

CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO ACHIEVE NET ZERO GOALS

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

The University of Nebraska Medical Center with its clinical partner Nebraska Medicine, (collectively the Med Center) have set ambitious goals to achieve net zero emissions, net zero waste, and 54 percent reduction in water use (net zero water) goals by 2030. These goals are all concurrent with their Better Buildings Challenge goal of 20 percent energy use intensity reduction across their 6.5 million square feet committed portfolio by 2022.

To achieve these goals, the Med Center developed a variety of campus engagement tools that help build sustainability skills amongst their employees and students. The engagement of students, faculty, and staff is critical in the Med Center's ability to reach its goals. The Med Center worked with Verdis Group, a sustainability consulting firm, to create an internal Sustainability Survey that measures sustainability knowledge, awareness, and behaviors of employees and students; it is conducted every two years and assigns a score of 1-100. In the first five years of the Survey, scores improved from 45 to 59. The Med Center has set a new campus engagement goal of 85 by 2030.

To help increase this engagement score and reach their goals, the Med Center created the LiveGreen Ambassadors Program, launched in 2016 as an employee engagement structure for volunteers passionate about incorporating sustainability into their role and department.

ORGANIZATION TYPE

Healthcare

BARRIER

Employee and staff engagement; Achieving net zero energy, water, and waste goals.

SOLUTION

Established an employee engagement structure known as the LiveGreen Ambassadors Program.

OUTCOME

Raised resource awareness, engaged employees and students; reduction in energy, water, and waste.

POLICIES

- Better Buildings Challenge goal: Reduce energy use intensity 20 percent by 2022
- Achieve net zero carbon by 2030
- Achieve net zero water, a 54% reduction in water use intensity, by 2030
- Achieve zero waste, a 90% waste diversion, by 2030
- Achieve a campus engagement score of 85 by 2030

PROCESS

The Med Center worked with Verdis Group to develop the survey, program, and training materials. The sustainability survey was developed based off of targeted behaviors the Med Center was looking to encourage. Once a baseline was established, Verdis Group and the Med Center determined which tools and strategies would be most effective to bring about the desired campus engagement. As a result, the LiveGreen Ambassador program was created along with supporting initiatives that encouraged reducing energy, water, and waste.

The program and its volunteers are supported by the Office of Sustainability and receive annual 1-day trainings in addition to occasional online training/TED talks, brief articles, and emails with information. No prior sustainability expertise is needed to volunteer; however, they must be willing to commit to modeling sustainable behaviors and providing their colleagues with support in the implementation of new sustainability measures and tools.

The LiveGreen Ambassadors are integral part of implementing the campus Energy Curtailment Campaign, an awareness effort that asks the entire campus to engage in energy-saving behaviors to reduce peak energy demand, consequently keeping costs lower by saving energy. Certain energy saving behaviors include closing blinds, turning off the lights, taking the stairs, closing fume hoods, and turning off electronics not in use. When the campus is in curtailment mode, certain spaces are pre-cooled at night, and all thermostats are locked, allowing the campus energy system to keep all spaces at a tolerable temperature in the most efficient way possible. It is important to note that while the entire campus is asked to engage, all patient, lab, and animal areas are exempt.

In addition to their traditional responsibilities, members of the LiveGreen Ambassadors program engage the campus in additional activities throughout the year including:

- *Shut the Sash*, which informs employees on the importance of closing fume hoods when not in use;
- *Stairwellness*, which encourages people to be healthy and save energy by taking the stairs rather than the elevator; and
- *TravelSmart*, which promotes biking, carpooling, taking the bus, and walking and has over 2,800 registered users.

With the support, supervision, and outreach of the LiveGreen Ambassadors, the Med Center is able to engage students and employees in broad range of sustainability efforts that drive progress towards achieving its goals.

OUTREACH

Sustainability Survey: Measures sustainability knowledge, awareness, and behaviors of all employees and students; it is conducted every two years and assigns an overall campus engagement score of 1-100. In the first five years of the Survey, scores improved from 45 to 59.

Campus Energy Curtailment Campaign and Campus Metabolism webpage: Motivational strategies to engage occupants include prizes, a quick survey that allows you to vote for selected UNMC or Nebraska Medicine senior leaders to get pied, and reminders of why curtailment matters. Med Center faculty, students, and staff can access the [University's Campus Metabolism](#) webpage which displays curtailment status and real-time data on campus building energy usage, as well as a 3-day history. The Office of Sustainability promotes the reasons behind curtailment, encourages energy-saving behaviors, and explains changes they should expect to see as a result either by email, an intranet story, or through the LiveGreen Ambassadors.

OUTCOMES

- Campus Engagement Score: In the first five years, scores improved from 45 to 59. The Med Center has set a new campus engagement goal of 85 by 2030.
- LiveGreen Ambassadors results: Since the program was initiated, more than 130 LiveGreen Ambassadors have been trained.

MEASURING SUCCESS

As of 2017, the Med Center has made the following progress towards its goals:

- Campus Engagement Score: In the first five years, scores improved from 45 to 59
- Better Buildings Challenge goal: Energy performance improved by 11% from a 2012 baseline, making progress towards a goal of 20% EUI reduction by 2022
- Net zero carbon: Carbon emissions reduced by 8% from a 2012 baseline, making progress towards achieving net zero carbon by 2030
- Net zero water: Water performance improved by 17% from a 2012 baseline, making progress towards a goal of 54% WUI reduction by 2030
- Net zero waste: Waste diversion increased from 25% to 27% from 2012 baseline, making progress towards a goal of net zero waste by 2030

LiveGreen Ambassadors contribute to an increased awareness in water use and waste. Students and employees are not only paying better attention to the water they use, but they also regularly report water issues – everything from dripping faucets to broken sprinkler heads. The culture has also been changed with Operations & Maintenance technicians; small leaks are never acceptable, and they are to be proactive in reporting and repairing all issues. This campus-wide awareness has resulted in significant savings without any major mechanical upgrades.