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Grand Valley State University

# Student Sustainability Guide





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## **Mission:**

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Grand Valley State University educates students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies. The university contributes to the enrichment of society through excellent teaching, active scholarship, and public service.



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## Table of Contents

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- 3..... What is Sustainability?
- 5..... Reduce Waste
- 7..... Recycle! Recycle! Recycle!
- 9..... Conserve Energy
- 11..... Save Water!
- 12..... Enjoy the Natural Surroundings at GVSU
- 13..... Transportation
- 15..... Eating Green and Buying Green
- 17..... Some Initiatives that are Making GVSU a More Sustainable University
- 19..... Other Ways to Enjoy a Sustainable Lifestyle
- 20..... Ten Ways to Green Your Life Today
- 21..... Sustainability Initiative Advisory Council
- 22..... Contact Information

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## What is Sustainability?


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Sustainability is meeting the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. From a global perspective it relates to the environmental impact of human activity, the enhancement of social systems, and the improvement of economic conditions. From a university perspective, it also refers to our ability to continue for the long term and our impact on the local environment, social issues on campus, and the economic performance of the university.

Globally we recognize the damage human activities inflict on the environment and the need to modify these activities to become harmonious with critical environmental systems. We are more aware today of the forces of an increasing human population and the ability of our oceans, atmosphere, and forests to absorb the impact of modern society. The growing population of the earth also creates a more complex society as people of many different backgrounds interact. Issues of respect, safety, prosperity, malnutrition, and health and wellness become ever more important. Social systems need to work to benefit all people. Economic advances have also impacted many people across the globe. Most countries of the world endeavor to increase the standard of living for their citizens. Economic conditions are not evenly distributed, so any growth must be developed and well-managed along with environmental and social improvements.

Grand Valley State University, as a public university, has a responsibility to practice sustainable growth. Grand Valley must maintain and protect the environment, strive to improve society, and effectively manage the economics related to the

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institution. Managing these three key factors of sustainability — environmental, social, and economic — is vital to the long-term viability of the institution.

Achieving the goal of a sustainable institution cannot be accomplished without the work of GVSU faculty, staff, and students. It is important that we all realize the impact that we have as individuals and as an institution, and that we work together to make the changes necessary to become a more sustainable university.

Students are vital to the overall success of sustainability at Grand Valley. The university offers an opportunity to apply what is learned and to make an impact today and on future generations. This guide is designed so that students might easily see how they can help make a positive impact on our world and become better global citizens.

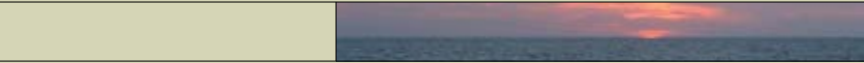
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## Reduce Waste

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Reducing waste is an important step toward a more sustainable lifestyle. The university sends over 1,500 tons of waste per year to the local landfill. There are many ways that students can do their part to reduce this waste.

- When printing or copying, use both sides of the paper. The average college student consumes 320 pounds of paper per year, much of which ends up in a landfill.
- Make use of the Internet and email to save paper.
- Re-use items whenever possible. An empty plastic water bottle can be refilled!
- "Free-cycle". Give away used but good items to others who may still find them to be usable.
- Purchase food and household products that have minimum packaging to avoid discarding a lot of excess material. Buy in bulk whenever possible.
- Avoid paper products such as napkins, plates, and plastic silverware. Start a trend in this regard.
- Make use of reusable mugs for coffee, tea, and drinks rather than paper or Styrofoam cups.
- Before buying something, make sure the item is something that will be used or is a necessity.
- Take only the amount of food that will be eaten. This reduces the amount of food that is thrown away. The U.S. Department of Agriculture states that 27% of the food in the U.S. is wasted each year.

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- Learn where to safely discard hazardous chemicals or products such as paints, oil, cleaners, etc.
  - Participate in Project Donation at GVSU. Staff members from the university collect food, cleaning products, furniture, small appliances, clothes, shoes, and miscellaneous items during student move-out from housing areas each April. These items are donated to local charities and shelters. This is a joint effort of Grand Valley's Office of Housing and Residence Life, the Women's Center, and Facilities Services staff.
  - Use re-usable grocery or shopping bags.
  - Re-use packaging material or recycle to shipping companies like the UPS Store.
  - Reduce junk mail by:
    - Contacting the Direct Marketing Association Mail Preference Service and requesting to opt out (<http://opt-out.cdt.org>).
    - Reducing credit card solicitations and insurance offers at <http://OptOutPreScreen.com>.
    - Requesting your bank and credit card company to stop sharing your information.

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## The Four Basic Principles

**REDUCE** - the amount of trash discarded.

**REUSE** - containers and products.

**RECYCLE** - use recycled materials and compost.

**RESPOND** - to the solid waste dilemma by reconsidering waste producing activities and by expressing preferences for less waste.

From: U.S. EPA Consumer Handbook for Reducing Solid Waste: The 4 Principles  
[www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/catbook/the4.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/catbook/the4.htm)

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## Recycle! Recycle! Recycle!

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At Grand Valley State University, recycling is coordinated through the Facilities Services department. Recycling bins are located throughout the housing units, classrooms, student centers, and office buildings. Multi-bin recycling units are also maintained at the apartment complexes and the Facilities Services building on the Allendale campus. Be sure to place only the proper recycle material into these containers. Throwing the wrong items into a recycle container can result in the whole bin being contaminated and discarded into the waste stream. Currently, GVSU recycles only 27% of its annual waste production. We need to do better and with everyone's help, we can!

### What can you recycle at Grand Valley?

Paper: We can recycle any type of paper up to the thickness of a manila folder or as thin as newsprint. We can also take magazines, paperback books, notebooks, and general office paper. Please deliver hardcover books ready for recycling in cardboard boxes.

Cardboard: The two types of cardboard, corrugated and non-corrugated, can be recycled. Non-corrugated includes cereal boxes, tissue boxes, etc. Both types can be recycled if they are clean of any food contamination. Please flatten and set beside the recycling bins.

Plastics: We can only recycle plastics marked with a #1 P.E.T.E. or #2 H.D.P.E. stamp. Other types of plastics must be discarded as trash. To check the container, simply look at the bottom of the bottle for its number. Remove the caps, rinse the plastic out, and place in the appropriate recycling bin.

Glass: Rinse glass containers, remove caps, and place in the marked recycling bin. We can accept clear glass, fish bowls, glass cups, or food holders.

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Batteries: We accept all types of household batteries.

Cans: We can recycle all types of metal. In the case of aluminum food cans, please rinse and flatten them if possible.

Computers: Old computers can be accepted for recycling. Contact our recycling center for assistance.

### **Items that GVSU cannot accept or recycle:**

- Car batteries
- Styrofoam
- Packing peanuts
- Aerosol cans
- Window glass
- Tissue paper or paper towels

Get up-to-date information and statistics on recycling at Grand Valley State University by checking the Web site at [www.gvsu.edu/facilitieservices](http://www.gvsu.edu/facilitieservices) and looking under Facilities Services Departments.

*Look for Grand Valley recycling locations and pitch in!*

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## Conserve Energy

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Important environmental concerns include global warming, ozone depletion, and loss of natural habitat. At Grand Valley we understand these concerns and are working to do our part with energy conservation and alternative energy sources. Helping the university with energy conservation is a way for everyone to join together to save our non-renewable resources. At this time, it is non-renewable resources such as natural gas and oil that are the primary energy sources for our institution. Therefore, it is vital that we make efficient use of these sources and conserve whenever possible.

### Doing the following will help save energy:

- Turn off lights when not in use and when a room is vacant.
- Make use of task lighting whenever possible and turn off overhead lights.
- Turn off computer monitors when they are not in use and avoid using screen savers, which do not conserve energy. Activate the sleep mode on your PC to help save.
- Turn off computers and printers if they will not be in use for 30 minutes or more.
- Keep your shades open! Sunlight is our most efficient source of energy.
- Dress according to the season especially for cooler mornings and warmer afternoons.
- Use fluorescent bulbs instead of incandescent bulbs.
- Unplug appliances that are not used regularly. Some continue to consume a very low level of power even when turned off.

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- Turn off TVs, radios, and stereos when not in use. Watch TV in a student lounge area with others rather than watching TV alone.
  - Use ENERGY STAR® rated appliances whenever possible.
  - Set heating and cooling temperatures to energy saving levels – ideally 68 degrees during winter months and 76 degrees during summer months.
  - To better control temperatures in rooms, keep windows and doors closed.
  - Avoid using space heaters.
  - Use cold water settings for laundry.
  - Don't over dry your clothes.
  - Report areas for energy conservation. To complete an online work order request, please visit these Web sites:  
For Allendale Campus: [www.gvsu.edu/facilitieservices](http://www.gvsu.edu/facilitieservices)  
For Pew Campus: [www.gvsu.edu/operations](http://www.gvsu.edu/operations)

*Energy is money!  
Help us to spend it wisely!*

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## Save Water!

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Fresh water is an important natural resource. Only about 3% of the Earth's water is fresh, and 75% of that is frozen at each of the poles. The supply of fresh water is not unlimited. In the United States, each person uses just under 600 liters of water per day as compared to someone in Africa who averages less than 50 liters of water per day. Our country is fortunate to have abundant fresh water resources, but we must take good care of and conserve what we have.

### Ways to conserve water include:

- Take shorter showers.
- Do not let the water run while brushing teeth, washing up, shaving, etc.
- Use dishwashers and washing machines when they have full loads to save on both water and electricity.
- If doing dishes by hand, do not let the water run. Fill a plastic tub or sink with water for washing and rinsing.
- Keep water in the refrigerator to save from running tap water to preferred temperature.
- Put garbage in the trash rather than running it through the disposal.
- Instead of pouring clean water down a drain, find another purpose such as watering a plant.
- Report water faucet leaks or running toilets as soon as possible. To complete an online work order request, please visit these Web sites:

For Allendale Campus: [www.gvsu.edu/facilitieservices](http://www.gvsu.edu/facilitieservices)  
For Pew Campus: [www.gvsu.edu/operations](http://www.gvsu.edu/operations)

*Saving water today will help to  
guarantee that we have fresh water  
for tomorrow and beyond!*

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## Enjoy the Natural Surroundings at GVSU

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The habitat is an important natural resource for the university, for the campus life of today as well as in the future. Everyone on campus, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, visitors, and guests can see, experience, and feel the presence of the natural surroundings. The natural habitat and its existence cannot be taken for granted. Specific steps are taken to maintain, restore, renew, and preserve the natural setting that we enjoy.

### Take advantage of Grand Valley's natural beauty:

- Spend time in the VanSteeland Arboretum.
- Enjoy the ravines walking trails. Help protect our ravines. Don't trash them!
- Enjoy walking the campuses and seeing the beautifully maintained lawns and garden areas.
- Help by placing cigarette butts, gum, and litter in the appropriate receptacles.
- Take advantage of the conveniently located benches and tables that allow for peaceful or wonderful gathering spots with friends.
- Observe pond areas and the well-cared-for river walks including water gardens and retention ponds.
- Enjoy and help to protect the wildlife that is found on our campus.
- Spend time enjoying the many seasonal colors offered by our natural settings.
- Take advantage of the region with nearby Lake Michigan and local parks and wooded areas.

*Enjoy the surroundings and  
help us keep it looking beautiful!*

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## Transportation

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Transportation and parking have certainly become important issues at Grand Valley over the past several years as the campus has continued to grow and expand to multiple sites. There are alternative methods to get to and from campus locations rather than driving your car and looking for an open parking spot.

The university, in collaboration with the Grand Rapids Interurban Transit Partnership, has established a highly effective bus transportation system. Dedicated routes called the Campus Connector, Off-Campus Apartment Shuttle, and the CHS Express have all been incorporated to develop a transit culture at the university. Participation in this busing system has continued to grow dramatically in recent years. Recent transportation improvements have included implementation of a “park and ride” location at the Meijer store in Standale. A “ride share” program is being developed to help improve transportation options for those attending and working at the university.

### **Consider the following transportation alternatives:**

- Take the bus! Look for schedules and hours of operation for the Campus Connector, Off-Campus Apartment Shuttle, and CHS Express at [www.ridetherapid.org/Main/routes/gvsu/gvsu.htm](http://www.ridetherapid.org/Main/routes/gvsu/gvsu.htm).
- Carpool whenever possible.
- Take advantage of “park and ride” locations to shorten driving needs.
- Bike to class. This helps you stay in better physical shape as well as lowering the impact on our environment.
- Walk to class. Walking is the most environmentally friendly means of transportation, plus you stay more fit and healthy.



### Other hints:

- Keeping vehicles tuned up and operating as efficiently as possible helps to save on fuel costs.
- If replacing a vehicle, consider a hybrid car or cars with higher fuel efficiency.
- If operating a diesel vehicle, consider using biodiesel as a fuel alternative.

*Alternative forms of transportation benefit our health and the environment!*

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## Eating Green and Buying Green

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What we eat does have an important effect on our environment. Many of the social and environmental problems encountered in the world today are a result of what we purchase and consume. "Eating green" and "buying green" are ways to reduce the impact and to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.

### Ways to practice "eating green":

- Do not waste food. Buy, take, or cook only what will be consumed.
- Use a personal mug for coffee, tea, or drinks rather than using disposables.
- Eat lower on the food chain, meaning eat more fruits and vegetables and less meat. Meat production requires more energy and resources to produce.
- Buy foods that are locally grown. This helps to provide economic benefits to local growers and producers.
- Buy locally. This reduces food miles (the distance food travels from where it is grown or raised to where it is purchased by the consumer). Purchasing locally helps to also support the local community.
- Eat more organic foods. These foods are produced in a more natural way and are more nutritious.
- Avoid buying items that have a lot of excess packaging. Ask for no bag.
- Use cloth napkins and towels rather than paper products that create more waste.
- Use re-usable grocery/shopping bags.
- Buy fair-trade coffee, chocolate, tea, gifts.
- Use unbleached coffee filters (to avoid dioxins).



### Ways to practice “buying green”:

- Buy items that can be re-used rather than thrown away. A plastic bottle for water can be used repeatedly.
- Buy and use ceramic plates, cups, cloth napkins, and cloth towels instead of paper products.
- Buy appliances that have the ENERGY STAR® label.
- Buy fair trade items, such as coffee, that guarantees a better deal for third world producers.
- Buying a new computer? Laptops use 10% of the energy of a desktop model.
- Buying a new monitor? A flat screen will use 33% of the energy of a large style monitor.
- Buy recycled materials or items. This helps to conserve energy and reduces waste.
- Purchase “green label” items or those that are friendlier to the environment.
- Buy products that can be recycled, disassembled, reused, etc., rather than discarded into landfills.
- Use non-toxic, biodegradable household cleaners such as:
  - Method (available at Target)
  - Seventh Generation (available at Harvest Health Foods or [www.drugstore.com](http://www.drugstore.com))
  - Earth Friendly Products (available at Harvest Health Foods or [www.drugstore.com](http://www.drugstore.com))

*Eat, buy, and think green...  
make a difference!*

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## Some Initiatives that are Making GVSU a More Sustainable University

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Grand Valley State University is fully committed to being a high quality, student-focused educational institution. It is this commitment to our students' education that focuses our attention on the best practices of sustainability. These are some examples of how these practices are being incorporated at our institution:

- New academic programs that incorporate sustainable practices and subject matter.
- Sustainable teachings and activities within the existing academic programs and classes.
- Adoption of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) construction standards.
- Greener environment in all buildings through improved air quality, maintenance, and custodial standards.
- Lighting upgrades with occupancy sensors and more energy efficient fixtures and bulbs.
- Installation of water usage fixtures such as low flow shower heads, low flush toilets, and waterless urinals.
- Green roof systems on new construction projects.
- Storm water management practices that include rain gardens, retention ponds, and other means to prevent ravine and soil erosion.
- Enhancement of the bus transportation system that serves the Allendale and Grand Rapids campuses.
- Investigation and incorporation of alternative energy options.



- Promotion and funding targeted to upcoming energy conservation projects.
- Protocol to address acts of intolerance on campus.
- Support of student volunteer groups.
- Community involvement at many levels.
- Completion of the first report on “Sustainability at Grand Valley State University.”
- Creation of an Office of Sustainability at the University. ([www.gvsu.edu/sustainability](http://www.gvsu.edu/sustainability))

*Many other initiatives are underway or are being considered. Get involved!  
Help make GVSU more sustainable!*

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## Other Ways To Enjoy A Sustainable Lifestyle

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There are many opportunities to live and enjoy a sustainable lifestyle.

- Volunteer! Volunteer on campus and within the community.
- Appreciate and promote diversity and intercultural understanding. Seek first to understand and speak out against intolerant acts.
- Become active in student groups on campus.
- Take advantage of classes and academic programs to learn more about sustainability.
- Consider an alternative spring break to help and serve others.
- Investigate internships and projects that promote a sustainable activity.
- Participate in Campus Sustainability Week activities in October and in student sponsored sustainability events.
- Look for opportunities to mentor or tutor children or fellow students.
- Donate to local charities.
- Exercise and eat healthy.

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## Ten Ways to Green Your Life Today

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- Consume less by using durable goods, such as dishes, instead of disposables.
- Conserve water by using water efficient products, repairing leaks, and consuming less.
- Save energy by turning off lights, TVs, and stereos and setting temperatures correctly.
- Stay healthy by exercising more and eating fresh vegetables and organic foods.
- Help the local economy by buying locally and regionally manufactured goods and services.
- Save resources by using reusable materials, such as 100% recycled paper.
- Reduce waste through campus and community recycling programs and by reusing containers rather than throwing them away.
- Reduce pollution and save fuel by car pooling and using public transportation.
- Buy fair trade food coffee, chocolate, and gifts.
- Get involved with community service projects and campus sustainability programs.

*Make a Difference!*

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## Sustainability Initiative Advisory Council

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**Fred Antczak**, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

**Norman Christopher**, Director of Sustainability

**Elaine Collins**, Dean, College of Education

**Jordan DeVries**, Student

**David Dyer**, Student

**Ryan Locke**, Student

**Rhonda Lubberts**, Assistant Vice President for Institutional  
Marketing

**Tom Minor**, General Manager, Aramark Food Service

**Paul Plotkowski**, Dean, Padnos College of Engineering &  
Computing

**Heather Poel**, Student

**Jose Reyna**, Assistant to the City Manager, City of  
Grand Rapids

**Tim Schad**, Vice President for Finance and Administration

**Tim Thimmesch**, Assistant Vice President for Facilities Services

**Brad Thomas**, CEO, Progressive AE

**Wendy Wenner**, Dean, College of Interdisciplinary Studies

**H. James Williams**, Dean, Seidman College of Business

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## Contact Information:

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**Norman Christopher**

Director of Sustainability  
Grand Valley State University  
1 Campus Drive  
Allendale, MI. 49401  
Ph. (616) 331-7461  
chrisfn@gvsu.edu

**Andy Beachnau, Ph.D.**

Director of Residence Life and Health Service  
Grand Valley State University  
1 Campus Drive  
Allendale, MI. 49401  
Ph. (616) 331-2120  
beachna@gvsu.edu

**Tim Thimmesch**

Assistant Vice President of Facilities Services  
Grand Valley State University  
One Campus Drive  
Allendale, MI. 49401  
Ph. (616) 331-3848  
thimmest@gvsu.edu

**[www.gvsu.edu/sustainability](http://www.gvsu.edu/sustainability)**

*Be an example for living a  
sustainable lifestyle*