The Sustainability Buzz at Chico State

The bees aren’t the only thing buzzing on the CSU Chico campus this spring. From ranking as a finalist in a national higher education sustainability competition, to the largest student-run sustainability conference in the nation and defending a state title in an energy reduction competition within residence halls, Sustainability is loud and proud here at Chico State.

California State University, Chico has been named a finalist in a national sustainability competition.

Climate Leadership Awards

The annual Climate Leadership Awards recognize colleges and universities making advances in climate leadership and campus innovation.Hosted by Second Nature, a nonprofit aimed at increasing sustainability in higher education, the awards are a competition among colleges and universities that are signatories of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). Finalists will produce a video chronicling their campus’ sustainability efforts, and winners will be chosen by a public, online vote. Voting will be open throughout Earth Month, in April, on Second Natures website, www.secondnature.org; winners will be announced in late spring. A link to CSU, Chico’s video will be shared when available.

- CSU Chico, News
The Campus Conservation Nationals competition is an annual sustainability competition held at hundreds of schools across the country. Here at California State University Chico, we hold our own individual competition between our own residence halls, called the Wildcat Sustainability Showdown. This is held between the Shasta and Lassen residence halls, and this year we partially included Sutter Hall. We have one particular key to our competition that we believe is very substantial, and that would be our employment of Eco Reps.

Eco-reps are students who have been identified by their resident advisers as well as residence community coordinators as being leaders in their hall. We specifically ask RA’s to compile a list of students from their halls who are friendly, enthusiastic, and willing to promote sustainability. These students are then introduced to the program and offered incentives to help them get on board. We have a total of about 10 Eco Reps in each hall, and these students are the liaisons between us and the residents.

The biggest factor in making this competition work is the constant access to someone who is dedicated to furthering the success of CSUC in the Campus Conservation Nationals. All of our Eco Reps have been educated on some basic saving measures as well as encouraged to branch out to other residents to suggest other savings techniques. We have come to understand that not all residents will be overtly excited to participate in the Sustainability Showdown, but we have still been significantly more effective in reducing energy consumption. We believe that a big part of this success is contributed to those residents who are constantly reminding their neighbors to do the right thing when it comes to conservation.

All Eco Reps have the ability to earn prizes and incentives along the course of the competition based upon their effort and success levels. We highly encourage all Eco Reps to have fun with the other members in their halls and we believe that if all of the residents in a hall are enjoying the competitive atmosphere, they will save significantly higher savings. The competitive spirit is increased by the fact that Lassen and Shasta are identical dormitories. These Eco Reps live less than 100 yards away from each other, and we believe they are the biggest factor we have to helping reduce energy consumption in housing. We have found that when students lead students, there is a significantly higher savings percentage measurement. Eco Reps are a key factor in California State University Chico’s success in the annual Campus Conservation Nationals competition, and they help lead our students to major energy reductions.
If you haven’t heard already, over the next few days Chico State will host its 9th annual “This Way to Sustainability” conference. A conference which brings together faculty, staff, students, administrators, public officials and citizens from near and far in search of common ground for developing solutions to the global problems we all face in today's world. From keynote speakers, workshops, seminars, posters, and facilitated discussions, this year's conference will host over 100 speakers and 1,400 participants for what will truly be a tremendous educational opportunity.

Although this year's conference will make a priority of addressing food and agriculture, our PowerSave Campus team will be putting on a Green Workforce Development session. It will feature a panel of professionals in the ‘Green’ focused or related field, and give participants the opportunity to network and ask questions. This session will be held on Thursday from 3-3:50pm.

Thank you to all our Stakeholders who are participating as a featured professional!
There has been an immediate push to reduce water consumption in the state of California by 20% due to the recently declared drought state of emergency. Californians are being asked to cut down on their water usage in order to conserve fresh drinking water for the fast-approaching hot summer months. What are you doing to conserve? Here are just a few ways you can help:

- Use the washing machine for FULL loads only
- Wash clothes in cold water
- Run dishwasher only when FULL
- When washing dishes by hand, don’t let the water run
- Install aerators on faucets to reduce flow
- Compost instead of garbage disposal
- Take shorter showers-5 minutes or less
- Use a low flow shower head
- Don’t water your lawn
- Don’t let the water run when brushing teeth & shaving
- Turn the water off when washing your hair & hands

And if you really want to go that extra mile…

- When it’s yellow, let it mellow
- Use baby-wipes instead of taking a shower
- Use dry shampoo instead of washing your hair

Water is California’s most precious natural resource and how we use it today will impact our future in every aspect, from what we eat, to how we live our lives. We simply cannot afford to waste. For more information, please visit: saveourh2o.org
For most students, dorm life represents a transition from living at home to living on your own. To simplify this transition, University Housing bundles dorm fees to include food and utilities, like water and electricity. While this approach seems simpler in the short run, its long term consequences leave students with poor sustainable living skills. However, by following these ten recommendations, any student can transform their living space into a comfortable, eco-friendly environment.

1. Be cognizant when using electronic devices and help reduce your energy consumption. In our technologically driven society, many students are inundated with electronics and often use multiple devices at one time. Try to reduce your energy use and limit yourself to one electronic device at a time. To further reduce your energy consumption, it is imperative to turn off your electronics when they’re not in use. Importantly, watch out for energy vampires, or electrical devices that draw power while they are switched off. The electrical load of a simple LED light or microwave clock often draws more power over the lifetime of the appliance than the particular function of that appliance. Thus, a power strip is a good way to easily turn off all your devices at once. If your electronics are not plugged into a power strip, unplug them manually when they’re not in use. This prevents phantom load, which really adds up when you have a TV, iPod, cell phone, stereo, game system, etc.

2. Change out those inefficient incandescent light bulbs for more efficient, longer lasting Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFL’S). CFLs use seventy-five percent less energy than incandescent bulbs because they require less wattage to produce the same amount of light. Afraid of the higher price tag? CFLs use less energy, therefore your energy costs are less. CFLs also last much longer, so the price extends over a longer period of time when compared to an incandescent bulb.

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3. Fill your wardrobe with second hand items from Vintage boutiques, thrift stores and estate sales. Besides reducing waste to landfill, wearing used clothing is also more environmentally friendly than buying new clothes which have been transported across the world by oil intensive processes. Without doubt, second-hand clothing gives your wardrobe variety and imagination, steering away from the common trends found at the mall.

4. Buy organic cotton sheets, towels and curtains, which are devoid of pesticides and harsh dyes. Cotton uses about twenty-five percent of the world’s insecticides and more than ten percent of the world’s pesticides, which amounts to about 55 million pounds of pesticides sprayed annually. Some of these chemicals are highly toxic, yet organic cotton is grown completely without them. Ultimately, buying products with organic fabrics helps reduce the environmental impact of pesticides and also protects your body from the deleterious effects of noxious chemicals.

5. Furnish your dorm room locally with used furniture. Because of the amount of waste generated at the end of the school year by students clearing out their dorm rooms, be responsible with what you purchase and try to buy furniture and decorations that you can bring to your new home. Try sourcing furniture from local resale shops and Craigslist. You will be able to find beautifully unique furnishings, while reducing your impact on the planet. If you go home for the summer, find a cheap storage unit to store your belongings for the following year.

6. Do your laundry in cold water. This will save you money on energy used to heat the water and will get your clothes just as clean. To save further on money and energy, dry your clothing on a drying rack, which is affordable, light weight and easy to break down and hide away when not in use.

7. Buy a Brita water purifying pitcher and reusable water bottle. This will save a substantial amount of water and petroleum used in the manufacture and transportation of bottled water. Chico’s own Klean Kanteen makes a wide variety of stainless steel cups and bottles that help prevent millions of pounds of plastic from entering the waste stream.

8. Get a plant to make your room feel more homey, and it will help sequester carbon dioxide from your living space. Plus, you can name your exotic new friend and watch him or her grow!

9. Buy reusable silverware and plates instead of going with the plastic, disposable variety. Invest in some nice cups and plates you can store and reuse in the future, as they will surely last beyond the dorms. You can also invest in some reusable bags to avoid bringing home loads of plastic ones.

10. When buying appliances for your room, look for Energy-Star appliances, which use up to 50% less energy than standard models. The most efficient option is to go fridge-less, though sharing one communally with dorm mates or friends is also effective.

Though it may seem challenging initially, living sustainably should not be a daunting process. By shifting your perceptions of how your actions effect the community and the environment, you will come to see how sustainable living is fun and rewarding. It is a continuously evolving process that you can always learn more about and teach to friends and family. The small steps that you can take initially will make definitive impacts on your wellbeing and save you money in the process.
Google. A word synonymous with the internet, cell phones, and our daily lives. Even though this technological company is best known for being behind self-driving cars and digital glasses, one of their unfamiliar ventures is their investment in clean energy.

Google spent $2.25 billion in the last quarter on data center and infrastructure spending alone, which is one of the reasons the company is diverting their attention to solar, wind, and other alternative energies that can supply their energy with the least environmental and financial footprint. The company made 15 wind and solar investments totaling more than $1 billion, which have a total capacity of producing two gigawatts of power around the world- an equivalent of the Hoover’s Dam worth of power generation.

Rick Needham, Google’s director of energy and sustainability, says that about 34 percent of Google’s operations are powered by renewable power. One of the most recent improvements to their renewable energy strategy has been the investment in the world’s largest solar thermal project in Ivanpah, that uses 347,000 sun-facing mirrors to produce 392 megawatts of electricity. This project alone will produce enough electricity for more than 140,000 California homes.

Tech companies investing in solar energy is not only beneficial for their end-costs, but also sends a great message to society that renewable resources are a viable source for energy, and that sustainability is a great thing to participate in. Google is setting the bar for what companies can do to reduce their dependence on fossil fuels, and hopefully other companies follow suit. The next time you search something using Google Search, just know there’s a good possibility your results were brought to you in a fairly sustainable manner.
Meet Our New Interns!
Alyssa Cordova and Bree Russell

Alyssa Cordova is pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science with an emphasis in energy and earth resources and a minor in Management for Sustainability. She will be graduating this spring, 2014. Alyssa has remained actively involved in sustainably efforts throughout the Chico State campus and the community for all four years of her collegiate career. Her passion for the natural world and preserving its longevity is what led her to apply for this position. She strongly believes that behavioral change is necessary and must occur for the well being of the planet and its species. Being a part of this organization allows her to be instrumental in the efforts to improve human behavior by promoting a sustainable lifestyle. So remember, “it is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do little - do what you can.” –Sydney Smith

Brianna Russell, a Sustainable Manufacturing student as California State University, Chico, has devoted her college experience to promoting sustainability. Bree's involvement during her time in Chico has been diverse and enriching. Academically, she has focused on reducing waste and increasing efficiency in manufacturing processes. Furthermore, Bree has interned for the campus sustainability office, coordinating community outreach. Her involvement with PowerSave Campus stemmed from her desire to improve the campus in a meaningful way.

Bree spends a great deal of her free time mountain biking and hiking the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. An avid tinkerer, she is also waist deep in the restoration of a vintage Honda café racer. Regardless of what she may be doing any given day, the tenets of sustainability inspire Bree to always put the planet first.