

President Bernie Machen
Speech for the Campus & Community Sustainability Conference
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Good morning and welcome to the University of Florida Campus and Community Sustainability Conference. This promises to be an exciting two days.

Last October, on National Campus Sustainability Day, I announced a plan of action – long in the making by very dedicated people – to make the University of Florida more sustainable. I promised I would give a report card on our progress one year later and that is why I am here today.

I like John's definition of sustainability. It's a way of saying that we should protect the environment and conserve our natural resources for our children, and for their children. Sustainability also means creating a more equitable society. It's fair to say that the concept is sweeping the country, no doubt helped by the dire energy and climate change predicaments in which we find ourselves. While several colleges have pursued sustainability, we are one of only a handful of large public institutions that are seriously engaged in this area.

As you will hear, due to the hard work of many people and groups, we have done a lot in the past year. There is much to be proud of. But, we have a long way to go. That will be my first takeaway point for today. I also want to tell you about our sustainability goals for next year. Climate change is an urgent problem for all of us. In fact, it may be the defining issue of our time.

So my second takeaway point is, we must strive to cut back on activities that contribute to this frightening phenomenon. We will tailor sustainability goals for next year with that in mind.

My third takeaway point is that everyone needs to stand together on sustainability. By acting in concert, we can turn many small changes into a sea change. This university can serve as a model for a healthier and ultimately more survivable lifestyle. This is tough to do because it requires us to abandon the comfort of the status quo. But if universities don't change the culture, who will?

Back to my first point: We should be proud of our accomplishments but aware of our challenges. With that in mind, here is my report card.

Last year, I said that we would purchase only hybrid or alternative fuel vehicles to lower emissions and cut back on the amount of energy we use. The university's fleet now has 12 hybrids and 45 Flex Fuel vehicles. We burn about 500 gallons of E-85 fuel each month, and we have piloted biodiesel in trucks and mowers. The results were good, so we have a bid out to replace 20 percent of our standard diesel with biodiesel.

Last year, I said we would build only green buildings in the future. Today, thanks to the work of the individuals at Facilities Construction and Planning, we have 12 new or planned buildings in the process of certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED standards. When all are completed, 2.2 million gross square feet of this university's building space will be green space – space that conserves resources, reduces pollution, and maintains healthy indoor air quality.

Last year, I said we would increase our recycling efforts. Through a partnership between our Office of Sustainability and Keep Alachua County Beautiful, we started a volunteer-based game day recycling program that began this football season. As a result, we have recycled at least 4 tons of plastic bottles and other refuse.

Last year, I said we would make lighting, heating, and air conditioning more efficient. Our colleagues in Physical Plant cut our hallway lighting by 50 percent. We are still working on heating and air conditioning, which has proven more complex than we anticipated in our humid climate.

Last year, I said we would plan new construction sites in concert with preserving our beautiful natural campus. In a campus-wide update of our master plan this year, we prioritized sustainability. We made room for future growth while setting aside 400 acres of natural land on the main campus, including 65 acres of open space. As our master plan stands today, we will preserve almost one quarter of our natural campus in perpetuity!

Last year, I said we would bridge our efforts to make campus more sustainable with what we teach in the classroom. We believe that instilling our graduates with a consciousness of sustainability will encourage them to live the concept in the world they enter after graduation.

This summer we inventoried our curriculum, finding 110 courses, 10 academic programs, and 23 centers or institutes with ties to sustainability. We are planning to hire a faculty fellow to nurture and connect these ties. Sustainability is a broad concept. It means we should become wiser stewards of the environment, but it doesn't stop there.

Sustainability also means striving for social and economic equity. In order to care for our environment, we must first take care of the people on our campus. With that in mind, I would like to include our decision to offer health care benefits to domestic partners among our achievements in sustainability this past year. Likewise, our new policy to give graduate students on appointment access to health care benefits. Although it predates last year, paying all of our employees more than Florida's minimum wage is also a sustainable policy. Our employees today earn \$2 more than Florida's minimum wage.

Hybrid cars. Green buildings. Planning for centuries of preservation. Integrating sustainability into our classes. Domestic partner benefits. We have come a good distance from where we were a year ago. But back to my first point: We are very much at the beginning of this process. I will use some of the numbers I just mentioned to make that clear.

I said our maintenance trucks and mowers burn 500 gallons of E-85 fuel per month. Well, we use a total 30,000 gallons of gasoline and 8,000 gallons of diesel each month. I said that when all our new buildings are finished, we will have 2.2 million gross square feet of green building space. Well, the university spans more than 18 million gross square feet of building space.

I mentioned the four tons of recyclables we've picked up after game days this year. The university as a whole recycles 6,500 tons of material annually.

Just to give you an idea of how much trash we landfill, did you know, the university used 4,344,850 trash bags last year? That's not the trash – *it's the bags*. And those bags weighed 163 tons...without the trash! Meanwhile we have set a goal of producing zero solid waste by 2015. Zero waste, and today we're filling up 163 tons of garbage bags.

What did I say about having a lot of work ahead of us?

One way to stay focused is to keep in mind that the biggest goal of sustainability is nothing less than saving this planet. There is a sense of urgency among climate change experts that we have to reduce the carbon dioxide spewed out by cars, power plants and industry today – right now -- to prevent our world from turning from a greenhouse into a hothouse. The deadly heat waves we saw in California this summer are nothing compared to the sea level rise and other calamities predicted for a hothouse world.

For this reason, I intend to be one of the university presidents signing the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment.

This brings me to the second point of my talk: That we must address global climate change right here on this campus next year. As it turns out, a focus on climate change cuts across much of what we do. Buying locally produced food is good because it supports local farmers. It also reduces carbon dioxide emissions. Just think about the amount of fuel burned to freight refrigerated lettuce from Salinas, California 2,708 miles to your plate at the Swamp restaurant here in Gainesville.

That's why I am enthusiastic about Gator Dining Service's new pilot program at Fresh Food Company to use food produced regionally. Incidentally, people at this conference can expect locally raised chicken, locally grown vegetable platters, Gulf shrimp, Gulf oysters, even regionally-raised Alligator tail.

Let me return to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We have a new sustainable purchasing policy to buy from vendors who have adopted environmentally and socially responsible practices. This policy supports companies that incorporate reducing harmful emissions.

Today, all of the paper we buy through our purchasing department has been certified as sustainable. Physical Plant is buying Green Seal-certified cleaning products, and we are bidding on remanufactured toner cartridges, among other examples.

This coming year, we would like to see departments and units also embrace sustainable purchasing. With that in mind, we sponsored UF'S first sustainable products vendor show, where 63 vendors displayed their goods and services. Let me pause here to emphasize that sustainable purchasing also means changing corporate behavior for the better. We can use our buying power as a kind of velvet club.

After institutional buyers complained about Dell Computer shipping all its computers in their own boxes with their own packing material, Dell quickly found a way to ship dozens of computers in a single large crate. This influence even goes beyond products. We have just finalized agreements with two of the biggest employers on campus, Aramark and Follett, for them to begin paying their employees a higher wage!

We can also influence corporate behavior when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. With our free bus rides, our miles of walking and biking trails, and our car pool policy, UF is already green when it comes to transportation. Earlier this year, the Environmental Protection Agency named the university one of the nation's best workplaces for commuters among universities. But we can do more. Because cars emit so much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, we want to deepen the greening of transportation on campus next year.

We have just instituted new carpool rules that seek to open this option to more people, rules that reduce the requirement from three to two people per car for Alachua County residents.

We are also close to making available the GreenRide ridesharing program that quickly and efficiently links people who can commute together. And we are looking at popular car-sharing programs such as Flex Car and ZipCar: programs that make it easy for people to share cars by the hour.

Our LEED buildings are great, but we can do more to save power and cut back on power plant pollution. For the first time ever, we plan to turn down the heat and turn off most of the lights in education and general buildings on campus during the upcoming Thanksgiving and winter breaks. We anticipate that we will save \$145,000 and over 1,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions during the winter break closure alone!

We have also started buying "green power" produced from renewable sources such as solar and biomass. To date, we have bought enough green power to prevent 2.5 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions. That's the equivalent of taking 226 cars off the road. We still get the bulk of our power from traditional sources, but we have taken an important first step.

To recap, we have made a good start in our sustainability initiative in the past year, and we are setting our sights on climate change this year.

I have the pleasure of announcing today, we just received news of a \$1 million dollar gift from a foundation to support our sustainability efforts, funding that will surely come in handy. That said, no amount of money or administrative fiats make this happen by itself. To do that, we must stand together. That is my third takeaway point.

Universities are divided places, with fiercely independent departments and disciplines. That model doesn't scan if we are to become the sustainable university we want to be. Each of us has to treat our piece of campus with the emphasis on economy and efficiency we apply to our home. Each of us also has to keep in mind our colleagues and our fellow community members. Thinking like this does not come naturally. But it is necessary. So try to do the little things at home. Swap out a burned-out incandescent light bulb with a fluorescent light bulb. Buy local. Give up your car one day a week.

But also, wherever you can, support our sustainability goals in your personal university workplace. Follow our guidelines, come up with your own and give us some great new suggestions. Encourage your administrators to get on board!

Help us reinvent our culture, so we can model it for the world. Thank you and I will see you next year!