

Living the New On-Campus Sustainability Experience



Richard Chapman

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Richard K. Chapman is Associate Vice President for Capital Projects at the University of Washington. His focus is on building and maintaining performance-oriented project management organizations in diverse business locations. Chapman received his Bachelor of Science degree in electrical engineering in 1974 from the California State Polytechnic University and has over 30 years of U.S. and international experience managing all operational aspects of higher education projects.

A major part of our new on-campus sustainability initiatives focuses on green residence halls, dining facilities and classrooms – the places where our students spend most of their time on campus.

Nurturing this clean and cutting-edge environment requires major creativity and a tremendous commitment to the future. And, from our perspective, the most important thing we can do, when it comes to sustainability, is to focus on creating and sustaining delivering a healthy living and work environment for students, faculty and staff.

That means – among other things – making sure the food system respects the planet; providing the right amount of natural daylight in our buildings; saving as much energy as possible in our operations; and deploying innovative technology, products and processes in order to enhance and enrich a sustainable on-campus life for thousands of people.

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There are a number of prerequisites that have to be in place before this green vision can become a reality, however.

First, there needs to be commitment, sponsorship and engagement from the President’s office and his senior staff; the campus community must also support sustainability and help drive sustainable initiatives.

Second, there needs to be an investment in resources, and these investments must show a return – whether it’s a reduction in landfill waste, an increase in composting or recycling, or continued increases in local food and beverage purchasing with lower costs of products. For example, several years ago we established in our urban environment the UW Farm, a student run and operated endeavor that sells produce grown right here on campus to our Housing & Food Services unit. What could be more sustainable than students growing the food their colleagues consume?

Third, there has to be collaboration from outside suppliers, distributors and contractors.

Fourth, you have to be able to show the impact of sustainable change from month to month and year to year by benchmarking and participating in rigorously analytical surveys.

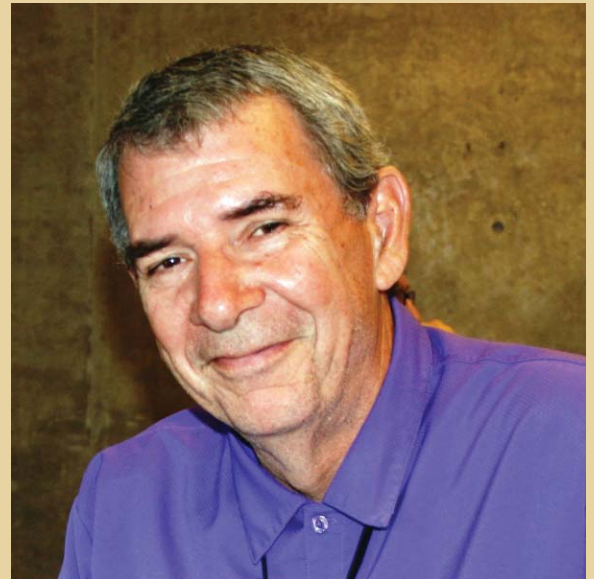
Fifth, it’s essential that students see the value of your sustainability efforts. They have to be engaged, and it

has to be easy for them to participate. So, for example, a waste recovery area on campus has to be conveniently located and clearly marked. Unfortunately, though, so much of what we do in terms of sustainability is invisible. It's hard, for instance, for a student to truly appreciate everything that goes into a LEED-quality building or a sustainable eating facility. The Student Union Building, also known as the "HUB," makes it easy to compost your food waste with well marked and placed compost bins.

"[The University] can serve as a test bed or influencing agent for new "green" ideas that will ultimately benefit the surrounding community."

Creating a green campus experience requires a really good business sense. When we construct a new or renovate an existing building, we often walk a financial tightrope. We borrow money to pay for projects of this nature, so at each stage we have to ask ourselves if there's going to be a payout. Take a new residential hall as a case in point. We can build it and gain LEED silver certification; but for \$1 million more we can obtain a gold certification. Is it worth it? Is that \$1 million better spent elsewhere on campus? These are the questions and conundrums we frequently wrestle with in the process of deepening sustainability at our university. One of our new residence halls, named Poplar Hall, is one of the most recent LEED Certified buildings that include an energy monitoring dashboard and a floor exclusively dedicated to sustainable living.

The exciting part of it all, though, is that we get to truly innovate. Our participation in a regional smart grid project funded by the Department of Energy is a good example of 21st century technology on campus. We're also piloting technologies that will advance the sustainable building code for the City of Seattle. And one of the fascinating state-of-the-art construction products that we're now using in some of our new facilities is a non-toxic, vegetable-based encapsulated gel. The gel absorbs thermal energy by melting at temperatures above 74 degrees, which helps to keep the building cooler without using energy.



Micheal Meyering

Sustainability Manager, UW Housing & Food Services

Michael Meyering is Business and Sustainability Manager, UW Dining, at the University of Washington. Selected for the 2010 Husky Green Award, Micheal has essentially built from scratch a nationally recognized campus-wide composting program that is a model for other universities. For Micheal, the concept of "zero-waste" is not an idle catch phrase but a reachable goal. Micheal has a BS in Nutritional Science & Foods plus a year of grad school in Nutrition both from the UW.

Looking ahead, one of our biggest challenges on campus is institutionalizing sustainability. We'd like students to be even more involved with our food and beverage purchasing, for example, so that they understand our local sourcing. But we're confident that this can happen, because the majority of our students think sustainably and are aware of the environmental implications if we don't work together to build a green campus on a daily basis.