



AFFINITY CONSULTANTS

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR A CHANGING WORLD

The Road to Sustainability

Sustainability is finding a niche at higher education institutions throughout Ohio. Institutions are not only reducing their environmental impact, but also partnering with their communities and empowering faculty, staff, and students to expand their impact beyond traditional educational influence. Whether you are just starting down the path of sustainability at your institution or have been traveling the road for years, there are many drivers that one can reference to help gain support and momentum for the institutions sustainability initiatives.

Some institutions have realized the benefits of sustainability initiatives due to regulatory obligations, including the well known House Bill 7 and House Bill 251 for state institutions. Institutions implementing HB7 and HB251 realize significant energy reductions through efficiency upgrades and alternative energy options, both of which can begin to move an institution in a sustainable direction as almost an afterthought.

Other institutions have sought to add value through targeted sustainability initiatives. These initiatives are often focused on bottom line benefits including cost reduction and attracting future students - typically something beyond just energy conservation measures. The 2009 Princeton Review College Hopes and Worries Survey found that 66% of high school students applying to college said that an institution's commitment to environmental issues is considered within their college decision. This figure indicates that perhaps sustainability principles can improve the bottom line by attracting more students to the campus and institutions are beginning to take notice of this.

Finally, there is a small but growing number of institutions that are attempting to strategically position themselves to gain as much value as possible by incorporating sustainability throughout the campus and campus life. These institutions are trying to "change the game" when it comes to sustainability. This select group is educating, promoting, and integrating sustainability throughout the campus and involving internal and external stakeholders when setting goals and making decisions because it's the right thing to do and buying into "People, Planet, Profit". These institutions understand that not every sustainability initiative is going to positively and/or directly affect the bottom-line. In fact, many initiatives may become an additional cost but these institutions also understand the bigger picture and consider both bottom-line and top-line benefits; which can be difficult and often impossible to accurately quantify.

AASHE understands this bigger picture and has incorporated it

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within the STARS® framework rating system. This rating system categorizes achievement and evaluates the sustainability principles within all areas of the campus including: education and research, facility operations, planning, administration and engagement.

Examples of great sustainability achievements can be found at AASHE member institutions throughout the country.

- Furman University, located in Greenville, SC, has been on the road to sustainability for the past decade. Furman's Shi Center for Sustainability focuses on "teaching Furman and Upstate communities about sustainability through outreach programming, curricular development, and original research."
- At New York University, the faculty is engaged in numerous sustainability research efforts supported by Green Grants from NYU's Sustainability Task Force. Faculty at NYU have even used their research findings to advise the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on climate change issues.
- The College of the Atlantic has claimed that they have reached carbon neutrality achieving the goal of the ACUPCC which is a significant achievement that many colleges and universities are apprehensive of committing to.

Where is your institution headed on the road to sustainability? Affinity Consultants can help your institution meet regulations or support your institution in becoming a sustainability game-changer. We can determine an institution's current sustainability status through baseline Greenhouse Gas Inventories conducted by our certified Greenhouse Gas Verifiers (GHG-V) and assist in sustainability assessments including AASHE's STARS® Reporting Tool. If your institution is farther along, Affinity also assists in the development and implementation of formal sustainability programs as well as individual sustainability projects. The road to sustainability can provide value for your institution and your community, regardless of where you begin. The sooner your institution starts down the sustainability path, the sooner your institution will reap the benefits of the sustainable journey.

Affinity Consultants, Inc. can assist your institution on its road to sustainability by conducting detailed sustainability assessments, greenhouse gas inventories, cross-sectional committee implementation, development of a sustainability programs, climate action plans, and reporting activities. Affinity can assist with your participation in the **Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS®)** self-reporting framework including initial evaluation, submittal information, and rating improvement activities. Affinity has accredited **Greenhouse Gas Verifiers (GHG-V)** and **LEED** professionals on staff. Our GHG Verifiers can conduct your institutions greenhouse gas inventory that can be used for adherence to the **American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC)**, as well as, various regulatory/voluntary frameworks and rating systems.

If you have any questions, or require more information on climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, and other environmental and sustainability issues, feel free to contact [Affinity Consultants, Inc.](#)

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