

Sustainable Endowments Institute again gives high grades to SU's initiatives

Syracuse University's administration has been named a leader by the Sustainable Endowments Institute, recognized in a group of only 42 colleges and universities nationwide for leading action regarding sustainability at the administrative or trustee level. This includes policies or commitments to sustainability in the institution's mission statement or master plan, and also commitments to local, national or international sustainability agreements. In February, SU Chancellor and President Nancy Cantor committed the University to a leadership role in the fight against global warming by signing the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment, sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

This recognition was recently presented in the Sustainable Endowments Institute's College Sustainability Report Card, which grades higher education institutions in the United States and Canada in eight categories of sustainable practices and initiatives. Now in its second year, the College Sustainability Report Card is the only independent sustainability evaluation of campus operations and endowment investments; it assesses the 200 public and private universities with the largest endowments, ranging from \$230 million to nearly \$35 billion.

This year, SU's overall grade for sustainable progress was a "B-," up from a "C+" last year, based on the Sustainable Endowments Institute's averaging of the eight categories.

According to the 2008 Report Card, SU again earned top grades in the categories of "Administration" and "Climate Change & Energy." In earning an "A" in each of these categories, the University is recognized for its implementation of several administrative committees addressing campus sustainability issues and for creating a Sustainability Division of the Department of Energy and Computing Management. In the "Climate Change & Energy" category, SU is lauded for its \$1.8 million investment in energy efficiency; a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification policy for all new building and renovation projects; and the purchase of renewable energy credits equal to 22,000 megawatt-hours of small-hydro and wind energy, making SU one of the country's leading higher education purchasers of renewable energy.

"Syracuse University has become a leader among higher education institutions in the areas of energy conservation, green building and sustainability for maintaining and continuously expanding its sustainable efforts in all areas of campus," says Louis G. Marcoccia, SU executive vice president and chief financial officer.

In the "Food & Recycling," category, SU again earned a "B" for efforts that include offering more locally produced foods in the dining center menus; offering an organic food section in the Schine Dining Center; implementing a beverage bottle program and providing students with "to-go" meal containers to reduce the amount of paper and plastics used in the dining centers; and continuously promoting the University's recycling efforts and programs. The University's commitment to follow LEED guidelines for all new building and renovation projects since 2005 again earned SU a "B" in the "Green Building" category. SU has also targeted a number of existing buildings to be prepared for certification in LEED-EB (existing building).

In the category of "Transportation" -- added to the report card this year -- SU earned a "B" for the free public transportation options provided to students, faculty and staff, and also for reducing carbon dioxide emissions by running the majority of its buses with clean, natural gas.

In the categories of "Endowment Transparency" and "Shareholder Engagement," SU raised its "F's" of last year into a "D" and "C," respectively. In the category of "Investment Priorities," the University was again given a "C." According to University Treasurer Barbara Wells, as a private institution, SU is not required to make its individual investment holdings public and, in fact, a number of its holdings change daily. The University does disclose its asset allocation, performance and the market value of its endowment fund through its participation in the annual endowment survey of the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). This year, SU changed its proxy voting protocol to better promote sustainability through responsible investment practices. This change, along with other added sustainable investing resources, has helped SU better ensure that investment decisions align with the University's values and priorities while still achieving its ! goals.

Among some of the New York institutions graded in the report, Columbia University and Cornell University each received a "B" overall; Hamilton College and New York University each received a "C+;" the University of Rochester a "C," Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute a "C-," and the Rochester Institute of Technology a "D-."

Syracuse Record – Sara Miller

To view the complete report, visit <http://www.endowmentinstitute.org>.