

Environmental Committee  
Accomplishments in the 2014-2015 Academic Year

## 1. Climate Action Plan

During the previous year the Environmental Committee received funding in the amount of \$20,000 for a successful Strategic Initiative Priorities proposal to hire a consultant to help the Committee develop a climate action plan for MSU. The plan was developed during the 2014-2015 academic year and involved a partnership among the Environmental Committee; our consultant, Sebesta; and the Urban and Regional Studies Institute, which in the spring offered the course URBS 481/581, Sustainable Cities, from which the team was drawn to write up the plan.

The kickoff workshop for the project was convened on September 24, 2014, in the CSU Ballroom by Sebesta. At the workshop students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members provided suggestions about what they wanted to see in a climate action plan. President Davenport made introductory remarks and State Representative Clark Johnson also spoke in support of the project. There were 70 – 80 participants from across the campus and the community including faculty from six different colleges and staff from offices in Finance & Administration, Student Affairs, and two academic department offices.

From the suggestions at the kickoff workshop Sebesta generated a list of 47 strategies for the plan. The climate action plan (CAP) subcommittee of the Environmental Committee evaluated the strategies and classified them as *include*, *don't include*, *ongoing* (an example of an *ongoing* strategy: Follow Minnesota B3 guidelines for energy use in new buildings), and *promotional*. (A *promotional* strategy is one which does not have much greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction potential but which is highly visible and therefore useful for educational and promotional purposes; for example, Initiate student competitions around water or energy issues.)

The evaluated strategies were then sent to Sebesta. Sebesta organized them into six categories (buildings and energy, transportation, natural resources, funding, purchasing, and education and communication) and into short- and mid-term actions; added action steps; and provided analysis (implementation cost, annual savings, simple payback, and annual GHG savings) of some of the action steps in the buildings and energy, natural resources, transportation, and funding categories.

The CAP subcommittee identified the offices responsible for carrying out each of the action steps and the responsible party in each office, checked with some of the responsible parties for feasibility, then handed the project off to a team to write the report. The writing team consisted of three students in the Urban and Regional Studies Institute course URBS 581/481, Sustainable Cities, for whom the writing of the Plan was their class project. The writing team members interviewed the responsible parties for buy-in and to refine the action steps and determine the time and resources necessary to complete each step, then wrote the report.

During the writing of the report there was a shift in thinking about the organization of the strategies into categories and about the types of strategy. As a result of the change in thinking the natural resources

category was split into two (water and waste), the funding category was eliminated, and a purchasing category added: the six categories in the report are buildings and energy, transportation, water, waste, purchasing, and education and communication. The classification of strategies was also rethought and an additional type of strategy added. The strategies in the report are of three types: *mitigating* (potentially large GHG reduction potential – buildings and energy and transportation); *adaptive* (small GHG reduction potential but supportive of other aspects of sustainability – water, waste, and purchasing); and *promotional* (education and communication).

The writing team presented the report to the University Cabinet on May 11, 2015. The Cabinet approved the Plan to move forward through the Meet and Confer process at the beginning of the 2015-2016 academic year. The draft of the plan reported to the Cabinet is available online at the Environmental Committee website, [www.mnsu.edu/greencampus](http://www.mnsu.edu/greencampus).

## 2. Carbon Footprint Update

As a preliminary to developing a climate action plan Sebesta determined the carbon footprint of the campus for the academic year 2011-2012 (FY2012); their report can be found at [www.mnsu.edu/greencampus/carbonfootprint](http://www.mnsu.edu/greencampus/carbonfootprint). The idea is that the footprint will be updated annually and compared with the baseline year FY2012 to measure progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Environmental Committee has updated the footprint for FY2013. The principal result of the update is that greenhouse gas emissions increased by 2.3%. The increase was the result of an increase of 11.5% in emissions from burning natural gas and fuel oil for heat, due to an unusually cold winter. Greenhouse gas emissions from electricity, on the other hand, decreased by 0.5%.

## 3. RecycleMania

The Recycling Sub-Committee of the University Environmental Committee again sponsored RecycleMania 2015. This year Minnesota State University, Mankato competed against 329 other colleges and universities; participating schools represented more than 4.5 million students from 48 states, the District of Columbia and Canada.

The contest was marketed using ideas from webinars, RecycleMania information and Sub-committee members. Tables were set up at in the Centennial Student Union with RecycleMania promotional items. “20 Things Every College Student Can Do to Help the Environment” tip sheets were handed out and posters were hung up around campus. Results were entered each week with the joint cooperation of the Sub-committee and the campus waste handler LJP.



Colleges and universities competing in the eight-week competition were ranked according to how much recycling, trash and food waste they collected. Between the early-February kickoff and the tournament's final day on March 28<sup>th</sup>, participating schools collectively recycled or composted 80 million pounds of recyclables and organic materials, preventing the release of 129,411 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO<sub>2</sub>E) into the atmosphere, which is equivalent to preventing annual emissions from 25,375 cars.

MSU Mankato's rankings in specific categories were as follows:

- Grand Champion (recycling rate as a percentage of overall waste):  
MSU Mankato ranked 197 out of 232 total competitors
- Per Capita Classic (recycling of paper, cardboard, & bottles and cans per person):  
MSU Mankato ranked 258 out of 307 total competitors
- "Gorilla Prize" (recycling the highest gross tonnage of combined paper, cardboard & bottles and cans):  
MSU Mankato ranked 202 out of 308 total competitors
- Recycled Paper:  
MSU Mankato ranked 86 out of 107 total competitors
- Bottles and Cans  
MSU Mankato ranked 68 out of 104 total competitors

MSU, Mankato again participated in the "Game Day: Basketball Category" event. Our university was one of 26 colleges and universities that took part in this special category. Schools were compared based on recycling and waste minimization efforts made during a single home basketball game.

The MSU Environmental Committee is again sponsoring the University's participation in RecycleMania 2016, working to improve the University's recycling rate and to reduce our campus footprint, while increasing awareness and student involvement. More information and results can be obtained at [recyclemania.org](http://recyclemania.org).

#### **4. Recycling Guide (Education)**

The Recycling Guides were handed out at information tables during the RecycleMania competition period.

#### **5. Student Recycling Team**

The Student Recycling Team was set up in Fall 2014. The Team consists of work-study students employed by Building Services who assist the General Maintenance Worker Lead Recycling person with emptying recycling containers across campus. The students also help out with various activities on campus, including RecycleMania and other activities sponsored by the Environmental Committee and the division of Facilities Management, all of which are committed to establishing a campus culture supporting energy efficiency, resource conservation and sustainability – part of the University's Strategic Plan 2010-15.

#### **6. Tabling at campus events (Publicity)**

The Environmental Committee made its presence on campus known with a table at the Community Engagement Fair on September 4, 2014, in Meyers Field House, and with tabling events on campus on November 19, 2014 and in February and March 2015.

## 7. Commuter Survey

The Environmental Committee conducts a University-wide commuter survey to gather information for the commuter part of the carbon footprint update. The survey has been sent out electronically in the spring in 2014 and 2015 to all students, faculty, and staff. Some results are shown in Tables 1 and 2 below. The number of respondents is almost the same for both 2014 and 2015, as shown in Table 1. In 2015 most students, 40.1%, walked and the majority of faculty, 67.2%, and staff, 75.7%, drove alone.

**Table 1:**

	2014	2015
<b>Students</b>	15,659	15,372
<b>Faculty</b>	746	933
<b>Staff</b>	824	642
<b>Total</b>	17,229	16,947

**Table 2:**

2015	Drive Alone	Carpool	Bus	Bike	Walk	Telecommute	Compressed Week
<b>Students</b>	29.2%	5.5%	17.3%	4.6%	40.1%	1.9%	0.5%
<b>Faculty</b>	67.2%	6.0%	2.6%	4.0%	12.8%	0.7%	5.1%
<b>Staff</b>	75.7%	10.8%	1.0%	2.5%	7.1%	1.1%	1.0%

2014	Drive Alone	Carpool	Bus	Bike	Walk	Telecommute	Compressed Week
<b>Students</b>	32.0%	5.3%	14.9%	6.7%	38.3%	1.8%	1.1%
<b>Faculty</b>	74.7%	6.4%	1.7%	4.3%	7.6%	4.7%	0.5%
<b>Staff</b>	85.1%	7.5%	1.0%	2.7%	2.8%	0.7%	0.3%

## 8. Do the Math

The Environmental Committee was a co-sponsor, along with the College Democrats and Mn350 Mankato, of a showing of Do the Math in Ostrander Auditorium on April 23, 2015. Do the Math is a mini-documentary about a popular movement to take on the climate crisis by confronting the fossil fuel industry.

## 9. Campus Beautification Day

Environmental Committee members participated in the Campus Beautification day on May 5, 2015.

## 10. Bicycle repair stands

The three (3) bicycle repair stands continue to be utilized by the campus community. At each stand are attached an air pump and various bike tools for fixing flats and doing other basic repairs. More information about the stands can be found at [www.mnsu.edu/greencampus/bikerepairstands](http://www.mnsu.edu/greencampus/bikerepairstands).

### **11. Social Media / Green Campus Website (Publicity)**

The Environmental Committee maintains the [mnsu.edu/greencampus](http://mnsu.edu/greencampus) website and [facebook.com/msumankatogreencampus](https://facebook.com/msumankatogreencampus).

### **12. Barnes & Noble Relationship**

A contribution from the Barnes & Noble campus bookstore has been used to cover speaker expenses and to help with expenses for the Sustainability Expo last year. The Environmental Committee appreciates their support.

### **13. Bus Ridership**

Bus ridership has grown from 198,000 rides in academic year 2011-2012 to 468,000 rides in 2014-2015, a 136% increase in three years. New routes have been added over the past three years and times have started earlier and ended later.

The surge in ridership is a direct result of the creation of a mandatory Green Transportation Fee (now 90 cents per credit hour). Because the Fee is used to pay for the buses, students, faculty and staff can ride for free on presentation of their MavCard. This concept first surfaced at an Environmental Committee meeting and was subsequently championed by the Parking Advisory Committee and Student Senate. Parking permit sales have dipped as a result; there are now close to 300 vacant stalls (of 5,600 spaces total) at peak demand periods during class days.

### **14. Meetings**

Meetings are held on the third Friday of each month from 10-11 am.

The following individuals have contributed to the writing of this report:

David Cowan  
Elizabeth Holcomb  
Medea Myhra  
Louis Schwartzkopf  
Gary Urban