

## Essay VI: An Environmentally-Engaged Campus

*Believing that each generation owes something to those who follow, we will create environmentally literate citizens, who embrace sustainability as a way of living. We will be wise stewards of scarce resources and, in seeking to develop the whole person, be aware that our individual and collective actions have economic, social, and environmental consequences locally, regionally, and globally.*

The update of *The Strategic Plan for the Future* added a new, [sixth strategic priority](#) on sustainability, stewardship, and environmental awareness. This priority was added after extensive campus conversation with faculty, staff, and students about how California State University, Chico could build on its strengths to create institutional distinctiveness. For Chico State, [sustainability](#) is both a goal and a means to help engage students in democratic controversies. Chico State understands it has a significant role to play in helping students become democratic citizens. [Engaging students](#) in discussions about the stewardship of public lands, conservation and sustainable economic development is one way to achieve this goal. To meet these complex [objectives](#), CSU, Chico has over the last decade developed structures, academic programs, and expanded community outreach activities.

### Strengthen Reputation for Environmental Stewardship



In November 2006, the University sponsored a conference, “This Way to Sustainability: Connecting to the Community,” that drew over 900 registrants. The conference grew out of the [American Democracy Project](#) and a partnership with Butte Community College. A planning community from Butte Community College, the Associated Students groups from Butte Community College and California State University, Chico, and members of the community developed the conference. This conference will be held annually as a continuing partnership between the university, the college, and the community. It is one of the ways in which we are raising our profile and capitalizing on existing strengths.

### Structures for Support

A comprehensive organization, The Bidwell Environmental Institute, ([BEI](#)) was created in 1999 to support environmental research and education, and to make use of newly acquired land that forms the heart of a system of preserves (now totaling over 4,500 acres). The BEI is a joint partnership of the Colleges of Agriculture, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Engineering, and Natural Sciences. Its mandate has been expanded, under the most recent update of the Strategic Plan, to be the University’s comprehensive center for sustainability, stewardship of public lands, sustainable business practices, outreach to the community, and environmental studies. More than 60 [faculty members](#) are already involved in BEI teams and projects. It also has a responsibility to raise funds from private and public partners to support the work of the center.

The first [sustainability assessment](#) of CSU, Chico was completed in spring 2005. The assessment specified six sustainability indicators: energy, water, transportation/planning, materials/waste, purchasing, and learning & governance for sustainability. The assessment specified how we are doing and what we could learn from others, and it gave direction for future efforts.

This campus was recently recognized as among the top one percent of all universities in the country for its commitment to civic engagement, service, and service learning. We have systematically built capacity to achieve these goals. Our Associated Students ([AS](#)) have several programs focused on the environment. The AS has a recycling coordinator that serves both the campus and the local community. The AS recently hired a sustainability director to oversee business practices within their corporation. They fund the Environmental Affairs Resource Council, and last year the students passed a fee to fund sustainable practices campuswide. The University recently hired a [director of sustainability](#) to coordinate student projects and connect them to the academic programs. In addition, Community Action Volunteers in Education ([CAVE](#)) is a student-supported group that has deepened their connection to environmental organizations throughout the North State and is working to develop placements for our students. The Internship Program is working to develop internships in businesses focused on sustainability.

## Academic Programs

All of the seven colleges that make up the University have one or more courses focused on sustainability. In total we have 147 courses spread throughout the [curriculum](#), which allow students to complete their GE requirements with a focus on sustainability. The [College of Business](#) has developed a Minor in Sustainable Business Practices, which will be launched in the spring of 2007.

## Research and Creative Activities

The grants and contracts office averages approximately \$24–30 million a year, which, when factored for size, puts us among the leaders in the California State University System. Much of our research dollars come from work that focuses on the local watershed and bioregion. Over 10 years, research and laboratory capacity was expanded to support efforts in this area, e.g., hydrology, fire ecology, organic agriculture, range management, and riparian habitats. The deans of agriculture, behavioral and social sciences, engineering, and natural sciences collaborated to hire faculty who could support interdisciplinary programs and who would form the core of [applied research teams](#) that focused on environmental issues.

## Sustainable Practices

California State University, Chico is not only in the community, it is [of the community](#). We see ourselves as a citizen of the city, as well as of the region. In this capacity, we seek to model sustainable business [practices](#), stewardship of the land, so that others might learn from us. We encourage students and community members to measure their ecological footprints, to learn how we are managing the campus using non-toxic and organic products, how we conserve energy, as well as how we manage campus waste. The campus recently installed a 364 kilowatt [solar array](#), which can power the equivalent of 110 homes, both to save energy and to demonstrate how alternative energy sources can be employed.

## Summary

CSU, Chico is excited about its new priority of being an environmentally-engaged campus. It aspires to become a leader in environmental education, environmental sciences and policy analyses, the building of environmentally-friendly facilities, the stewardship of public lands, and the practicing of sustainability principles. Chico will continue to build its institutional capacity in this area so that it can become the distinctive “sustainable” campus in California.