

Voluntary University Review of the Sustainable Development Goals

2024-2025



Carnegie Mellon University Sustainability Initiative

Sustainable Developmental Goals

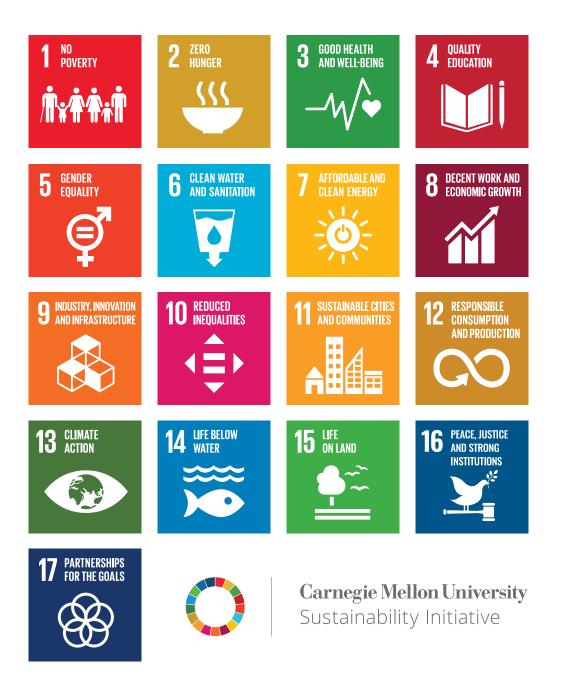


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Dear Colleagues and Community Members,

It is with great pride that I introduce Carnegie Mellon University's 2024–2025 Voluntary University Review (VUR), a timely reflection of our community's ongoing engagement with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year marks five years since we embarked on this journey — five years of building, evolving, and most recently, taking stock of where we've been and where we still need to go.

At the heart of this year's report is a major milestone: the Sustainability Initiative's campus-wide engagement survey. This effort to reach every student, faculty, and staff member across our Pittsburgh campus represents a comprehensive move to better understand the scope, impact, and aspirations of our community's sustainability efforts. As we turn toward the final five years of the SDGs, this work is more essential than ever.

The strength of this movement is the people behind it — particularly our students. What began as a small team has now blossomed into a robust and far-reaching network. Our students are not only leading programming and helping shape the vision of sustainability at CMU, but also forging partnerships beyond our campus, connecting with peers from other universities and engaging in dialogue with the United Nations through its Academic Impact program. These connections are building a national conversation about what's working — and what's not — as we collectively strive toward a more sustainable future for all. Their great work underscores how sustainability must be both community-rooted and globally informed.

As we look ahead, we are also taking a moment to reflect more broadly on the purpose and identity of the Sustainability Initiative itself. With the tools we now have — data from the new survey, insights from evolving programming, and a renewed urgency as the 2030 deadline approaches — we are beginning the work of reimagining our Initiative to meet the moment. This includes reevaluating how we communicate our impact and how we ensure programming remains actionable, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

One major step forward will come in October, with the release of CMU's Climate Action Plan, developed under the leadership of Steven Guenther and informed by a university-wide committee formed through the Sustainability Initiative. This plan outlines the university's path to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. It is an ambitious but necessary step, and one that reflects our deep commitment to science-based action.

As universities around the country begin to more deeply engage with the SDGs, we are seeing a movement take shape. CMU has long been a leader in this space, and we are excited to continue fostering connections, learning from our peers, and sharing what we've discovered along the way. Thank you to the many students, faculty, staff, and partners who make this work possible. Your voices are shaping not just the future of this institution, but the future of sustainable development in higher education and beyond.



Curpholster

Keith Webster Helen and Henry Posner Jr. Dean of the University Libraries and Director of Emerging and Integrative Media Initiatives



Executive Summary



CMU campus in Pittsburgh

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) continues to lead on sustainability through a comprehensive, university-wide approach aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), or Global Goals. Acknowledging that the activities described in the VUR generally follow the academic calendar, the Sustainability Initiative has adjusted the annual VUR timeline to align with the academic year instead of the calendar year. The 2023 VUR, published in April 2024, already included relevant activities from the spring 2024 semester. The current assessment period runs from May 2024 through April 2025 and highlights key advancements in climate action, measuring engagement, and thematic programming. The VUR also outlines efforts across education, research, and practices.

Regarding climate action, CMU remains on track to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, having already reduced emissions by 78% since 2005 despite significant campus growth. This progress is in line with the Second Nature Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment signed by President Farnam Jahanian. A revised Climate Action Plan is in development, prioritizing student involvement to ensure diverse perspectives in climate strategy. Community learning and feedback were central to the "Learn & Listen" session held in January 2025, connecting students with local climate leaders. The projected release for the Climate Action Plan is fall of 2025.

Since 2020, the Sustainability Initiative has worked with the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis (IRandA) to measure engagement with sustainability at CMU through surveys and focus groups, using the Global Goals as a framework. In October 2025, IRandA administered a Pittsburgh campus-wide survey, and the results are now guiding the university's approach to sustainability in education, research, and practices.

Thematic programming, including the Storytelling for Sustainability series, brings sustainability to life through personal narratives and partnerships with organizations across campus. The Sustainability Studio in Hunt Library serves as a hub for dialogue, learning, and collaboration, hosting events from mending workshops to study abroad sessions to student organization meetings.

Student leadership is central to CMU's approach, with interns driving initiatives like the Pittsburgh Youth Leaders in Sustainability Network, which has hosted leadership symposia, interuniversity exchanges, and professional development events. In February 2025, the youth leaders organized Pathways to Impact: Careers in Sustainability, where more than 60 students registered to connect with 10 local employers to explore sustainability career paths. In April 2025, over 300 attendees joined the Metamorphosis art and fashion showcase at the Phipps Conservatory.

The event, hosted by the youth leaders in partnership with the Phipps Youth Climate Advocacy Committee, explored sustainability through personal stories, art, and fashion.

CMU also collaborated with the United Nations Academic Impact for a workshop at the United Nations headquarters in New York City. The workshop was created and facilitated by the Sustainability Initiative director and featured student interns presenting CMU's sustainability efforts. Participants included Lehigh University's UN Partnership, The New School's Graduate Program in International Affairs, and New York University's Center for Global Affairs.

In education, the Core@CMU Steering Committee is using stakeholder feedback and survey data, including the 2024 Sustainability Survey, to refine course content by integrating more information about the Sustainability Initiative and its connection to Core4 skill development.

The Sustainability Initiative also supports research through enhanced visibility of faculty contributions via the Elements platform, aligning faculty outreach with the University Libraries' existing efforts to engage academic departments by incorporating additional messaging about Global Goals into their communications. Following the success of the 2024 pilot Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships (SURF) Sustainability awards, the Sustainability Initiative transitioned the program to a permanent partnership with the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholar Development (OURSD) and has committed to supporting a second cohort of SURF-Sustainability fellows for summer 2025.

Across practices, CMU continues to foster a culture of sustainability through partnerships, student engagement, and institutional leadership. These efforts underscore CMU's commitment to preparing students as global citizens and advancing innovative sustainability solutions.

Stay engaged!

Please reach out to sustainability@cmu.edu with any questions, suggestions, comments, or encouragement!



Sustainability Initiative interns visiting the United Nations headquarters in New York City.





The What We Brought with Us exhibition displayed in the Sustainability Studio.

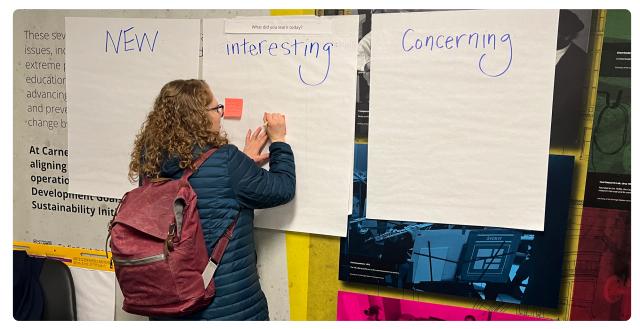
Carnegie Mellon University's Sustainability Initiative reflects the university's commitment to building a more sustainable future for all. Using the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, as a guiding framework, the Initiative integrates sustainability into education, research, and practices. This includes organizing interdisciplinary events and partnerships that empower students, faculty, staff, and community members to drive meaningful change, building on more than two decades of sustainability at CMU.

In 2019, Provost James Garrett launched the Initiative by establishing a Steering Committee and Advisory Council to evaluate how the Global Goals show up across CMU. In 2020, CMU hired an executive fellow to conduct the world's first Voluntary University Review (VUR). The Initiative found a permanent home in University Libraries in 2022, when the executive fellow became the director, and established the Sustainability Studio in Hunt Library to serve as the brick and mortar location of the Initiative. The Studio now serves as a hub for collaboration and conversation across disciplines. In 2023, the Advisory Council transitioned into three working groups focused on climate action, engagement metrics, and thematic programming, and in 2024 the recommendations of these working groups were incorporated into the overarching Sustainability Initiative.

The Initiative is led by a director and a team of undergraduate and graduate interns. Interns contribute to communications, engagement, data analysis, and programming, shaping their roles around their own academic interests and values.

Together, the team helps the campus community understand and engage with the Global Goals — through advising, events, and consultations. Community partnerships are at the heart of this work. The Initiative also produces the university's annual VUR, a report that highlights progress, identifies gaps, and keeps CMU accountable to its sustainability commitments.





CMU community attendee at the Climate Action Learn & Listen event

The 2024–2025 Voluntary University Review (VUR) is grounded in data collected through the 2024 Sustainability Survey, which served as a foundational instrument to assess awareness, engagement, and community priorities around sustainability at Carnegie Mellon University.

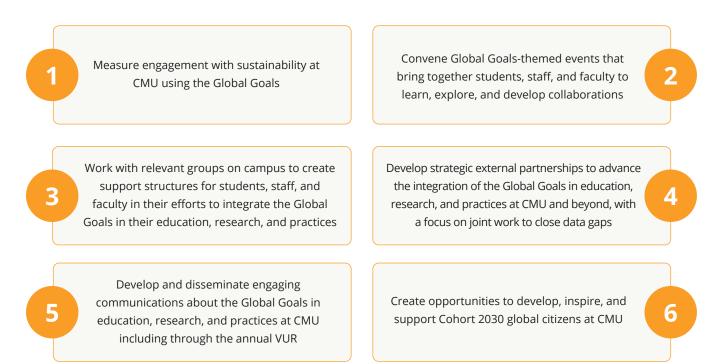
Recognizing that the activities outlined in the VUR are typically carried out in an academic year, the Sustainability Initiative has transitioned the annual VUR timeline to reflect activities over the course of the academic year, rather than the calendar year. This assessment for this VUR begins in May 2024 and ends in May 2025.

A key insight from the 2024 survey was that while the university has developed comprehensive dashboards and analyses in recent years, stakeholders expressed a stronger interest in practical, visible steps being taken to address sustainability issues. Informed by this feedback, the structure of the current VUR retains the overarching outline established in the 2023 report — refined through intern review — but shifts the emphasis toward clear communication of campus activities and the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an interpretive framework. This includes an intentional focus on building foundational awareness of the Global Goals across the CMU community, though the interactive education, research, and practices Tableau dashboards can still be accessed at cmu.edu/sustainability. To access the education and research dashboards, you must have an Andrew userID and be connected to the CMU virtual private network (VPN).

Content development for the VUR drew on subject matter expertise and campus collaboration. The Climate Action, Measuring Engagement, and Thematic Programming sections were developed in consultation with relevant departments and offices. The research section was produced in partnership with University Libraries to leverage existing initiatives and avoid redundancy. For the education section, Core@CMU staff provided updates on curriculum integration. The practices section highlights key collaborations facilitated by the Sustainability Initiative, acknowledging that these represent only a portion of the broader sustainability efforts underway at CMU.



Charges issued by Provost James Garrett, Jr.:





Karma Lisa Edwards, senior director of Workforce Development and Green & Healthy Schools at the Green Building Alliance, leading a workshop at Pathways to Impact: Careers in Sustainability



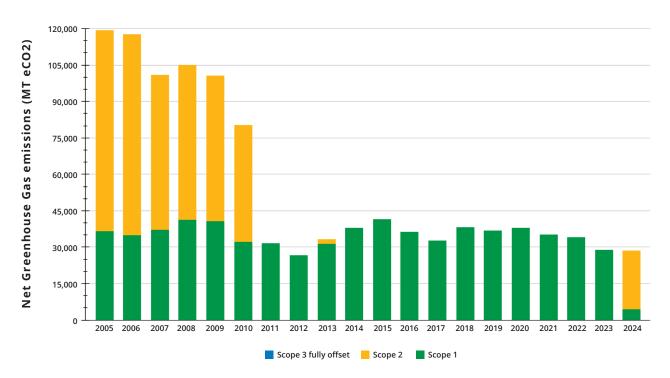
Climate Action

Introduction

CMU is committed to reducing its environmental impact and has signed Second Nature's Presidents' Climate Leadership Commitment, pledging to work towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by July 2030. The campus tracks its emissions, including Scope 1 (direct emissions), Scope 2 (indirect emissions from purchased energy), and starting in 2024 applicable Scope 3 (induced emissions), and reports annually using SIMAP — the Sustainability Indicator Management & Analysis Platform.

In the chart below, the transfer between Scope 1 and Scope 2 in 2024 reflects a decision to follow the accounting guidelines for CMU's steam purchases from Bellefield Boiler Plant. In the past, those steam-related emissions were Scope 1, but are better characterized as Scope 2. The change was made on a forward-looking basis. Additionally, while CMU began tracking Scope 3 emissions in 2024, they are fully offset so they do not appear in the chart.

Since the 2005 baseline assessment, Carnegie Mellon University has reduced overall emissions by 78% despite campus growth of over 30%. On a perstudent basis, the campus emissions are nearly 89% lower than the baseline. To chart progress toward the net-zero goal, CMU is poised to update the Climate Action Plan, with a projected release in the fall of 2025. A key component of this update will be the active involvement of students, ensuring that the plan reflects the diverse perspectives and concerns of the campus community. This collaborative effort will allow students to contribute meaningfully to the university's sustainability goals, shaping strategies and initiatives that address the challenges of climate change.



CMU Greenhouse Gas emissions since baseline year





Attendees at the Climate Action Learn & Listen event

Learn & Listen

The Sustainability Initiative invited the campus community for a Learn & Listen Session on Climate Action on January 28, 2025. The two-hour event provided a platform for introduction and interaction between students and local environmental organizations. Structured as an open and interactive poster session, the Learn & Listen showcased the climate action efforts of over ten distinct entities at Carnegie Mellon and beyond, including the City of Pittsburgh, the Higher Education Climate Consortium (HECC), and the Green Building Alliance (GBA).

Representatives from these organizations were present to engage with attendees, offering insights into their respective initiatives and answering questions. The session aimed to inform the university community about ongoing local and regional efforts to address climate change.

The event also served as a forum for feedback, inviting participants to contribute their perspectives on critical climate action planning questions relevant to Carnegie Mellon's future sustainability strategies. The interactive nature of the poster session facilitated direct engagement between students, faculty, and community representatives.

AASHE STARS

To measure progress in the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainability, Carnegie Mellon participates in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) program, which is managed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). STARS is a transparent, self-reporting framework for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. CMU has completed six reports, renewing every three years since the first report was submitted in 2011. The most recent report, submitted in 2024, maintained a Gold rating.





Attendees at the Climate Action Learn & Listen event

Scotty Goes Green

The Scotty Goes Green (SGG) certification programs provide the CMU community with resources and guidance on making sustainable choices and taking sustainable actions. The first certification, the SGG Workplace Certification, is a voluntary, self-guided review of office practices and employee behaviors as well as an opportunity to learn more about sustainability. We aim to establish a network of sustainabilityliterate employees to serve as leaders and to educate their peers on campus resources and practices while increasing campus sustainability practices. The certification process follows five steps: Designate, Educate, Evaluate, Celebrate, and Participate. We have had four workplaces achieve certification; one at the bronze level, two at the silver level, and one at the gold level. We are currently working on an individual certification and a lab certification.







Introduction

The Sustainability Initiative has been measuring engagement with sustainability since the first VUR was conducted in 2020, when the provost sent a Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices survey to all CMU students, faculty, and staff. The following year, the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis conducted focus groups within the CMU community. The Sustainability Initiative subsequently began establishing a baseline set of criteria to measure engagement and knowledge around sustainability at CMU using the Global Goals framework.

In October 2024, the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis administered a survey for students, faculty, and staff on the Pittsburgh campus. The effort was led by Madison Speck, Post Doctoral Fellow for Institutional Research and Analysis, with input from Deborah Steinberg, Green Practices and Sustainability Manager for Facilities Management and Campus Services, Shannon Foster, Associate Director for Institutional Research and Assessment, and Alexandra Hiniker, director of the Sustainability Initiative.

There were 964 responses from faculty and staff, representing a 23% response rate, and 1,404 responses from students, representing a 10% response rate. There were no indicators that any populations were overly or insufficiently represented within the survey responses. The survey results are now informing the Sustainability Initiative's approach to education, research, and practices across the university.

Key Data Insights – Faculty / Staff Survey

Knowledge about sustainability

The first question within this survey provided respondents with six items and asked them "which did you already know before taking this survey?" 48% of faculty and staff claimed that they already knew that "in 2019, Carnegie Mellon University committed to the Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals or SDGs." However, only 18% of respondents said they already knew that "the 17 Sustainable Development Goals include 169 targets and 232 indicators." For the remaining four statements, an average of 28% of faculty and staff reported that they already knew the facts provided before taking the survey.

Global Goals dashboards

Of 556 respondents, only 7% reported ever using the online dashboards that address the Global Goals. And of that 7% (n=39), 62% use the "practices" dashboard, 41% use the "courses" dashboard, and 31% use the "researchers" dashboard.

Personal green practices

Faculty and staff members at CMU were asked within the survey about to what extent they practice a variety of sustainable efforts. The most popular sustainable practice among this group of CMU faculty and staff was "sorting waste into the appropriate campus bins" with 58% of faculty/staff always doing this and 34% of them often doing it. The second most popular sustainable practice by faculty and staff was "turning off lights when leaving a room" with 90% of them either always or often doing it.

On the other end, the least popular sustainable practices among CMU faculty and staff were reported as being "using the shuttle, walking, biking, or other alternative transportation methods other than single rider cars" with just 38% of them reporting often or always doing this, as well as "buying non-food products from local, independent businesses" of which only 35% of faculty/staff report often or always doing.

Participation in sustainability efforts at CMU

The subsequent section within the sustainability survey provided faculty and staff with a list of seven efforts or initiatives across CMU, both inside and outside of the classroom, and asked them about whether or not they have ever participated in that particular initiative. The "not sure" option was also available for participants. Identical to students, the highest participation by 20% was with "a program or event hosted by the Student Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" with 43% of faculty and staff (n=776) having participated in one of these. On the contrary, only 9% and 8% have participated in each of the following, respectively: "an event in the Sustainability Studio" and "a research project related to the Sustainable Development Goals."

In addition to the aforementioned habits and practices that CMU faculty and staff members are already engaging in, the survey also inquired about the likelihood of them participating in sustainabilityrelated opportunities on campus in the upcoming academic year. Again, very similar to students, the majority of faculty and staff reported that they are somewhat likely (38%) or a little bit likely (32%). The remaining participants shared that they are very likely or not at all likely at 18% and 12%, respectively.

Communication and knowledge-sharing about sustainability

An additional topic covered in the survey was regarding information-sharing around sustainability programs and events at CMU. First, faculty and staff were asked about how they would like to hear about sustainability initiatives (they could select their top 2 choices) with the leading method of communication

Key Data Insights – Faculty / Staff Survey

being email at 90%. The next highest option was "The Piper" at 39%. And consistent with student responses, faculty and staff least preferred options were Slack and Discord at 3% and 0%, respectively.

Next, faculty/staff were also asked about what types of sustainability information they would like to know more about. They were able to select all that applied. The top three selections were consistent with student reports (in a varied order). Faculty and staff top three were "Green Practices programs and initiatives" (71%), "Sustainability Initiative programs and initiatives" (70%), and "tips for sustainable living" (66%). The option with the least selections was "using the 17 Global Goals to find applicable student organizations" at 6%.

Finally, 40% of faculty and staff respondents (n=669) expressed that they would like to be contacted by the CMU Sustainability Initiative to learn more about programs and opportunities available to the CMU Community.

The Sustainable Development Goals

Faculty and staff were provided a list of these goals within the survey and asked about whether or not they were aware of each prior to the survey.

The item with the least reported faculty/staff knowledge prior to the survey was "ending poverty in all its forms everywhere" as only 65% of respondents knew this as a goal prior to the survey. This was another consistent finding with the student survey.

On the other hand, 89% of faculty and staff respondents already knew that both "taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" and "ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" were goals. The remaining items fell somewhere within that range of 65%-89% of faculty and staff members already knowing these examples of sustainability prior to taking the survey.

How "green" are CMU faculty and staff?

The final section of the survey was designed as a fun quiz where respondents were asked nine sustainability-related trivia questions. As a whole, faculty and staff members got all of the quiz questions correct. For each question, at least 55% of respondents answered correctly with some questions having up to 96% correct answers.

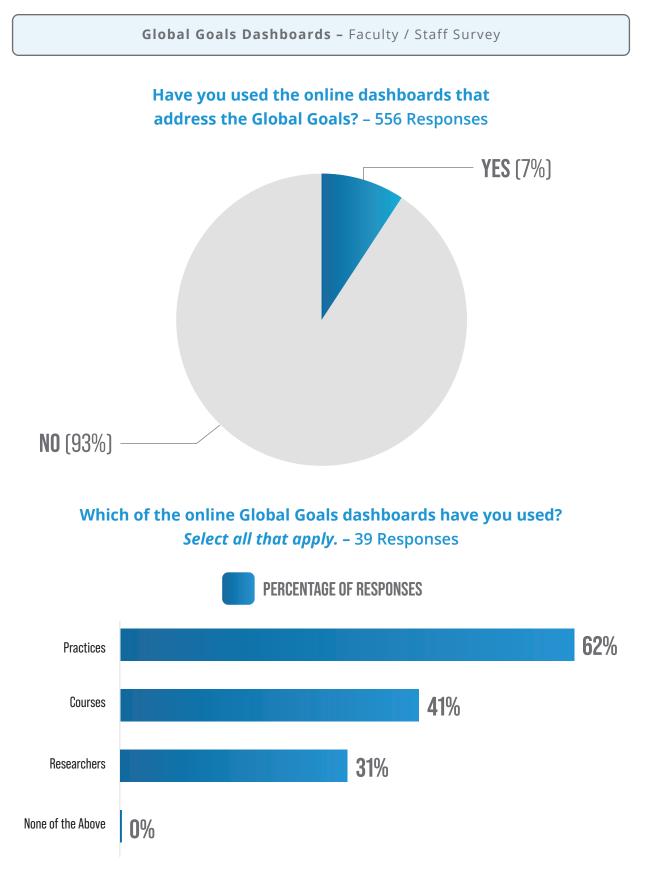
Open comment analysis

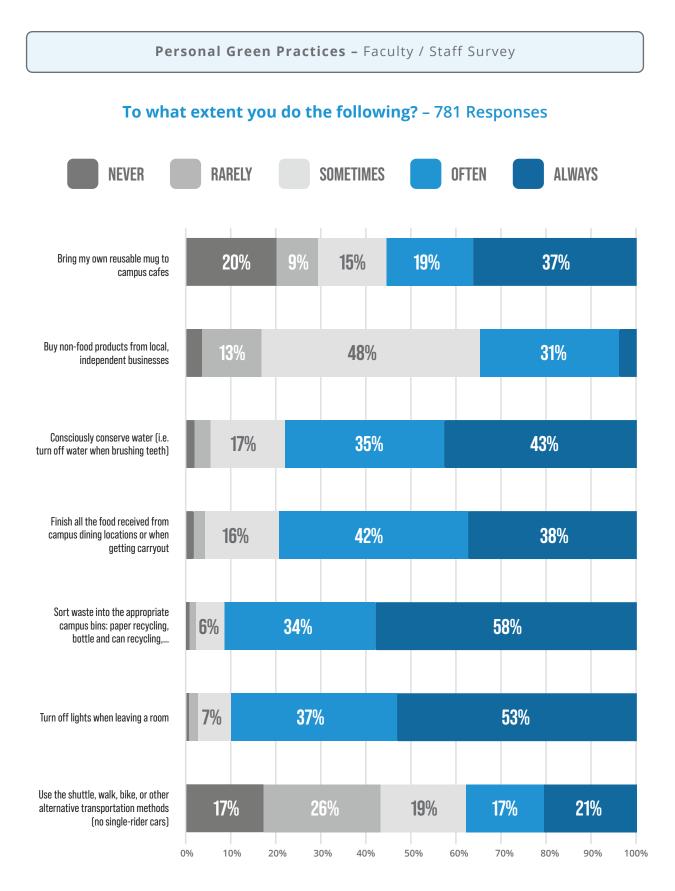
Of the 964 total survey responses, there were 190 additional comments, concerns, or suggestions for sustainability at Carnegie Mellon University. This count includes responses that were "NA" or "I don't know."

The overarching themes included institutional commitment and leadership, education and awareness, infrastructure and facilities management, transportation and commuting, and the scope of sustainability. Knowledge About Sustainability – Faculty / Staff Survey

Of the following, which did you already know about before taking this survey? – 859 Responses

DY KNEW	I		DIDN'	T KNOW	1				
s		48 %				52 %			
e	4	4%				56%			
e s	23%			7	7%				
e n d	2 3 %			7	7%				
n s 2	2%			7	8%				
	8%			82	%				
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The Sustainable Development Goals – Faculty / Staff Survey

Before taking this survey, were you aware of the following examples of sustainability? – 736 Responses

ALREA	DY KNEW	DIDN'T KNOW	
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts		89%	11%
Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all		89%	11%
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development		86%	14%
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all		86%	14%
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns		86%	14%
Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss		85%	15%
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable		80%	20%
End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture		78%	22%
Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	0% 10% 20%	76%	24% % 70% 80% 90% 100%

The Sustainable Development Goals - Faculty / Staff Survey

Before taking this survey, were you aware of the following examples of sustainability? (cont.) – 736 Responses

Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation	75%	25%
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages	73%	27 %
Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all	71%	29 %
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	70%	30%
Reduce inequality within and among countries	70%	30 %
Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels	68%	32%
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	68%	32 %
End poverty in all its forms everywhere	65%	35%

Key Data Insights - Student Survey

Knowledge about sustainability

The first question within this survey provided students with six items and asked them "which did you already know before taking this survey?" 50% of students (n=1,404) claimed that they already knew that "in 2015, all countries agreed to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals or SDGs, by 2030." However, only 10% of respondents said they already knew that "in 2020, Carnegie Mellon was the first university in the world to conduct a Voluntary University Review of the Sustainable Development Goals, and now publishes annual updates." For the remaining four statements, an average of 24% of students reported that they already knew the facts provided before taking the survey.

Global Goals dashboards

Of 930 respondents, only 9% reported ever using the online dashboards that address the Global Goals. And of that 9% (n=79), 65% use the "practices" dashboard, 49% use the "courses" dashboard, and 38% use the "researchers" dashboard.

Personal green practices

Students were asked within the survey about to what extent they practice a variety of sustainable efforts. The most popular sustainable practice among CMU students was using the shuttle, walking, biking, or using another mode of transportation (instead of a single-rider car) with 66% of students always doing this and 24% of students often doing it. On the other end, the least popular sustainable practices among CMU students were reported as being "bringing my own reusable mug to campus cafes" with just 41% of students report often or always doing this, as well as "buying non-food products from local, independent businesses" of which only 21% of students report often or always doing.

Participation in sustainability efforts at CMU

The subsequent section within the sustainability survey provided students with a list of seven efforts or initiatives across CMU, both in and outside of the classroom, and asked them about whether or not they have ever participated in that particular initiative. The "not sure" option was also available for participants. The highest participation by nearly 20% was with "a program or event hosted by the Student Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" with 43% of respondents (n=1,314) having participated. On the contrary, only 10% of student respondents have participated in each of the following: "an event in the Sustainability Studio," "a lecture organized or sponsored by the Sustainability Initiative," and "a program or event hosted by CMU Green practices.

In addition to the aforementioned habits and practices that CMU students are already engaging in, the survey also inquired about the likelihood of students participating in sustainability-related opportunities on campus in the upcoming academic year. The majority of students reported that they are somewhat likely (37%) or a little bit likely (33%). The remaining students shared that they are very likely or not at all likely at 17% and 13%, respectively.

Communication and knowledge-sharing about sustainability

An additional topic covered in the survey was regarding information-sharing around sustainability programs and events at CMU. First, students were asked about how they would like to hear about sustainability initiatives (they could select their top 2 choices) with the leading method of communication being email at 79%. The next highest option was "flyers/posters on campus" at 31%. The least preferred options were Slack and Discord at 5% and 4%, respectively.

Key Data Insights - Student Survey

Next, students were also asked about what types of sustainability information they would like to know more about. They were able to select all that applied. The top three selections were "tips for sustainable living" (61%), then "Sustainability Initiative programs and initiatives" (54%), and "Green Practices programs and initiatives" (52%). Aside from the "other" choice, the option with the least selections was "using the 17 Global Goals to find applicable student organizations" at only 21%.

Finally, 48% of student respondents (n=1,143) expressed that they would like to be contacted by the CMU Sustainability Initiative to learn more about programs and opportunities available to faculty, staff, and students.

The Sustainable Development Goals

Students were provided a list of these 17 goals within the survey and asked about whether or not they were aware of each, prior to the survey.

The item with the least reported students knowing prior to the survey was "ending poverty in all its forms everywhere" as only 67% of students knew this as a goal prior to the survey. On the other hand, 90% of student respondents already knew that "taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts" was a goal. The remaining items fell somewhere within the range of 67%-90% of students already knowing the example of sustainability prior to taking the survey.

How "green" are CMU students?

The final section of the survey was designed as a fun quiz where students were asked nine sustainabilityrelated trivia questions. The majority of respondents got most questions correct, aside from the question asking "what is the most common cause of pollution of streams and rivers?" The most-selected answer (43%) was "waste dumped by factories," however, the correct answer is "surface water running off yards, streets, paved lots, and farm fields." Another important note from this 'quiz' is that 49% of students reported thinking that plastic tubs can be recycled on campus although they cannot. Relatedly, 60% and 63% of students believe that batteries and electronic waste CANNOT be recycled on campus, even though they CAN.

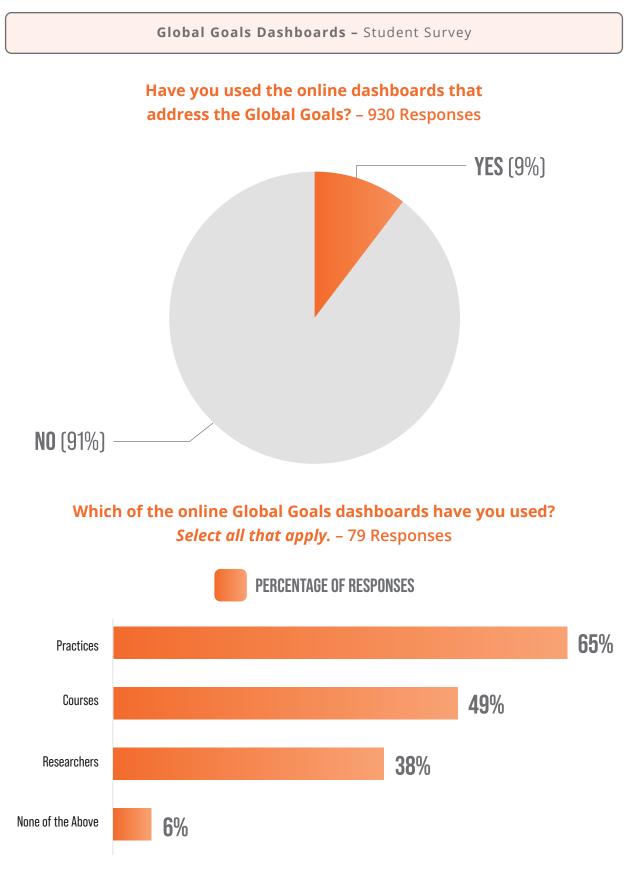
Open comment analysis

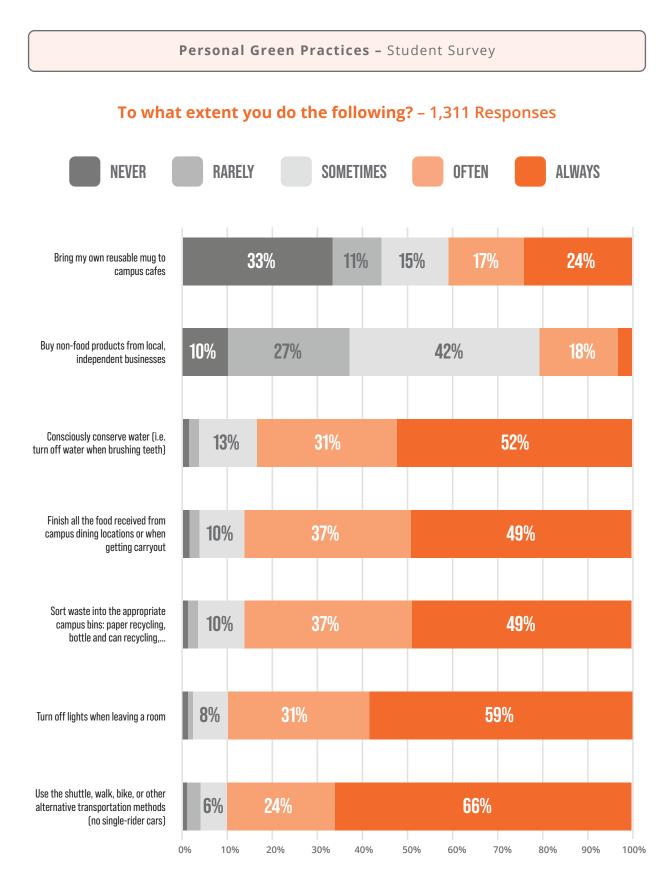
Of the 1,404 responses to the student sustainability survey, there were 266 participants who elected to provide open-ended feedback, including those that solely noted "NA" or "I don't know."

The overarching themes included waste reduction and management, energy efficiency and renewable resources, sustainable transportation and campus design, education and engagement, and institutional commitment and transparency. Knowledge About Sustainability – Student Survey

Of the following, which did you already know about before taking this survey? – 1,404 Responses

ALREAD	Y KNEW			DIDN'T	KNOW	1				
In 2015, all countries agreed to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals or SDGs, by 2030.		50%					50%			
The Sustainability Studio, located in Hunt Library, is open for all CMU community organizations to reserve for free. It is intended for programming and education that centers equity in support of social, economic, and environmental justice.	3	3%				67 %	6			
In 2019, Carnegie Mellon University committed to the Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals or SDGs.	27%	6				73 %				
The 17 Sustainable Development Goals include 169 targets and 232 indicators.	22%				7	8%				
Since 2020, the Sustainability Initiative has been compiling information for three online dashboards that address the Global Goals through practices,	14%				86%	6				
education, and research. In 2020, Carnegie Mellon was the first university in the world to conduct a Voluntary University Review of the	10%				90%					
Sustainable Development Goals, and now publishes annual updates.	IU 70 0% 10%	20%	30%	40%		60%	70%	80%	90%	100





The Sustainable Development Goals - Student Survey

Before taking this survey, were you aware of the following examples of sustainability? – 1,287 Responses

ALREA	DY KNEW	DIDN'T KNOV	Ν
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts		90%	10%
Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns		89%	11%
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development		88%	12%
Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all		88%	12%
Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all		87%	13%
Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss		87%	13%
Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable		85%	15%
End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture		80%	20%
Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation		78%	22%
	0% 10% 20%	30% 40% 50%	60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

The Sustainable Development Goals – Student Survey

Before taking this survey, were you aware of the following examples of sustainability? (cont.) – 1,287 Responses

ALREAD	DY KNEW	DIDN'T KN	W
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages		78%	22%
Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all		77%	23%
Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development		76%	24%
Reduce inequality within and among countries		74%	26%
Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels		74%	26%
Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls		72%	28%
Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all		72 %	28%
End poverty in all its forms everywhere		67 %	33%
	0% 10% 20%	30% 40% 50%	60% 70% 80% 90% 100%





Speakers at the Native Perspectives on Hospitality event hosted with the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center

Introduction

Thematic programming centers what sustainability means to CMU students, faculty, and staff and reflects the broad range of issues covered in the Global Goals. The central objective is to build connections among community members, offer resources that deepen understanding of sustainability and its applications across campus, create opportunities to develop practical sustainability skills, and highlight the work being done by people throughout the CMU community. At its core, the programming also strives to make the Sustainability Studio a welcoming, inclusive space that fosters a sense of belonging—both at CMU and within the broader field of sustainability.

Storytelling for Sustainability series

Storytelling for Sustainability was created by Sustainability Initiative intern Cristina Goeller to address the challenge of connecting our daily experiences to the complex framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. Recognizing the need to move beyond abstract definitions, she created a monthly roundtable format that provides a low-stakes environment for open dialogue. These moderated discussions draw on personal narratives so we can reflect on how our experiences and identities influence how we see sustainability. By empowering students, staff, and faculty to share their stories, the program aims to cultivate a deeper understanding of sustainability and its relevance to their lives — ultimately contributing to a more impactful and inclusive approach to achieving global sustainability goals.

These events were organized in partnership with the Center for the Arts and Society's Coffee Break project, which seeks to promote disruptive thinking about "good coffee" by bringing coffee drinkers into conversations with coffee farmers, roasters, baristas, and one another in order to reimagine forms of hospitality rooted in sustainability and justice, not connoisseurship. Additional partners included the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion and the Office of Wellness and Meaning-Making Programs. All of the engagements were conducted over sustainablysourced coffee and snacks.

Notable discussions included:

What does sustainability mean to you? September 30, 2024

Native Perspectives on Hospitality with the Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center November 13, 2024

Conocimiento: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Birthday Celebration January 27, 2025



Participants in the Conocimiento event hosted in partnership with the Student Center for Diversity and Inclusion

Office hours

Complementing thematic program activities, the interns each hold dedicated office hours at the front desk of the Sustainability Studio. During this time, they serve as a resource for library visitors — answering questions about the Studio, sparking discussions about the connections between students' work and sustainability, and sharing the goals of the Sustainability Initiative. This ongoing presence plays a key role in raising awareness of the Studio, helping visitors understand that the space serves a unique and intentional purpose within the library.

External events

The Sustainability Studio is available for reservation at no cost to all members of the CMU community. To reserve the space, event hosts must explain how their work aligns with the Global Goals framework and ensure that events held in the space are open to the public. Sustainability Initiative interns provide support with event planning, setup, and execution. The space is especially effective for events that benefit from the high foot traffic in the library during peak times. Its modular design allows it to be tailored to the specific needs of each event, as demonstrated by the wide range of events hosted by external organizations. Some examples of external events organized in the Studio include Sustainable Earth weekly meetings, Data Science Office Hours, Fix-it Fair: Mending Workshop, a Valentine Make and Take, and a No-sew Tote Bag Workshop.



The Climate Action Learn & Listen event in the Sustainability Studio

Study Abroad

Two events organized by the Sustainability Initiative and the Office of Study Abroad highlighted the role of global experiences in sustainability education. The first, in October 2024, emphasized how study abroad fosters cross-cultural collaboration and innovative thinking around sustainability challenges. In February 2025, the "Spotlight on Africa" event brought together students, faculty, and staff to share insights on studying and working in Africa. Together, these events underscored the importance of study abroad in preparing students to become sustainability leaders with a global outlook.



Tanzania study abroad photo (credit: Alva Huang)

Pittsburgh Youth Leaders in Sustainability Network

The Pittsburgh Youth Leaders in Sustainability Network was founded by Sustainability Initiative interns to provide more opportunities for connection and involvement for the student population in greater Pittsburgh to engage with the Initiative. It is a tangible way to channel the Sustainability Initiative into a resource for students in the Pittsburgh region to connect, share ideas, and engage with professional development opportunities together.

The first event held under this network was a leadership symposium in the spring of 2024 which connected students from Carnegie Mellon, Chatham University, and the University of Pittsburgh. The Sustainability Initiative partnered with Student Leadership, Involvement, and Civic Engagement (SLICE), the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion (CSDI), and the Steinbrenner Institute to build skills in effective conversational strategies and enact social change.

With a focus on building connections between universities, Sustainability Initiative interns partnered with students from Chatham's student club, the Sustainability Explorer Post, to organize a tour of their fully sustainable auxiliary campus, Eden Hall. This event allowed students to discuss the value they saw in a local network of youth leaders interested in sustainability and what they would want it to look like. Taking feedback and inspiration from this event, the network was formalized and a Slack was created for students to share opportunities to learn and grow together as leaders in sustainability.

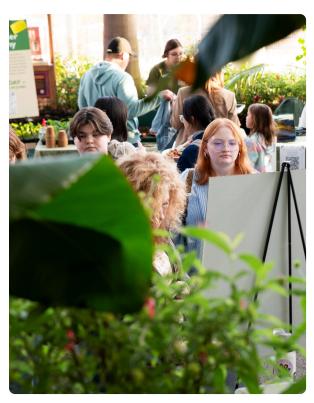
Interns are now focused on creating meaningful events that utilize the resources available at a university setting, organizing events such as Pathways to Impact: Careers in Sustainability and Metamorphosis: A Sustainable Art Gallery and Fashion Showcase.

Looking forward, the interns are working to make this network self-sustaining and increase involvement from other local universities. They have created a liaison position to strengthen leadership within the network because it is a powerful tool to bridge gaps between institutions.

Pittsburgh Youth Leaders in Sustainability Network



Network leaders at the Pathways to Impact check-in table



The Metamorphosis exhibit at the Phipps Conservatory (credit: Kitoko Chargois)

Pathways to Impact: Careers in Sustainability

In February 2025, the Pittsburgh Youth Leaders in Sustainability Network organized an event focused on careers in sustainability that was open to all students in the Pittsburgh region. The convening was spearheaded by Sustainability Initiative intern Aleena Siddiqui. More than 60 students signed up for an informal career event to eat lunch and speak with 10 different employers from the Pittsburgh area about their sustainability career journeys.

Metamorphosis: A Sustainable Art Gallery and Fashion Showcase

In April 2025, the network collaborated with the Phipps Youth Climate Advocacy Committee to host Metamorphosis: A Sustainable Art Gallery and Fashion Showcase. Sustainability Initiative intern Purva Bommireddy conceived of the art exhibit component of the event. The Metamorphosis theme alludes to how our backgrounds, cultures, and unique stories shape our worldview. Youth aged 12-26 were asked to submit works of art reflecting how their personal journey allows them to maintain hope and reimagine sustainability.

More than 300 people attended the reception at the Phipps Conservatory to watch the fashion show and view the art gallery. The evening also included activities run by the Pittsburgh Center for Creative Reuse, GreenBridge 412, Tree Pittsburgh, and Women for a Healthy Environment.



Education

Education is central to Carnegie Mellon's sustainability commitments, and the Sustainability Initiative has been assessing how courses contribute to the Global Goals since the first VUR was published in 2020. To complement the analysis of existing efforts, the Sustainability Initiative began exploring how the Global Goals could be integrated into existing educational efforts, including Core@CMU, internships, experiential learning, and other activities.

Core@CMU

Core@CMU is an engaging, online learning experience where students develop core competency skills in the Core4 domains:

- Collaboration & Teamwork
- Communication & Presentation
- · Information & Data Literacy
- Intercultural & Global Literacy

Additionally, students discover evidence-based strategies to enhance their learning. This foundational course is an essential step in students' educational journey at CMU, setting them up for academic, personal, and professional success across any field of study.

Beginning in Fall 2024, the 3-unit C@CM course was transformed into Core@CMU, a foundational primer that introduces incoming undergraduate students to the Core4 skills. This course is a graduation requirement for all undergraduate students and will also provide baseline assessment data to help us better understand students' knowledge and skill when they enter. Additionally, the Intercultural & Global Literacy module is included as part of the university's Graduate Student Orientation asynchronous offerings. The Core@CMU Steering Committee is currently enacting a series of iterative refinements to the course content informed by data gathered from the initial course offering, other campus assessments, and feedback from key stakeholder groups including our Core@CMU Student Advisory Committee. One of these data sources is the 2024 Sustainability Survey which indicated an opportunity to build awareness of CMU's commitment to fostering a sustainable future via integration of the SDGs into education, research, and practices. To support this opportunity, additional information about the connection between the Sustainability Initiative and students' Core4 skill development will be incorporated into the next iteration of the course.

The Steinbrenner Institute

The university-wide program in **Environmental and Sustainability** Studies has offered a minor since 2018, and an additional major since 2021. The Steinbrenner Institute for Environmental Education and Research led the initiative to create and manage this interdisciplinary academic program. Both the minor and additional major are designed to be accessible for every undergraduate student at CMU, regardless of their college or major, and to complement their primary major with courses addressing the intrinsically interdisciplinary issues associated with the environment and sustainability.

"Working on the Sustainability Initiative with Alex and the team completely broadened my understanding of what sustainability really means. Before, I didn't realize how often the term is misinterpreted or narrowly defined. Now I see how broad it is."

—Ishwrya Achuthan Geetha

Since 2020, the Sustainability Initiative has engaged interns as part of the team to enhance student leadership and involvement in our work on sustainability at CMU. To date, 13 undergraduate and graduate students have participated in the program.

In this year's Voluntary University Review, we are weaving a narrative that underscores the power of storytelling in understanding and advancing sustainability. A key focus has been exploring the stories within our own Carnegie Mellon University community to better understand the impact of our collective efforts. To enrich our understanding of CMU's sustainability journey, we turned to those who have directly contributed: our former Sustainability Initiative interns.

These individuals have played a crucial role in shaping CMU's sustainability landscape. Their experiences offer a unique, qualitative perspective, and demonstrate how CMU catalyzes personal and professional growth while fostering a commitment to a sustainable future. By sharing their stories, they illuminate the diverse pathways through which CMU's initiatives resonate and inspire.

The following spotlights showcase the impactful contributions of our former interns — offering a glimpse into the tangible ways CMU's sustainability efforts translate into real-world change and individual achievement. Their insights underscore the importance of connecting personal narratives with

institutional goals as they enrich our understanding of CMU's commitment to a sustainable future for all. These interviews were conducted by the four current Sustainability Initiative interns.

Ishwrya Achuthan Geetha



Ishwrya Achuthan Geetha, a recent civil engineering master's graduate from CMU who specialized in advanced infrastructure systems, interned with the Sustainability Initiative from 2023-2024 as the

Data Analytics Intern. Her primary focus was to refine the Global Goals dashboards, a tool that maps CMU's sustainability efforts to the SDGs. Her work on developing these Tableau dashboards helped in making the information more accessible, engaging, and actionable, specifically for students with an interest in aligning their passions and projects with the Global Goals. Ishwrya's experience as a Sustainability Initiative Intern reshaped her understanding of sustainability to be more holistic, extending beyond environmental concepts into a framework that intersected with her work in civil engineering.

Now as an engineer at Verdantas, Ishwrya works with the water/wastewater team, where she works on asset management and develops models to help municipalities with stormwater management and

"The Sustainability Initiative programs exposed me to a variety of ideas that went beyond the environment, which definitely shaped the way I think about sustainability."

—Camden Johnson

climate resilience. She is primarily involved in building hydraulic models to represent the existing conditions and identify capacity issues. Her work also involves examining asset conditions in drinking systems and aligns with EPA standards to prevent system failure. Across her internship and professional work, Ishwrya highlights the importance of actionable data, blending her technical expertise with communitydriven impact.

Camden Johnson



Camden Johnson, a chemistry student in the integrated bachelor's/ master's degree program, served as the Thematic Programming Intern from 2023 to 2024. He led projects like Open Studio

events, fostering informal discussions on involvement in the Global Goals, and the Sustainability Snack Hour, featuring presentations on topics like global disarmament and the energy burden in the southern United States. Camden also co-founded the Pittsburgh Youth Sustainability Network, connecting sustainability-focused students from local universities through events like a tour of Chatham University's Eden Hall campus and the Pathways to Impact exploratory career event.

Beyond the Sustainability Initiative, Camden has pursued his passion for Environmental Chemistry through three years of research at the Collins and McDonough Labs at CMU, and at Brunel University in London. His research focused on developing a sustainable water treatment process to replace traditional bleach methods, aiming to reduce toxic chemical byproducts. He tested environmental water samples to ensure the new process effectively removed harmful chemicals.

Seeking to make a community impact, Camden joined the Watersmith Guild, a nonprofit focused on watershed conservation. As the project lead for Aqua Lab Adventures, he developed a two-day microplastic pollution education program for middle school students in Braddock Hills and Hazelwood communities affected by industrial pollution. Camden is currently exploring careers in environmental education, aiming to blend his scientific knowledge with his dedication to sustainability and community outreach.

Bobuchi Ken-Opurum



Bobuchi fondly remembers her time with Carnegie Mellon's Sustainability Initiative — where she immersed herself in projects that fueled her passion for sustainable urban

development. She particularly enjoyed interviewing faculty to contribute to the VUR and expanding the "Elements" framework to integrate SDGs. Serving as the Research Intern in 2021 allowed her to develop methodologies for capturing sustainability in university practices, education, and research, experiences that directly inform her impactful career.

"My approach to sustainability is informed by how I want to make change for my community through sustainable development, and learning something new from Alex and the guest speakers at the events helped me determine what that might look like."

-Phidor Kong

Currently, she leads the Building Electrification Group's (BEI) research arm, championing equitable decarbonization and climate resilience in marginalized urban communities. Her efforts encompass comprehensive research, financial analysis, and strategic funding acquisition, all aimed at ensuring affordable housing aligns with citywide decarbonization goals. Notably, Bobuchi's dissertation, focused on urban coastal resilience in the Global South, culminated in the Re-HOUSED toolkit. This innovative resource empowers "selfbuilders" with practical tools for resilient housing decisions, including a design solution matrix, a decision-support web app, and a resilient strategies guidebook. Rooted in bottom-up resilience knowledge and the lived experiences of frontline communities, Re-HOUSED exemplifies her dedication to sustainable development and resilient cities, aligning perfectly with her ongoing commitment to equitable and environmentally sound urban solutions.

Phidor Kong



Phidor Kong, a master's student in Public Policy and Management at CMU, is originally from Cambodia. She holds degrees in Environmental Science, and Political Science and

Environmental Justice. From 2023 to 2024, Phidor served as a Research Intern at the Sustainability

Voluntary University Review of the Sustainable Development Goals

Initiative, where she played a key role in drafting the 2023 VUR and spearheaded the Sustainability Career Chat series. This initiative invited CMU alumni working in sustainability and international development to share their career journeys with students exploring similar paths. Her work on the VUR exposed her to the university's cross-cutting efforts around the Global Goals, while the Career Chat series highlighted the diverse professional pathways in sustainability. Together, these experiences sparked her broader interest in the broader definition of sustainability.

Building on her experience with the VUR, she collaborated with a professor from Heinz College and an international team to research Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs). Phidor evaluated and compared VLRs from different countries, examining their efforts to close the gap of food insecurity by addressing the UN No One Left Behind policy, and increasing an understanding of what food insecurity looks like in different contexts.

Currently, Phidor is an intern at the National Center on Education and the Economy, where she's benchmarking the international education system to evaluate the benefits of different systems. Giving back to her community, she is part of a mentorship program to assist students in Cambodia and support their career pathway. Phidor is invested in working towards sustainable development from an angle of education, recognizing how education can change people's lives. By engaging with students, she is beginning to drive change at the local level, with the long-term goal of expanding her impact on education.

"The internship helped me gain a broader sense of understanding about all of these different issues related to sustainability, and then gave me the opportunity to convey those things, talk about them, listen to other people talking about them, and make sense of it."

—Khushi Nandgaonkar

Khushi Nandgaonkar



Khushi Nandgaonkar, a former Communications Intern with the Sustainability Initiative, was part of the 2021 cohort of interns. She helped build the foundation for the

Sustainability Initiative's outreach by developing a communications strategy that included social media, newsletters, and event promotion. She also created a short animated video introducing the Global Goals and the Sustainability Initiative, which remains featured on the Initiative's homepage.

Born and raised in Delhi, India, Khushi's passion for sustainability is rooted in personal experience, from witnessing air and water pollution to observing disparities in resource access between urban and rural communities. Her understanding of sustainability expanded during college, where she began to see the intersections between environmental, gender-based, and social justice issues. This intersectional awareness informs her personal values and professional life.

Now working as a tattoo artist in Mumbai, Khushi blends her love for nature with her commitment to sustainability. She works to reduce single-use supplies and centers her artwork around natural themes like plants, animals, and birds. Her work also empowers women, whom she primarily tattoos, as a means of reclaiming bodily autonomy and selfexpression.

Outside her professional work, Khushi incorporates sustainable habits into daily life by repurposing wastewater for plants and supporting small local businesses. Her time with the Sustainability Initiative helped her develop a more holistic understanding of interconnected global issues and strengthened her ability to communicate across disciplines.

Katie Posko



During her time with the Sustainability Initiative in 2020, Katie served as a research assistant to Dr. Sarah Mendelson and Alex Hiniker playing a vital role in the development of the

VUR. Her contributions included data collection, mapping, and analysis. A highlight of her experience was working closely with the Sustainability Steering Committee to advance the VUR. This collaboration deepened her understanding of CMU's alignment with the Global Goals—particularly Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. Through identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement in its sustainability practices, she noted valuable insights into university operations.

Internship Program

"For me, sustainability is all about empowerment and trying to help people level up."

—Peter Wu

Katie's passion for decent work and economic growth extends beyond her time at CMU. Her career began in workforce development, where she worked with employers to ensure local residents had access to meaningful employment. In her current role, she continues to drive job development and career growth — placing early-career associates in roles that match their skills. This work directly supports Goal 8 by promoting inclusive economic growth through sustainable employment opportunities.

Overall, Katie is most proud of the knowledge she gained about CMU's SDG alignment through her VUR work, contributing to a clearer understanding of the university's sustainability landscape. The analytical skills and understanding of organizational dynamics gained through her work on the VUR continue to inform her approach to identifying talent and fostering career growth in her current role.

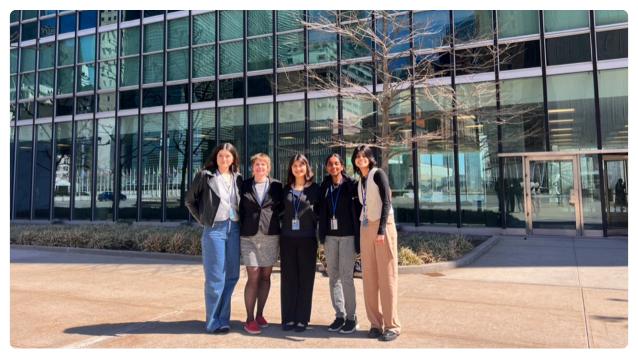
Peter Wu



As the Data Analytics Intern in 2021, Peter Wu played a pivotal role in leveraging data to advance the Sustainability Initiative. A key project of his was developing a model to map CMU course descriptions

and clubs to the SDGs. By identifying keywords, he connected academic offerings with the SDGs and mapped them on a Tableau dashboard still available today — boosting student engagement and awareness. A notable achievement during his internship was contributing to CMU's improved performance in sustainability rankings through effective data analysis and methodology.

Reflecting on his experience, he highlighted the interconnectedness of the Global Goals emphasizing the importance of partnerships to achieve collective progress. Peter's experience at CMU significantly shaped his career, fostering a data-driven approach to empowerment and accessibility. Now a data scientist at LinkedIn, he continues to focus on initiatives that uplift people by providing access and opportunities. He sees a strong connection between his work and sustainability particularly in promoting decent work and economic growth.



The Sustainability Initiative team standing in front of the United Nations Secretariat in New York City

Sustainability Initiative visit to the United Nations

In March 2025, the Sustainability Initiative team traveled to the United Nations in New York City for a workshop hosted by the United Nations Academic Impact to discuss implementation of the Global Goals with other universities. Director Alexandra Hiniker designed and led the convening, with participation from Lehigh University's United Nations Partnership, The New School's Graduate Program in International Affairs, and New York University's Center for Global Affairs.

The Sustainability Initiative interns presented on the history of the Sustainability Initiative, the Voluntary University Review, the Pittsburgh Youth Leaders in Sustainability Network, and the Storytelling for Sustainability series.

The team also toured the United Nations, listening in on a United Nations Security Council briefing and attending events as part of the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Additionally, they met with representatives of the New York City Mayor's Office of Operations to share experiences on how cities and universities address the Global Goals.

Additional engagement

The Sustainability Initiative team also spoke to classes in the Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Computer Science, the Tepper School of Business, and the Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy who requested to learn more about the Sustainability Initiative. Additionally, Sustainability Initiative director Alexandra Hiniker continues to serve as a member of the Student-Centered Community Engagement and Learning Network (SCCELN) and the Dietrich Community Engagement Fellowship Program to advise students, staff, and faculty on how to incorporate sustainability efforts into community engagement activities.



Research

The Sustainability Initiative is accelerating progress on the Global Goals by identifying and connecting researchers at CMU and beyond. To support this work, the Sustainability Initiative collaborated with Jason Glenn, director of Research Information Management Services, to integrate the Elements research management system with faculty profiles on scholars.cmu.edu — allowing for automatic updates and opportunities for faculty to review their top Global Goals. Anyone can use the platform to search for researchers by Global Goal, college/division, department, or faculty name, among other criteria.

However, not all faculty have entered or confirmed their top Global Goals, so for last year's VUR, the Sustainability Initiative team undertook a comprehensive outreach process to encourage faculty across campus to complete their Elements profiles and confirm their top Global Goals. Despite this systematic approach, the response rate was relatively low. Over the course of the past year, the team revisited the outreach process and consulted with colleagues who already have established relationships with the various departments, and decided to update the approach. The team is now aligning with established outreach efforts to departments and incorporating additional messaging about Global Goals into those communications, rather than initiating separate communications.

Throughout this process, the interactive Tableau dashboard continues to be updated and remains available for the CMU community to access by visiting the cmu.edu/sustainability. To access the Tableau dashboard, you must have an Andrew userID and be connected to the CMU virtual private network (VPN). However, anyone can access the Elements research management system and use the Global Goals search function at scholars.cmu.edu.

Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships (SURF)

In 2024, the Sustainability Initiative undertook a pilot program with the Office of Undergraduate Research and Scholar Development (OURSD) to create SURF-Sustainability Awards. The objective was to connect students with faculty to conduct research that helps achieve the Global Goals. OURSD funds experienced undergraduate student-researchers conducting 8-10 weeks of full-time research in Pittsburgh through SURF, a selective program that requires an application with a research proposal and a letter of recommendation from the faculty research mentor. Following the success of the 2024 program, the Sustainability Initiative transitioned this to a permanent partnership and has committed to supporting a second cohort of SURF-Sustainability fellows for summer 2025.



Numerous organizations, committees, and student groups at CMU are actively engaged in advancing the Global Goals. These are a few examples showcasing key partnerships to highlight the diverse and meaningful ways the CMU community is driving progress toward these goals, but it is by no means an exhaustive list of all activities across CMU.

If you have a question about the analysis or would like your efforts to be included, please contact us at sustainability@cmu.edu. We also welcome suggestions for partnerships.

Scholars at Risk U.S. General Assembly

In October 2025, more than 100 scholars, leaders, and advocates gathered for the 2nd Scholars at Risk (SAR) U.S. General Assembly to highlight the importance of promoting academic freedom in the United States and around the world. The event featured sessions exploring the national and global contexts of academic freedom, offering guidance on hosting threatened scholars on university campuses, and providing space for scholars and practitioners to share reflections from their placements.

Hosted by Carnegie Mellon University in partnership with the University of Pittsburgh, the assembly centered on the theme "Building bridges to support scholars and promote academic freedom." Both Carnegie Mellon and the University of Pittsburgh are active members of the SAR Network and the SAR U.S. Section, working together to advance academic freedom and expand opportunities for at-risk scholars in the region. CMU's Artists and Scholars At Risk (ASAR) Program upholds university values of academic freedom and freedom of expression through our support to scholars who are under threat in their home countries or regions.



Panelists at the Scholars at Risk U.S. General Assembly

During her closing remarks, Sustainability Initiative director Alexandra Hiniker, a member of the SAR U.S. Section Steering Committee and the ASAR Steering Committee, reflected on the links between sustainability and academic freedom by referencing the links to the Global Goals.



What We Brought with Us

In November 2024, the Sustainability Studio hosted What We Brought with Us, an exhibition of things people took when they fled persecution, suffering, and war.

As the organizers explain, when people are forced from their homes, their things carry symbolic weight. They represent the human relations that constitute a settled life. Yet things also stand for hope: they are a seed that must bear fruit in strange ground. Refugee things aren't always judiciously chosen; they may be selected in haste and confusion. En route, things are lost, traded, and stolen, or jettisoned because they can't be carried a step farther. What is retained may acquire new meaning and become the metonym for an entire life.





What We Brought with Us displayed in the Sustainability Studio

The traveling exhibition was developed by Academy in Exile at TU Dortmund University and curated by Vanessa Agnew and Annika Roux, with photography by Jobst von Kunowski.

Costa Rica Study Abroad

The Sustainability Initiative engaged with the Department of Languages, Cultures, and Applied Linguistics to support the partnership with the Monteverde Institute in Costa Rica's Puntarenas region for a summer 2024 study abroad and experiential learning program. Founded in 1986, the Monteverde Institute (MVI) is a globally recognized center dedicated to sustainable environmental practices and community involvement. As one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, Costa Rica is also celebrated for its forward-thinking environmental policies. This program provides students with a unique opportunity to explore sustainability and environmental stewardship firsthand, while also studying Spanish and immersing themselves in Costa Rican culture. Through the program, students engage with the Global Goals and examine Costa Rica's contributions to creating a more sustainable world for everyone.

During her visit to the program in June 2024, Sustainability Initiative director Alexandra Hiniker gave a lecture open to students and the public entitled "Local Advocacy for Global Change" exploring how local advocacy efforts connect to global policy commitments, with a focus on the role of Costa Rica, and highlighted how the Global Goals can be employed as a common language to collectively achieve sustainability objectives.



Costa Rica study abroad students learn how to cook local dishes

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar earns first FEE EcoCampus Green Flag Designation in the MENA Region

In November 2024, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q) was awarded the prestigious FEE EcoCampus Green Flag designation, becoming the first university in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to achieve this recognition. CMU-Q is a Qatar Foundation partner university.

Since Fall 2021, CMU-Q students, faculty and staff have embraced positive change and worked together to make CMU-Q a model for environmental and social stewardship.

On Earth Day 2024, Dean Michael Trick signed the CMU-Q Sustainability Charter.

Based in Denmark, the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) is one of the world's largest environmental education organizations, with over 100 member organizations in 81 countries. The EcoCampus program empowers students to lead sustainable change, bring awareness to their peers, and encourage operational efficiency at their campuses.

CMU-Q embarked on its ambitious EcoCampus journey in September 2020 under the leadership of Chadi Aoun, teaching professor of information systems, and the guidance of Ruba Hinnawi, technical lead at Qatar Foundation's Earthna Center for a Sustainable Future, the national operator for EcoCampus. A committee of students, faculty and staff created a comprehensive plan to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals into all aspects of campus life.

CMU-Q collaborated with Earthna and the FEE organization to transform the CMU-Q campus and community and led the charge to create a coordinated approach to environmental, social and economic sustainability within Qatar Foundation.

In 2022, Jennifer Bruder, associate dean of research, and Elissar El-Akra Hajjar, director of facilities, became co-directors of the EcoCampus initiative. They mobilized a large community effort to transform the



CMU-Q community members caring for the community garden

campus, focusing on three key areas: food equity, climate change, and campus waste management.

One of the many campus achievements is a community garden, nourished by compost from the cafeteria.

The CMU-Q EcoCampus assessment audit was led by Pramod Kumar Sharma, senior director for education for the Foundation for Environment Education (FEE), Ruba Hinnawi, technical lead at Earthna and Dr. John Chachladakis, assistant professor at Qatar University; As a result of the audit, CMU-Q was awarded the Green Flag as the FEE EcoCampus certification.

The FEE Green Flag is a milestone in CMU-Q's sustainability journey; it counts as a first step in CMU-Q's commitment and dedication in teaching and educating students to lead by example in sustainability.

CMU-Q offers undergraduate programs in biological sciences, business administration, computer science, and information systems. In their coursework, research activities, student-led events and extracurricular opportunities, every student has the opportunity to learn about sustainability and effect change throughout their undergraduate years.



Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Day

On Wednesday, November 20, the CMU Libraries Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Services team hosted "GIS Day 2024: Sustainable Communities and Technologies," a day-long symposium celebrating the positive impact of GIS applications and exploring the connections between GIS, spatial inquiry, and sustainability. More than 100 attendees from local universities, government organizations, and industry gathered in the Cohon University Center's Rangos Ballroom to learn more about the GIS work happening in the community and share their own contributions.





Participants in GIS Day

Student group outreach

Thanks to the efforts of intern Ameena George, the Sustainability Initiative has begun systematically reaching out to student groups to explore how aligning with the Global Goals can support and enhance their missions. This outreach offers several key benefits to student organizations, including mapping their activities to the Global Goals to better understand and communicate their impact, identifying potential next projects, improving general outreach and visibility, and discovering new internal and external partnership opportunities through the shared framework of the Global Goals.





The CMU campus in Pittsburgh

Network engagement

CMU's Sustainability Initiative is an active member of numerous associations that explore the links between the Global Goals and post-secondary education. This allows us to not only share our experience, but also to learn from others who are working in this field. Such networks include the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA), the Academic Consortium for Climate, Environment, and Sustainability Solutions (ACCESS), and the International Sustainable Campus Network (ISCN). Green Practices colleagues also actively participate in AASHE and Second Nature. Contributions include giving workshops, participating in panels, and sharing case studies with the associations.

Additionally, Sustainability Initiative director Alexandra Hiniker contributed a chapter entitled "The Role of Post-Secondary Institutions in Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Carnegie Mellon's Engagement with Local and Global Communities through the Sustainable Development Goals" to the NAFSA Publication "Global Goals, Global Education: Advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals." The publication, edited by Joanna Regulska and Jolynn Shoemaker, offers a comprehensive guide on how higher education institutions worldwide can contribute significantly to the advancement of the 2030 Agenda.



Carnegie Mellon University Sustainability Initiative







The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education





Conducting the Voluntary University Review has provided valuable insights into Carnegie Mellon's progress and opportunities in advancing the Global Goals. Key takeaways highlight the importance of strengthening communication, engagement, and education around sustainability efforts across campus. Moving into the next cycle, the Sustainability Initiative will prioritize incorporating the findings from the comprehensive sustainability survey, such as revisiting our dashboards and developing and regularly updating our communications to share sustainability work across campus and connect partners both internally and externally.

Additionally, we plan to expand educational opportunities through initiatives such as Core@ CMU, the Sustainability Initiative internship program, student department liaisons, and workshops hosted in collaboration with campus partners like the University Libraries, Dining Services, and the Office of Human Resources. We invite students, faculty, and staff to stay engaged and collaborate with the Sustainability Initiative as we continue to grow this shared commitment to a more sustainable future for all.

Stay engaged!

Please reach out to sustainability@cmu.edu with any questions, suggestions, comments, or encouragement!







The Sustainability Initiative team (left to right): Cristina Goeller, Ameena George, Alexandra Hiniker, Purva Bommireddy, Aleena Siddiqui (credit: Kitoko Chargois)

Thank you to the Carnegie Mellon University community for your engagement with the Sustainability Initiative. We're especially grateful to the students, faculty, staff, and partners who contributed to sustainability projects and shared feedback on the Voluntary University Review. Your input has helped shape our work and advance our goals.

The Sustainability Initiative team (2024 - 2025)

Alexandra Hiniker Director

Purva Bommireddy, Senior, Civil Engineering, College of Engineering Community Engagement intern

Ameena George, Freshman, Business Administration, Tepper School of Business Strategy and Communications intern Cristina Goeller, Masters Student, Public Policy and Management, Heinz College Heinz College DICE intern

Aleena Siddiqui, Junior, Materials Science and Engineering and Environmental and Sustainability Studies, College of Engineering Outreach and Programming intern



AASHE - Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education

ACCESS - Academic Consortium on Climate, Environment, and Sustainability Solutions

AIEA - Association of International Education Administrators

- **BEI** Building Electrification Institute
- **CCI** Core Competencies Initiative
- CIT College of Engineering
- CMU Carnegie Mellon University
- CMU-Q Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar
- CSDI Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion
- DASH Data Analytics Sharing Hub
- DICE Diversity, Inclusion, Climate and Equity
- **EPA -** Environmental Protection Agency
- FAQ Frequently Asked Questions
- FEE Foundation for Environmental Education
- **GBA** Green Building Alliance
- HECC Higher Education Coordinating Commission
- IRandA Institutional Research and Analysis
- ISCN International Sustainable Campus Network
- MENA Middle East and North Africa
- NAFSA Association of International Educators
- SAR Scholars at Risk

SCCELN - Student-Centered Community Engagement and Learning Network

- SDGs Sustainable Development Goals
- SGG Scotty Goes Green

SIMAP - Sustainability Indicator Management and Analysis Program

SLICE - Student Leadership, Involvement, and Civic Engagement

STARS - Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System[™]

- SURF Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships
- VUR Voluntary University Review





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