



THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND

STRATEGIC PLAN for
CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY
and CLIMATE ACTION



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Message from the President



Whether you look at the increasing frequency and length of droughts across the world or the extreme weather changes right here in Rhode Island, the effects of climate change are increasingly evident. Climate disruption due to global warming threatens the progress humanity has achieved over the last 10,000 years. In 2014, Rhode Island's governor signed an executive order to form the Rhode Island Climate Change Council and charged it with developing a comprehensive approach to address potential threats from climate change

to the state's environment, economy, and people. The council is also charged with reducing Rhode Island's greenhouse gas emissions.

The University of Rhode Island, a leader in education, research, and engagement, is uniquely positioned to help the council achieve its goals. By shaping a greener, more sustainable future for our students, faculty, staff, and extended community, URI leads by example and directly combats the threats of climate change.

At URI, sustainability is woven into the very fabric of our values, our operations, and our educational pursuits. Our university operations strive for climate neutrality, while our students and researchers are becoming today's leaders in understanding and developing solutions to global climate change. A land-grant and sea-grant university, URI possesses strong local and worldwide connections, allowing us to share knowledge beyond university borders. Our campus teems with talented and passionate individuals who are dedicated to bettering the lives of their fellow Rhode Islanders and the global community.

Research institutions play an important role in shaping our Earth's future. Through collaborations across the state and around the world, URI fosters creative solutions and promotes interdisciplinary conversations that will spur the worldwide movements for sustainability, wise environmental stewardship, conservation, and resiliency.

Sincerely,

David M. Dooley
President

Message from the Vice President for Administration and Finance



It's an exciting time to be at the University of Rhode Island, as we continue to attract record numbers of outstanding students, transform URI by building innovative centers and facilities for learning and living, and hire dynamic leading-edge faculty from around the world.

Our enrollment now tops 18,000, and we are building a \$150 million center for engineering and a 500-bed residence hall. Since 2007,

we've invested \$607 million in capital projects.

With such tremendous growth in all parts of the University operation, I am happy to report on the expansion of another critical component of our mission—sustainability.

We have scholars who lead the way around the globe in sustainable fisheries, coastal resilience, climate action, pollution control, public health, and other critically important issues, and we have also done our part in big and small ways to make URI an environmental leader.

We are reducing waste by reusing and recycling, choosing transportation alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles, and making changes to reduce energy and water consumption. But we are also taking an enterprising approach to major projects across the University that involve conversions to energy-efficient lighting, enhancements to our steam and other heating and ventilation systems, storm water management improvements, and protections for our aquifers, which provide our campus with high quality drinking water.

Through our teaching, research, and outstanding campus initiatives, we hope to inspire change in our community members, and serve as a model for the state, nation, and world through our collective actions.

Join us as we work to make URI more beautiful and sustainable for generations to come.

Sincerely,

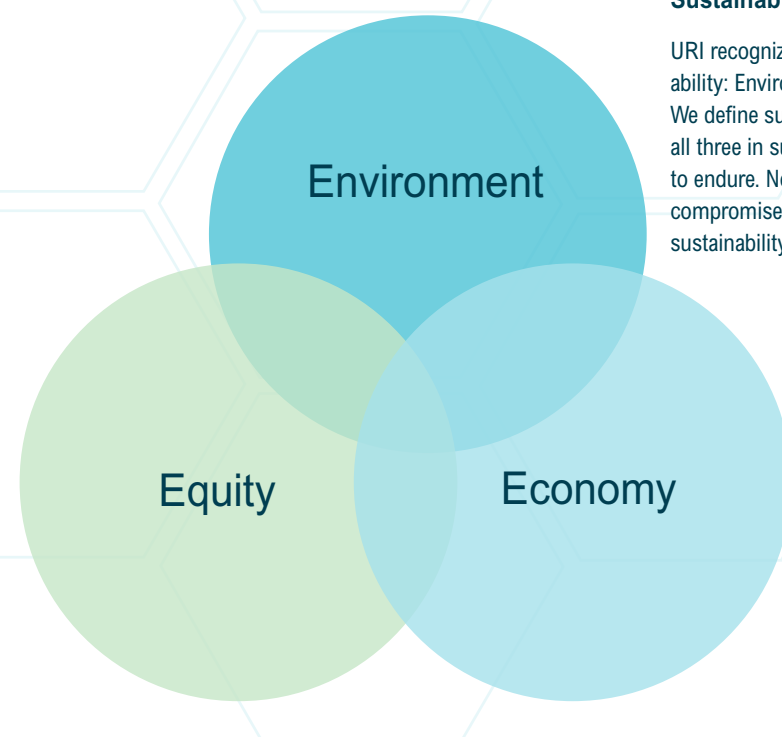
Abigail Rider
Vice President for Administration and Finance

President's Council on Sustainability

In 2007, URI was among the first institutions to join the American College and University President's Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). Today the ACUPCC, now known as the Climate Leadership Network, is a national network of almost 700 colleges and universities that have committed to achieving eventual climate neutrality and integrating sustainability into the curriculum.

To provide strategic guidance and oversight of the University's commitment to sustainability, the President's Council on Sustainability, led by the vice president for administration and finance, was formed. The council is comprised of URI faculty, staff, and students to provide the most diverse representation of the URI community. The council's mission includes reviewing plans, providing advice on best practices, supporting initiatives, and imagining solutions for the greening of URI, from reducing the University's carbon footprint to inculcating sustainable values across the URI community.

It is through the continued leadership of URI's current administration and the President's Council on Sustainability that this, the University's first Strategic Plan for Campus Sustainability and Climate Action, has been drafted.



Sustainability

URI recognizes the three Es of sustainability: Environment, Economy, and Equity. We define sustainability as the balance of all three in support of the Earth's capacity to endure. None of the three Es can be compromised in a successful, long-term sustainability plan.



About the Strategic Plan for Campus Sustainability and Climate Action

The Strategic Plan for Campus Sustainability and Climate Action represents the University's commitment to a more sustainable future for URI, and for our state, nation, and the world.

The goals of the plan are focused on these critical areas:

1. Academics and research
2. Engagement and outreach
3. Greenhouse gas emissions reduction
 - a. Transportation alternatives
 - b. Energy conservation and efficiency
 - c. Resource Management

The University of Rhode Island recognizes its unique capacity to foster a more sustainable society through teaching, research, and outreach and by serving as a model of innovative practices and sustainable systems. URI has been at the forefront of environmental research for decades, helping to develop a greater understanding of ecology while also examining the impact of human activities on ecosystems as varied as the deep sea and suburban backyards.

We aim to reduce the University's environmental footprint and to prepare our students for the most pressing global challenges of the 21st century. This strategic plan will help URI address environmental impacts in measurable ways. Working groups consisting of students, faculty, and staff have been established to assess existing sustainability initiatives and identify opportunities across the University. Additionally, this plan complements URI President David M. Dooley's Transformational Goals for the 21st Century, as well as the University's Academic Strategic Plan, and will therefore help URI strengthen its reputation as a forward-thinking learning environment.

This plan is designed to be a dynamic document and informative benchmarking tool for URI, with an annual process in place to make updates, reassess available resources, and address new challenges as they arise. This annual review will ensure that the goals, strategies, and tactics described continue to be relevant and realistic.

Vision

The University of Rhode Island will be an institute of higher education that engages all members of the community in the pursuit of practices and principles leading to a healthy environment, a sustainable economy, and environmental and social equity.





GOAL
01

Academics and Research

Strengthen students' knowledge of global sustainability topics by increasing academic and research opportunities. Ensure that URI students graduate with a foundation of knowledge in sustainability issues via formal curricula, and provide opportunities for students to engage in researching solutions for global sustainability issues.

Strategy 1

Increase environmental literacy among all undergraduate and graduate students.

TACTICS

1. Develop sustainability-themed courses for all students; engage first-year and transfer students in sustainability learning and practices as a principle of global citizenry and membership in the URI community.
2. Provide students with sustainability learning experiences outside the formal curriculum.
3. Increase enrollment in the sustainability minor.
4. Increase experiential learning opportunities that teach sustainability and global citizenship.
5. Develop curriculum-change programs around sustainability for faculty.

Strategy 2

Increase research opportunities that incorporate links between the University and local community and global sustainability issues.

TACTICS

1. Provide resources for students and faculty members engaged in sustainability research.
2. Acknowledge and reward interdisciplinary research in faculty promotion and tenure decisions.

Academics and Research





Engagement and Outreach

GOAL 02

Engagement and Outreach

Develop and implement outreach programs that promote a culture of sustainability. Equip students, faculty, and staff with the tools, knowledge, and motivation to adopt behavior changes that promote sustainability.

Strategy 1

Engage and build the URI community as a living laboratory for sustainability; support, publicize, and share efforts that demonstrate best practices and principles.

TACTICS

1. Identify current URI programs, operations, and completed projects, and showcase them to the University and to our community partners as qualitative and quantitative contributions to URI's sustainability mission.
2. Ensure sustainability principles are integrated into the current Kingston Campus Master Plan, as well as other current and future URI campus master plans.
3. Increase ecological literacy among staff and faculty.
4. Develop community engagement strategies and additional living-learning community (LLC) opportunities for students, encouraging them to create a university-wide living laboratory for sustainability.
5. Seek opportunities to incorporate sustainability ideals and principles at all campuses: Kingston, W. Alton Jones, Narragansett Bay, and Providence.

6. Collaborate with URI Cooperative Extension to provide ongoing community training in sustainable horticulture, agriculture, and energy and water conservation/quality.
7. Design communication materials to help the URI community understand its role in supporting sustainability initiatives, reducing energy consumption, and lowering emissions.

Strategy 2

Raise awareness of and provide support for URI's current sustainability outreach programs, develop new programs, and collaborate with local municipalities, private entities, and citizen groups.

TACTICS

1. Strengthen existing partnerships and develop new partnerships with local small businesses; encourage franchises that operate on URI campuses to develop sustainability plans; provide guidance and support for their efforts.
2. Engage alumni in sustainability programs and initiatives.
3. Create opportunities for staff and faculty to engage with the local community through volunteer and philanthropic sustainability initiatives.

Strategy 3

Increase public recognition of URI as a leader in sustainability.

TACTICS

1. Identify and celebrate existing URI sustainability initiatives and programs.
2. Market URI sustainability resources and programs to strengthen our reputation as a green campus and effectively communicate our commitment to sustainability.
3. Use available outlets to share news about URI's sustainability programs and initiatives (e.g. local radio, television, newspaper, and magazines; URI external communications such as *URI News*; and nonprofit organizations such as AASHE—the Association for Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education).





Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction

GOAL 03

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction

Reduce the University's greenhouse gas emissions. Building on successes to date, strive to reduce URI's emissions in alignment with the Rhode Island Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan; focus on initiatives related to transportation alternatives, energy conservation and efficiency, and resource management.

Transportation Alternatives

Strategy 1

Significantly reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips taken by students, staff, and faculty to/from URI campuses. *

TACTICS

1. Promote and encourage ridership of available public transit services (i.e. Rhode Island Public Transit Authority—RIPTA—and Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority—MBTA).
2. Create a robust intramural shuttle system to facilitate access to the Kingston Campus core and other campus destinations where parking is restricted.
3. Establish baseline data on number of campus commutes per SOV and on RIPTA.
4. Encourage bicycle ridership as an alternative to SOV trips.
5. Enhance “walkability” of Kingston Campus community to facilitate access to the campus core and other campus destinations by foot; favor pedestrian-friendly access routes.
6. Develop a priority parking and carpool program to encourage use of alternative-fueled vehicles and high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) commutes to URI campuses.
7. Restructure parking permit fees; consider reduced fees for carpool and alternative-fueled vehicles.

Strategy 2

Reduce emissions through improved use of alternative transportation and fuel alternatives.

TACTICS

1. Streamline process of collecting transportation-related emissions data to track reduction progress.
2. Increase the number of URI fleet vehicles with higher-than-average fuel efficiency and that use cleaner fuels; decrease overall number of URI fleet vehicles by 2025.

Strategy 3

Communicate opportunities for transit alternatives to the URI community.

TACTICS

1. Ensure that sustainability themes are incorporated into all relevant internal/external university communications; engage URI media/promotion channels to assist with communication (i.e. URI website, social media, URI Today, *Good 5 Cent Cigar*, Student Senate, family orientation events, etc.).
2. Coordinate URI communication and RIPTA communication.

3. Promote availability of services that connect parking on URI campus perimeter lots, off-campus satellite parking, the RIPTA statewide network, and the regional Amtrak/MBTA rail lines.
4. Promote transit alternatives by raising awareness and understanding of faculty, staff, and student eligibility for access to transit alternatives (i.e., RIPTA fare discounts).
5. Raise awareness of the value of public transit vs. the cost of automobile ownership.
6. Use social media to communicate alternative transportation opportunities.
7. Employ and promote real-time mobile apps for transit schedules.
8. Promote on-campus shuttle systems.
9. Promote the use of public transit services to the Narragansett Bay Campus, Providence Campus, and Rhode Island Nursing Education Center in Providence.
10. Promote the use of public transit services to university events; during events, remind visitors of the availability of public transit.

* Tactics have been coordinated with the 2018 Transportation and Parking Master Plan



Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction *(continued)*

Energy Conservation and Efficiency

Strategy 4

Improve energy efficiency and resource conservation in facilities and operations; maintain a 2 percent annual reduction in buildings and operations energy use per square foot of building space.

TACTICS

1. Decrease university reliance on fossil fuels; continuously identify opportunities for using alternative energy sources.
2. Implement URI energy conservation initiatives to decrease fossil fuel use.
3. Advance a proposal for an Energy Star appliance mandate.
4. Develop behavior change programs to educate the university community about the importance of energy conservation measures; reduce per capita energy use.

5. Track emissions reductions related to building operations and energy use; advocate for the installation of dashboard technology in university buildings.
6. Streamline the process of collecting emissions data.
7. Research how URI can use renewable energy credits toward emissions reductions.

Strategy 5

Design and renovate university buildings to exemplify leadership in sustainable, high-performance, resilient, and energy-efficient design.

TACTICS

1. Design URI construction projects and major renovations to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver rating or equivalent.
2. Develop comprehensive design guidelines to reduce carbon consumption.

Resource Management

Strategy 6

Increase waste diversion and recycling rate by at least 50 percent over 5 years.

TACTICS

1. Decrease cumulative university waste tonnage by 5 percent each year.
2. Decrease landfilled waste by 5 percent each year.
3. Increase materials recycling rate by 5 percent each year.
4. Divert university-produced “yard waste” from the landfill.
5. Institute a construction waste policy and recycling plan that mitigates the impact of waste associated with new construction and major renovations.
6. Develop greater awareness of electronic waste and hazardous waste management programs; minimize the presence of these materials on URI campuses whenever possible; divert electronic and hazardous waste from landfills and recycle these materials properly.
7. Collaborate with Dining Services, Facilities Services, and the Waste Minimization team to develop a university composting program to reduce landfilled food waste; track related emissions reductions.

Strategy 7

Strengthen water conservation efforts and protect water quality.

TACTICS

1. Achieve a 5 percent reduction in total water consumption adjusted to university user groups.
2. Develop behavior change programs for water conservation.
3. Research and maximize use of available technologies and innovative storm water management plans that mitigate runoff impacts at new construction and major renovation sites, addressing both quantity and quality of storm water runoff.
4. Decrease the use of potable or natural surface/subsurface water for landscape irrigation.
5. Document URI's use of pesticides and herbicides; draft a policy restricting the use of pesticides and herbicides that are potential groundwater contaminants.
6. Decrease the square footage of impervious surfaces on university grounds.

Strategy 8

Increase purchases of green goods and services.

TACTICS

1. Define green goods and qualifying green goods to calculate cost difference between non-qualifying and qualifying goods; determine cost of going green in terms of purchasing.
2. Establish a baseline of purchased green goods and services; include estimated relative emissions; develop emissions reduction goals specific to procurement.
3. Collaborate with URI Purchasing to develop a menu of preferred green goods/services.
4. Develop a proposal to educate and communicate the benefits of purchasing green goods and services (e.g., office and cleaning products, outside caterers, etc.) that are energy efficient, and/or manufactured locally, and/or contain low levels of hazardous chemicals and pollutants, and/or are recyclable or made with recycled materials.
5. Work with Dining Services to increase the percentage of produce and other food products procured from within 250 miles of the Kingston Campus.
6. Implement sustainable retail and Dining Services operations that reduce energy, waste, and emissions.



Contributors to the Strategic Plan for Campus Sustainability and Climate Action

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employer committed to
the principles of
affirmative action.

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