



2025 -2030

Sustainability Action Plan



Introduction

Objective

The Sustainability Action Plan supports Central Sustainability's (CS) goal of institutionalizing sustainability at CMU while also aligning with the university's mission to prepare students for success in an ever-changing world.

This plan includes data and specific goals, along with measurable metrics, to strategically guide CS with advancing its sustainability efforts across operations, academics, engagement, and planning.

Land Acknowledgement

CMU's campus resides on beautiful lands that have been maintained for over 200 years by the Anishinaabe people, the Indigenous inhabitants of Michigan. Central Sustainability acknowledges CMU's impact on Indigenous peoples and their homelands and recognizes the long-standing environmental stewardship of Indigenous peoples, a mission that is also central to the work of the office. CS strives to continue a strong partnership with the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe.



Sustainability at CMU

In less than a decade, CMU has made significant strides in its sustainability endeavors, including advancements in areas like composting, campus gardening, and more sustainable purchasing habits. Many of these initiatives have been spearheaded by students from CS, the university's sustainability office.

CS is dedicated to making the CMU community more sustainable through projects, policy, and programming. CS focuses on educational, collaboration, and institutional growth to better CMU's campus. Since its launch in May 2020, CS's main goal has been to institutionalize sustainability at CMU.

To drive strategic progress, CS monitors and reports data using the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE) Sustainability, Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS). The Sustainability Action Plan is structured to coincide with this benchmarking tool.

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Operations

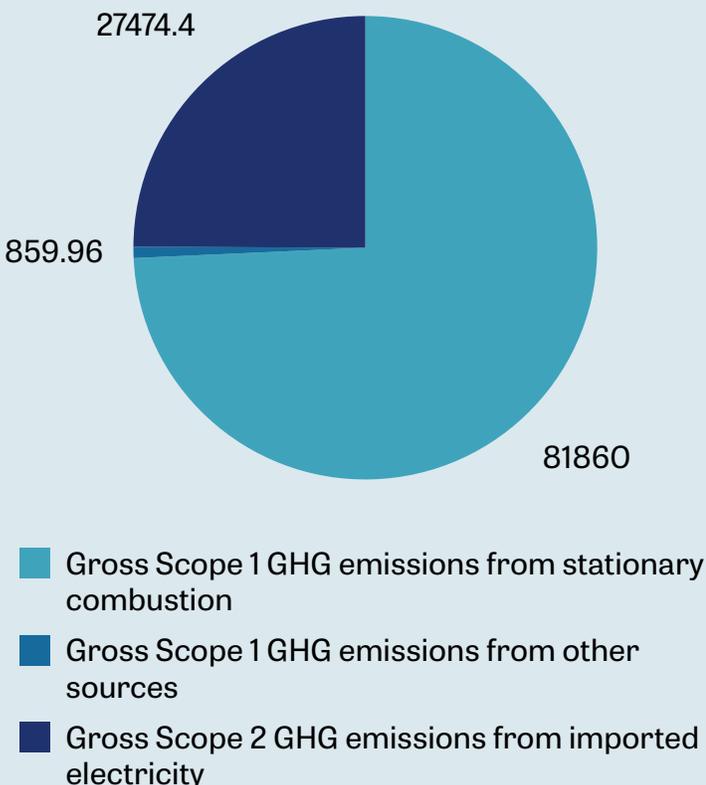
Air & Climate

Background

CMU's 2020 AASHE STARS report shows that an emissions inventory was conducted from July 2015 to July 2016, but no greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions data has been collected since then.

A lack of up-to-date data hinders CMU's ability to assess changes in its emissions profile, set meaningful reduction targets, and track progress toward new goals. Given that emissions significantly contribute to environmental degradation and climate change, it is critical for CMU to conduct annual assessments of its emissions to effectively support mitigation efforts.

CMU GHG Emissions from July 2012 to June 2013
(in Thousand Metric Tones of CO2 Equivalent)



Goal 1

Annually track CMU's GHG Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions with a future goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.

Strategy

Commission an employee or student worker to track emissions data annually.

Measure

Data will be included in every AASHE STARS report.

Operations

Energy

Background

Another key area CS seeks to address is CMU's energy practices. CMU is fortunate to produce majority of its energy through its on-campus powerhouse. However, like GHG emissions, recent data remains largely unavailable. By monitoring energy use, CMU can identify opportunities to optimize consumption, reduce waste, improve resource efficiency, and achieve cost savings.



A look into CMU's powerhouse that now runs on natural gas instead of wood!



Solar-panel workstation donated by DTE to CMU's School of Engineering and Technology

Goal 2

Annually track CMU's GHG Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions with a future goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050.

Strategy

Commission an employee or student worker to track emissions data annually.

Measure

Data will be included in every AASHE STARS report.

Operations

Buildings

Background

Green buildings are strongly recommended by AASHE since they are usually more energy-efficient and cost-friendly. Fortunately, the 2024 STARS report features CMU's commitment to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

The following buildings are LEED-certified at CMU:

- Biosciences
- Education & Human Services
- Graduate Housing
- Health Professions
- Bovee University Center
- Ronan Hall
- Multipurpose Stadium



Goal 3

Commit to sustainable building practices for all new campus constructions.

Strategies

- Incorporate sustainable design principles into the planning and development stages of all new campus construction projects.
- Develop clear guidelines to prioritize LEED certification for new campus buildings.

Measure

CMU administration must issue a written statement that depicts its commitment to LEED certification or an equivalent certification group.

Operations

Transportation

Background

Gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles are major sources of GHG emissions and other pollutants that contribute to environmental and health problems. Consequently, AASHE encourages higher education institutions to reduce emissions produced by their vehicle fleet and to adopt more sustainable transportation habits.

Despite being a walkable campus, a 2023 survey found that more than half of CMU's students rely on driving as their primary mode of transportation. More must be done to encourage sustainable transportation at CMU.



Students enjoying CMU's pedestrian and bike-friendly paths



Goal 4

Encourage more sustainable transportation at CMU.

Strategy

Establish a program that encourages motorless travel on CMU's main campus (e.g., a bikeshare program).

Measure

Track student and employee commuting behavior via fall survey and AASHE STARS.

Operations

Waste

Background

CMU is fortunate to have several ongoing waste reduction efforts, such as the university's residential dining composting initiative, residential recycling programs, and its annual participation in Campus Race to Zero Waste (CR2ZW).

However, many of these initiatives are practiced inconsistently throughout campus. Furthermore, a 2023 survey revealed that while over two thirds of students care about waste reduction efforts, only about 15% understand appropriate recycling habits.



Goal 5

Ensure that waste reduction efforts are practiced consistently throughout campus.

Strategies

- Require each residential hall to facilitate an ongoing recycling program.
- Conduct regular audits of departments' purchasing and disposal habits.
- Encourage dining spaces to offer reusable or compostable packaging options.

Measure

Track CMU's waste habits via CR2ZW, surveys, and AASHE STARS reports.



Academics

Curriculum

Background

AASHE encourages HEIs to establish structured educational programs and courses focused on sustainability. According to the 2024 STARS report, CMU offers over 5,000 courses, with only 8% of them explicitly referring to sustainability. Additionally, a survey CS administers every fall also found that only 39% of students feel that their academic education at CMU has informed them enough about sustainability and environmental issues. Consequently, there is an obvious need to increase students' knowledge of sustainability at CMU.

Fall 2024 Survey Data

Do you feel like your academic education at CMU has informed you enough on sustainability and environmental issues?



■ Yes, I feel like my education has informed me ■ No, I do not feel like my education has informed me ■ Not sure



Goal 6

Ensure students feel well-informed of sustainability and environmental issues through their education at CMU.

Strategy

Establish formal incentives for instructors to teach sustainability in their courses.

Measure

Issue fall survey to track progress of students' academic knowledge of sustainability, aiming to have at least 50 percent of students feel well-informed by 2030.

Academics

Research

Background

CMU must work to advance its research in sustainability-related topics and environmental issues. While the 2024 STARS report found that over half of the university's departments performed sustainability research from 2020 to 2022, less than 15% of the university's employees conducted sustainability research during this period. CMU can amplify the impact of its research and innovations by continuing to address pressing sustainability issues.



Goal 7

Enhance interdisciplinary sustainability research at CMU.

Strategies

- Provide formal incentives for instructors to engage in sustainability research.
- Encourage students to gain experience in sustainability research through credit-based or monetary incentives.

Measure

Increase sustainability research performed by faculty to 25 percent by 2030.

Sustainability research blends diverse disciplines for innovative solutions.

Engagement

Campus Outreach

Background

AASHE provides recommendations for institutions seeking to improve the engagement of its students and faculty with campus sustainability efforts through sustainability learning experiences outside of formal curriculum.

CS has made large strides to engage with the campus and get the community excited about sustainability. However, more can be done. The following goal and strategies aim to strengthen CMU's engagement with sustainability.



CS delivering sustainability tours to incoming students

Goal 8

Improve campus engagement with sustainability.

Strategies

- Incorporate CMU's sustainability effort into student orientation programming.
- Have Central Sustainability coordinate presentations and tours to offer to the campus community.
- Support sustainability-oriented student organizations.

Measure

Have 75% of campus community express involvement with sustainability efforts by 2030.

Engagement

Public Outreach



Background

Higher education institutions are key in fostering sustainability through outreach, partnerships, and service.

CMU has strong connections with groups like the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribal College and Central Michigan Sustainability Partners. However, a survey found that less than a third of students feel connected to their community. A key goal is to strengthen student engagement with local organizations, enriching the college experience.

Goal 9

Strengthen engagement with community through partnerships and service.

Strategies

- Actively participate in community initiatives.
- Support the development of service-learning programming.

Measure

Ensure 50% of students report feeling connected to their community by 2030.

CS engaging with the local community



Planning & Administration

Sustainability Coordination

Background

Central Sustainability (CS) is the main organization overseeing sustainability efforts at CMU. The office submits AASHE STARS reports every four years and works to advance sustainability through projects, policies, and programming. CS has been gaining significant traction since its start in May 2020, with 73.4% of students reporting their familiarity with CS in a recent survey.

Despite growing support, CS has yet to be recognized by the university as its official sustainability office. This goal aims to formally charge CS with coordinating institutional sustainability efforts at CMU and implementing the Sustainability Action Plan.



Goal 10

Recognize Central Sustainability as the official body that coordinates all sustainability-related activities at CMU.

Strategies

- Ensure consistent funding and support to CS annually.
- Include CS in decision-making processes related to sustainability and environmental mitigation.

Measure

Grant CS the official title of "Central Michigan University's Office of Sustainability."

CS presenting to the Board of Trustees

