

UNO by the Numbers:

- Students: 15,000+
- Employees: 1,800+
- Majors & programs: 200
- Campus area: 400+ acres
- Building area: 2.8 million ft²

How We Are Helping:

Sustainability Master Plan

- Information-gathering
 - Stakeholder meetings & interviews
 - Data collection & analysis
 - Sustainability Engagement Index Surveys
 - Focus groups & workshops
- Greenhouse Gas inventory
- Development of sustainability vision statements
- Baseline performance metrics
- Improvement goals for 2025 and beyond
- Development & prioritization of strategies

University of Nebraska-Omaha Case Study



A Plan to Become a Sustainability Leader

Early in 2014, a chancellor-appointed sustainability committee at UNO asked Verdis Group to help create the university’s first ever Sustainability Master Plan. From the very beginning, the committee made apparent that it wanted the process to involve significant stakeholder engagement -- input from students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members. The purpose of the plan (expected to be finished before 2015) is to build on UNO’s existing sustainability successes, including its aspirations to foster and instill a culture of sustainability, and to reduce consumption and waste of natural and material resources. The plan will also be unique because it will incorporate solutions beyond

energy/emissions, water, and materials/waste -- it will consider curriculum, policy and coordination, and on-campus and community engagement.

The plan will integrate all the quantitative and qualitative information we’ve gathered to benchmark performance metrics and set improvement goals for 2025 and 2050. The plan will then outline and prioritize solutions and strategies for reaching those goals. In the end, the plan will lead UNO towards being a local and national leader with respect to sustainability in higher education.



We are excited to deliver the high level of stakeholder engagement that UNO desired throughout its planning process. Hearing from so many voices has been enlightening and informative. As a result, we are going to have an immensely comprehensive plan that has been built from the ground up. The plan will position UNO to be recognized and celebrated for its exciting sustainability successes.”

Craig Moody

Principal and Project Manager
Verdis Group



Discovering Success & Opportunity

UNO's plan has three primary objectives:

- Articulate a sustainability vision for the university
- Prioritize short- and long-term strategies that are socially responsible, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective
- Integrate sustainability into the university's culture and identity

To meet these objectives, we first needed to discover information from students, faculty, staff, administrators, and community members. This process included:

- Regular meetings with the chancellor-appointed sustainability committee
- Meetings with a Sustainability Master Plan steering committee
- A Leadership Immersion with key UNO decision-makers
- Meetings with dozens of university councils, committees, and taskforces
- Analysis of our Sustainability Engagement Index survey and website-submitted comments
- Presenting and soliciting feedback at UNO's Strategic Planning Forum
- Interviews and focus groups with select stakeholders
- A Dream & Design planning workshop with key UNO decision-makers

The comprehensive nature of this information-gathering has provided us with a long list of sustainability successes already happening at UNO, as well as opportunities for improvement. A few notable successes are listed at right.



Photo credit: University of Nebraska at Omaha

Craig Moody captures notes while Daniel Lawse facilitates conversation during UNO's Sustainability Leadership Immersion. The purpose of this event, held at UNO's Glacier Creek Preserve, was to discuss why sustainability is important to UNO, connect with nature, and engage key decision-makers in articulating a sustainability vision for the university.

A Plan Built on Previous Success

- * Established the Center for Urban Sustainability
- * Sustainability as one of the five formal campus priorities
- * New buildings are green & efficient
- * MavRide program provides free bus passes to students
- * New sustainability courses & academic programs
- * Ongoing sustainability research
- * Widespread single stream recycling program
- * Water bottle refill stations
- * Green Basis business school sustainability organization
- * Green information technology guidelines

Sustainability in Higher Education

The green movement in higher education should come as no surprise; there is a sincere and growing interest among students in identifying and applying to colleges where there is a demonstrated commitment to sustainability. Thus, many colleges across the country are making sustainability a priority in their academics, student life, and campus operations.

To date, over 650 college and university presidents have signed the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, which is an important step towards creating a more sustainable campus. Also, over 800

institutions are members of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. Institutions that do not commit to being more sustainable must be cautious not to fall behind the trend.

There are over 4,500 institutions of higher learning in the U.S., and many are, quite simply, massive consumers of resources. What a great opportunity to make a meaningful positive impact on the environment and educate students that will graduate and do the same in their careers.