

Project Green Challenge

Day 5 (GREENER)

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has a “Three Zeros Program” that aims for net zero water, zero waste to landfills, and net zero greenhouse gases. This seems incredible.

They collect storm water runoff and use it to flush toilets and irrigate. This has decreased potable water consumption by 46 percent (300 million gallons annually saved) since the year 2000 according to their website (“The Three zeros”).

Moscow Idaho doesn't get as much rain as I'm used to coming from Oregon, and I don't know how much North Carolina gets, but I'm sure we get enough at the University of Idaho that we could benefit from using it in this way. Or perhaps there is a way to use the snow that is melted from our heated sidewalks* in the same way?

My only concern is interrupting the natural flow within the water cycle. By storing the precipitation, does it effect the infiltration into the ground and other processes of the natural water cycle? Perhaps they only capture a small percentage of the precipitation, so it does not have drastic effects. I will research further.

As far as zero waste goes, in 2017 UNC diverted 45% of their waste from the landfill by recycling and composting (“The Three Zeros”). They mention campus wide materials management as well as individual behavior change playing major roles in the system.

UIdaho already has established recycling and compost, but I feel that we could do better. For instance, the compost program is not well known among students and there is only one drop off area which decreases involvement because of the lack of convenience. I would like to see drop off areas in the middle of the dorm side of campus instead of only at the top of campus near the dining shops. The advertisement and education of both programs also needs to increase.

A next step would also be to limit waste on campus through controlling what is sold at the food shops to be more sustainable. A lot of the breakfast and lunch fast food places serve in to go containers that can't be recycled or composted. This could change across campus to really limit waste created.

The third zero is greenhouse gas emissions; the UNC focuses on renewable energy and has reduced their emissions by 22% since 2007 even as the campus has expanded since then, mainly incorporating LEED certified buildings (“The Three Zeros”). There was a proposed plan mentioned for a solar panel and pollination promoting field.

UIdaho has a steam plant on campus that is run by bio fuels (locally sourced wood scraps) as our main renewable source. We also have one LEED certified building that I

know of- Silver ranking I think, but I am not at all positive. I would like to see greater attempts at renewable energy, such as implementing a similar solar field in the empty lot behind our arboretum. Also, HELLO, Moscow is windy as all heck- lets get some wind turbines?! (I am obviously not an expert, so maybe this has been investigated already and is not feasible because of the conditions required for the turbines, but it's still worth a shot to suggest.)

I am also really interested in green roofs, community gardens within campuses, and improving the dining options to be more locally sourced and sustainable.

All of these implementations could cost a large amount of money, but lets face it:

1)The university has money, especially if they shift some priorities and use funds efficiently

2)Sustainability should be a priority

3)In the long run, these implementations and many other sustainable choices will save a lot of money through self-reliance and efficient use of natural (i.e. free) resources, such as the collection of rainwater.

So, what's stopping us?!

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I focused on one University but skimmed over many more interesting approaches to sustainability within campuses. There are a lot of ideas and plans out there, it is just time to implement them whenever and wherever possible- worldwide. I will have more time to research other options later this weekend, but for now I found UNC very interesting and inspiring. I also plan on researching further into their campus, but for the essence of time today, I have stuck to reading through their website alone.

*The heated sidewalks on campus are warmed by the steam plant which runs off bio-fuels.

Source: "The Three Zeros." *Three Zeros Environmental Initiative*, University of North Carolina , 2016,

threezeros.unc.edu/the-three-zeros/.