

SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

Cal Poly continues to make progress on its goal of carbon neutrality by 2045, reducing its emissions by 14% since 1990, despite roughly doubling in size.

- **Energy Conservation:** All of Cal Poly's new buildings are designed to be all-electric (operating without gas). Additionally, all new buildings are designed and constructed to meet LEED Gold certification standards from the United States Green Building Council. Cal Poly has set up a new DEEP Energy Fund to invest in energy conservation like lighting and HVAC retrofits and return the cost savings from energy conservation to the fund each year.
- **Renewable Energy** – Cal Poly now generates roughly 25% of its own electricity from the sun, largely due to the 4.5 MW Gold tree solar farm, with more solar projects in development. More solar projects are in development. Read more about ways Cal Poly is working to reduce GHG from energy (<https://afd.calpoly.edu/sustainability/campus-action/energy/>).

Water Conservation

Since 1996 Cal Poly has reduced its potable water consumption by 17% despite adding 3 million sq-ft of buildings, 6,000 new on-campus residents and 7,000 students. Cal Poly's future Water Reclamation Facility, slated to be online in summer of 2026 will increase water system sustainability and resilience by treating campus wastewater and making recycled water. The recycled water will then be used on campus farms, the sports complex, and future landscaping areas, freeing up water to build more housing. Read more about water conservation (<https://afd.calpoly.edu/sustainability/campus-action/water/water-conservation/>) at Cal Poly.

Waste Reduction

The 2021 CSU sustainability policy set a goal of diverting 80% of campus waste from the landfill by the year 2040, then continue toward zero waste. Campus recycling efforts include collection of traditional recyclables (<https://www.iwma.com/recycling-guide/>), construction and demolition debris, scrap metal, food scraps, yard waste, and animal manure.

While recycling has certainly helped diversion efforts, Cal Poly acknowledges that focusing on intentional consumption and reuse initiatives are also effective strategies of waste prevention. To that end, Cal Poly has increased reuse of materials through campus surplus (<https://www.publicsurplus.com/sms/calpoly/ca/list/current/?orgid=3013>), food donation efforts, and CP Thrift, which captures and redistributes clothing and household goods during student move out. To further our zero waste efforts, Cal Poly has made changes to products and processes to eliminate waste before it happens by reducing single-use packaging and offering reusable food containers, eliminating single-use water bottles, and reducing paper use by implementing electronic processes. Learn more about how Cal Poly is working towards zero waste.

Sustainable Transportation

The greatest challenge Cal Poly faces on its path to carbon neutrality is transforming the way commuters get to campus, as commuting accounts for nearly half of total campus carbon emissions. The university has implemented numerous initiatives to reduce emissions from commuting, including the addition of bike racks, expansion of ZipCar and vanpool programs, and limitations on the sale of parking permits. Additionally, Cal Poly has partnered with the City of SLO to offer free bus passes for all students, staff, and faculty. Most importantly, Cal Poly is building thousands of new units of student housing on campus so students can walk or bike to class instead of drive. Learn how to sustainably commute (<https://afd.calpoly.edu/parking/commutingtocampus/>) to campus.

Sustainable Food and Dining

As one of the largest commercial services at Cal Poly, Campus Dining strives to lessen the university's environmental impact with programs, products, and services that reduce the campus's overall ecological "foodprint."

Campus Dining improves sustainability of food streams through the addition of plant-based options, edible food donation, sustainable food ware, and composting. Read more about Campus Dining sustainability efforts (<https://dineoncampus.com/calpoly/campus-sustainability/>).

Curriculum and Research Infusion

SusCat

Cal Poly has created a catalog of sustainability focused and related courses and programs, often referred to as SusCat or the Sustainability Catalog. The purpose of the SusCat digital resource is threefold; to help students find courses and programs that focus on sustainability, to allow faculty to highlight the courses they teach in sustainability, and to track and grow the list of sustainability offerings in Cal Poly academics. By using this tool, students in all colleges can easily find courses that discuss a variety of environmental topics. To learn more, visit SusCat (<https://suscat.calpoly.edu/>). For a full list of courses, please see the Sustainability Courses website (<https://catalog.calpoly.edu/courses/#sustainabilitycoursestext>) in the Courses section of the Cal Poly Catalog.

CAFES Center for Sustainability

Established by students in 2010, the Center For Sustainability, established by students in 2010, helped form the Cal Poly Organic Farm as well as numerous professional development programs in sustainable pest management, composting, artisan foods and FEED (Farmer Experiential Education).

and Development), a program for veterans entering agriculture. The Center has hosted many leaders in the sustainable agriculture movement and has offered scores of public education programs on organic gardening, permaculture, holistic management, fair trade, bee keeping, carbon farming, and more. The Center also facilitates campus-community collaborations, which have resulted in regional food system initiatives, buy local campaigns, and young farmer coalitions. Visit the Center for Sustainability (<https://cfs.calpoly.edu/about/>) for more information.

Campus and Community Engagement

AASHE-STARs Certification

The AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) STARs (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System) offers a framework to implement, measure, and improve sustainable practices across the entire university. AASHE STARs uses a detailed data collection and certification process to foster sustainability across the entire campus. Cal Poly began working on AASHE STARs in 2016, earning a silver rating in February 2017, and a gold rating in September 2019 and in November 2023. The 2023 full report (<https://reports.aashe.org/institutions/california-polytechnic-state-university-ca/report/2023-07-10/>) is available online.

Green Campus

Cal Poly Green Campus is a student-led team with oversight from the Energy, Utilities, and Sustainability department within Facilities. The Green Campus team implements conservation projects and expands educational outreach and marketing, increasing engagement in sustainable practices throughout campus. Every year, Green Campus team members collaborate directly with Sustainability staff on strategies to most effectively engage their peers. Green Campus conducts student outreach by hosting a variety of events ranging from film screenings, festivals and fairs, art installations, panel discussions, and workshops. Interested in joining the team? Learn more about Green Campus (<https://afd.calpoly.edu/sustainability/student/green-campus/>).

Eco Reps

Eco Reps are a group of students committed to creating a culture of environmental stewardship on campus at Cal Poly. Managed by the Green Campus Team, Eco Reps exemplify the "learn by doing" motto and play a direct role in Cal Poly's advancement to a fully sustainable future. The Eco Reps club holds regular meetings where students spend time learning about environmental topics through guest speakers, campus tours, and volunteer opportunities such as litter cleanups and tree plantings. Eco Reps serves as an all-inclusive space for students interested in growing their knowledge of local environmental topics.