

## **Green is the New School Color**

Remember the all-you-can-eat dining pass. You picked up a tray at the beginning of the line and loaded it with anything that looked appealing. Who cared if you ate it or not? Mom wasn't there to scold you. When you were finished eating, you dumped the remainder into the trash and left the tray for the campus dishwasher. These days much of that is changing. Since New American Colleges view civic engagement and social responsibility as a crucial aspect of the student experience, it's not surprising that campuses are going green in an effort to do right by the environment.

Pacific Lutheran University switched from all-inclusive dining to a la carte meal plans to discourage students from wasting food. Elon College has eschewed trays to cut down on food waste and dishwashing. Hamline University now uses smaller trays, and Simmons College hopes to follow on the tray-less path. Other schools have taken a hard look at packaging and products, making a switch to more environmentally-friendly materials.

Food waste – especially leftover cooking scraps – is inevitable. But you know what they say about one man's trash, so Hamline partnered with a local pig farmer who picks up scraps, including produce trimmings and peelings, twice weekly to use for hog feed. Meanwhile, Wagner College and Pacific Lutheran compost their food waste.

Other schools, such as Westminster College, Pacific Lutheran and Simmons, purchase locally grown goods and fair trade coffee. Simmons traded its national-brand chips for a local brand from Cape Cod. To keep its students in the loop, Ithaca College launched a Web page for its sustainable dining choices. And Valparaiso University is consolidating its three dining locations into one when its new student union opens, reducing transportation between facilities and redundant equipment.

Most institutions have taken their green movements beyond the cafeteria doors. The University of Scranton actually launched a Sustainability Task Force four years ago, and recently opened its first LEED-certified building. Ithaca, North Central College and the University of Evansville are also using green principles to guide new construction.

At Butler University, cleaning crews use only green cleaners, and its paper products are environmentally-friendly too. Moreover, its grounds care is done with an eye towards the green – clippings are returned to the lawns, and waste is composted to be used as fertilizer.

As role models for civic engagement, New American College students are leading the charge at some schools. As a result of a student proposal, Westminster recently purchased 11% of the campus's energy needs from Rocky Mountain Power's Blue Sky renewable energy program, which buys wind power from various sources. The result of Westminster College's Blue Sky purchase amounts to the same environmental benefit as planting 176,775 trees or not driving 1,927,500 miles. At Wagner, 25 students live together on the Earth Floor, committing their free time to raising student awareness about the importance of recycling, composting and using environmentally friendly products.

Richard Guarasci, president of Wagner College, said, “At Wagner College, we believe that, in our role as both educators and community members, it is important for us to provide a positive example in helping to moderate climate change. And, as large consumers of energy and other resources, this is an appropriate role for colleges and universities.”

Wagner, like many schools, is looking seriously at energy usage. It installed solar-powered trash cans and motion-sensor light switches. Meanwhile, Westminster became the first college in Utah to harness solar power with the installation of 42 panels on its health and wellness center. And, its soccer fields are the site of rainwater harvesting, later used for irrigation. Other schools purchase only Energy Star appliances or monitor space usage (for example, lights turn off automatically). Elon also began an overnight computer lab shutdown program rather than letting computers idle until dawn.

Awareness is a key element. Elon is instituting a sub-metering system in residence halls so that residents can see real-time power consumption in their buildings. This spring, the school will institute a competition between residence halls to reduce energy usage. And Hampton University is devoting its annual Black Family Conference to green issues.

Getting from here to there requires energy, so North Central is trying to shift energy consumption – from cars to people. Along with its Student Government Association, the college established an eco-friendly bike-sharing program known as the Cardinal Community Bike Program. Faculty, staff and students pick up red bikes at designated racks and pedal to their destinations.

Across the country, ANAC schools are proof that when campus communities exercise social responsibility, the effects can be far-reaching. And this green looks good on all of us.

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