practical

New Initiatives Identified by the Task Force

- EMS upgrades to ensure maximum efficiency of our electrical usage on campus and ensure reliability of those systems. Current cost projections to upgrade the whole EMS system for the campus is approximately \$600,000. This is best managed as a phased project, and initial steps are already underway. Additional measures will be implemented as funding sources are identified.
- Participate in Recycle Mania/ “zero waste” events in campus. This recommendation is underway. The first step is to work with student affairs and athletics to determine the location, date, feasibility and timing of possible events. The current plan is to have at least one event this spring.
- Communicate current recycle methods to campus community more frequently. Because our community is always in flux (meaning, students graduate, and new students arrive annually), this is a long-term effort. The first step will be to provide more information to the campus community and to increase informational signage.
- Food waste minimization events on campus. Aramark is willing to partner with us on this important initiative. This is an issue that is connected to personal habits, so the first step is to determine the logistics and timing of possible events to highlight how to better predict need and how we might alert individuals when there are appropriate left-overs.

- Revive Students for Sustainable Campus to get more ideas and communication about green initiatives on campus. Partnering with the Sustainability Club on campus will provide the opportunity to explore additional ideas.
- Continue to go paperless on as much as practically possible within office environment. Please join us in this effort by creating and storing documents digitally. Digital routing is being explored as to how it might be used for purchase approvals (that has already cut down dramatically on paper usage).
- Look into “Big Belly” recycle and compactor stations to reduce man hours removing trash and increase recycling. This offers several benefits, but at this point in the semester, funding sources need to be identified as the costs per unit are approximately \$5,000. The solution will need to be phased into the campus and budget.
- Introduce more low-flow water fixtures in facilities. Typically, this runs about \$36 per faucet and we need to replace approximately 250 fixtures on campus. Decision was made to attack this in phases. As bathrooms are upgraded or faucets replaced, more energy efficient fixtures will be installed.
- Install room sensors in community lounges in housing to save energy with lights and thermostat. Step one is to determine how to fund this improvement. Discussions will be integrated into the budget process.
- Install roof top solar panels on one or more buildings where practical to reduce electrical costs and provide education opportunities. The first step is to determine how to fund this improvement. Discussions will be integrated into the budget process.
- Build a partnership (through grants, organizations, master gardener and extension, etc.) between our faculty and community to cultivate designated research areas for green or sustainable land use. Implementation of this solution will require all who are seriously interested in green initiatives to assist. Student organizations, departments, and individuals will need to help identify partners and grants, and take initiative to write, and implement grant-funded projects.