

CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY MOVES FROM CONCEPT TO CONCRETE

By Angela McManaman

Surplus is the new chic.

That's the message coming out of UWM's University Services Building. A midsection of that building has become a clearinghouse for campus cast-offs: a large, cracked mirror from the Dance Department, film reels from Peck School of the Arts, cube-like writing desks that served many students but remain sturdy enough for more. Even technical equipment – a spectrophotometer with a new market value of \$50,000; robots from the College of Engineering and Applied Science – cycle through this building.

Moving used but still functional equipment from one academic unit to another, says UWM Environmental Sustainability Coordinator and alumna Kate Nelson ('07 Conservation and Environmental Sciences), saves money and keeps bulky nonrecyclable items out of landfills. The surplus program also funnels items to UW–Madison's Surplus With a Purpose (SWAP) for public auction.

The underlying purpose of university surplus and other campus sustainability endeavors is threefold. Sustainability looks to improve systems and operations through a strengthened commitment to social responsibility, environmental stewardship and financial prudence.



Farmers hand-picked these vegetables several hours before they were delivered to UWM from Montello, Wis.



Alumna Kate Nelson, UWM's first Environmental Sustainability Coordinator, and Dave Danielson, director of Physical Plant Services, talk sustainability in the University Services Building's surplus warehouse.

"Sustainability deals with the processes that affect the entire campus: recycling, energy use, food supply," says Nelson. "'Being green' is more about practices that we incorporate into our everyday life – sustainability on a smaller scale."

UNDERGRADUATE INSPIRATIONS

It's an issue that has been on Nelson's mind since she began studies in UWM's Conservation and Environmental Sciences program in 2005. A theater graduate, also, of Cardinal Stritch University, Nelson said UWM's proximity to Lake Michigan inspired her to think about how campus operations might affect one of the nation's greatest sources of fresh water.

"Anyone who goes to UWM has seen Lake Michigan," she says. "It's so beautiful and it's right there in front of us. I just wondered what we could do to protect the lake and beaches; it's something we have a responsibility to protect."

A film Nelson viewed at the Union Theatre, about locally grown food, further inspired her undergraduate activism. Within days of seeing the film, Nelson reactivated UWM's dormant Sierra Student Coalition and was talking with Restaurant Operations Director Scott Hoffland about the Union's food supply.

In the three years since that conversa-

tion, Nelson has graduated and completed her first year as UWM's first sustainability coordinator. Hoffland has just completed UWM's first semester under the "Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin" initiative, which Gov. Jim Doyle instituted to team Wisconsin farmers with institutional food buyers.

"I'm so proud of all the work that Scott Hoffland put into this program," says Nelson. "Everything from negotiating purchase authority to working directly with Wisconsin farmers."

"You have to consider how much the food costs, what's available in season; even look at the distance between livestock and the growing fields. It's a commitment."

EVERYBODY'S DOING IT: SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER ED

With tough times facing both the economy and the environment, UWM isn't alone in developing more sustainable campus operations. Hundreds of academic institutions, from sprawling land-grant universities to tiny private colleges, have made sustainability an institutional priority.

But moving sustainability from concept into practice takes time and careful collaboration. Nelson says there is no other way to maximize sustainability across such



UWM's largest green roof was installed on Sandburg Commons last summer.

diverse processes as energy use, recycling, lawn care, alternative fuel for university vehicles and more.

"It's very challenging, but to solve complex, multidisciplinary problems, like responding to climate change or reducing our carbon footprint, you need a collaboration across disciplines," agrees Jim Wasley, an associate professor of architecture who collaborates with Nelson.

For example, Wasley recently participated in the construction of UWM's third and most ambitious green roof atop the Sandburg Hall Commons, with the support of University Housing Director Scott Peak.

He and Nelson are now pursuing similar progressive and artistic storm-water management goals at Lot #18, between Norris Health Center and the heating plant. The redesigned lot will feature a linear bioswale and spiral garden that will capture storm water to irrigate the garden's native plants, reducing storm-water discharges by up to 84 percent in a typical rain season.

Other projects on Nelson's "wish list" for the next two to three years include campus composting, new recycling containers and natural lawn care.

MOVING AHEAD – SLOWLY AND SUSTAINABLY

"As a compact urban campus, we may be the most energy-efficient campus in the UW System due to our density," Wasley says. "People in our facilities area have made real progress toward energy efficiency in our heating and cooling systems."

On the "practice" side, there are other signs UWM is making strides toward sustainability:

- The UWM Bookstore no longer carries bottles made with the controversial plastic bisphenol-A.
- Nelson coordinated a Sustainability Fair in October, a Green Holiday Fair in December and a series of campus cleanups.
- A drop-off box in the Pavilion collects used sneakers to be recycled into play surfaces, or "tot lots," for kids.

For more on sustainability at UWM, visit: uwm.edu/Dept/PPS/sustain/Sustainability.html.

To shop UWM surplus or SWAP, visit: uwm.edu/Dept/PPS/sustain/Surplus.html or bussvc.wisc.edu/swap/swap.html.

New fund, new gifts promote sustainability

From building a solar-powered home to filling the university's Sustainability Fund, individuals from many corners of campus are boosting UWM's sustainability factor.

We Energies and the U.S. Department of Energy made lead gifts totaling \$300,000 to the Solar Decathlon project – a joint endeavor of students and faculty from the School of Architecture and Urban Planning and the College of Engineering and Applied Science. Additional donors throughout the state have stepped forward to provide funding, materials and expertise for the project.

Last spring, the U.S. Department of Energy selected UWM and 19 other universities to compete in the 2009 Solar Decathlon. Interdisciplinary teams of students and faculty are competing to design and build an 800-square-foot home that is powered entirely by solar energy.

The UWM house has been under design since spring 2008; a small-scale model was on display at the 2008 Wisconsin State Fair. Construction on the home will begin in February. The completed house will be shipped, via truck, to Washington, D.C., in fall. The competition takes place on the National Mall. The house will eventually be moved to the Menomonee Valley, as part of the Urban Ecology Center.



A model of UWM's Solar Decathlon entry was displayed at this year's Wisconsin State Fair.

GREG WALZ-CHOUNACKI

Another sign of progress: Environmental Sustainability Coordinator Kate Nelson just established a Sustainability Fund through the UWM Foundation.

"Not many academic institutions have a dedicated, endowed fund that draws contributions to exclusively support sustainability," Nelson says. "Sustainability improvements sometimes require little or no money for implementation, but that's not always the case. This fund can assist with some of our larger initiatives and sustainability upgrades at UWM."

Nelson is also working on campus sustainability tours for alumni, and other environmentally themed alumni events. If you'd like to know more about the sustainability fund or make a donation, contact Stephanie Ackerman, director of major and planned giving: ackerman@uwm.edu; 414-229-3018.