

## Macalester Sustainability Data

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Compiled by

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In preparation for the Sustainability Strategic Planning and the Climate Action Plan undertaken by the Environmental Senior Seminar, the Sustainability Office assessed the current state of sustainability on campus in the fall and winter of 2008/2009. The idea was that before we look forward to where we want to be, we should make sure we understand where we are now so we can utilize our strengths and identify our weaknesses. We chose two different assessment systems to complete based on their relative strengths and weaknesses.

### **Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS)**

This system was chosen because of its focus on the technical uses of energy, resources, and finances – it acts as a good complement to the Macalester College Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory. STARS is administered by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE), and appears likely to become the standard rating system that schools can use to compare to each other. This program is currently in its pilot stage. We are not part of the pilot project so our score is unofficial. However, the STARS system is a useful assessment of Macalester's current level of sustainability. It also gives us an additional year to work on the data collection mechanisms for the assessment, which can be quite complicated.

Macalester scored a total of 47 out of 172 possible points. Since no other schools have released their scores yet, we do not know how this compares to anyone else. It is quite interesting to note where we did not get points, as it offers several ideas for improvement in the future. We also scored 36 out of 58 possible Tier II points, but it is not yet clear how this factors into the overall rating system. Tier II points measure strategies that institutions can adopt to move toward sustainability rather than actual concrete progress.

#### ***Macalester Strengths:***

Macalester scored well in the co-curricular category, due to several student-initiated initiatives such as organizations, efficiency project, energy competitions, etc.. Macalester also did well in Materials Waste and Recycling, and Purchasing.

Overall we did very well in the Administration and Finance category. The Sustainability Infrastructure, Community Relations and Partnerships, Diversity/Access and Affordability and Human Resources were the strongest sub

categories. We noted that STARS highlights Macalester's progress in so many areas that are not typically thought of as related to sustainability.

### ***Room To Improve:***

The single largest area for improvement right now is in Curriculum and Education, where Macalester was only definitely eligible for 1 of the 40 points. The largest weaknesses are the lack of a coherent sustainability curriculum, including a major/minor/concentration and the clear identification of sustainability courses. There are several courses being taught today that would likely count as sustainability courses (such as environmental studies courses), but without a clear definition of what a sustainability course is at Macalester we were unable to qualify.

In the Operation category did not receive any points in the Buildings, Energy and Climate or Ground sections. Although there are multiple student projects in all of these areas there are no institution-wide policies or directives from the Administration other than the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. At the this time there are several policies in draft form that could gain institutional backing and we could improve in these areas: Green Building, Environmentally Preferable Procurement Policy, Environmentally Preferable Paper and Printing Policy, and a campus-wide Energy Policy.

In the Administration and Finance category Macalester was penalized for not having an official long-term sustainability plan. However, during the 2008-2009 academic year, there has been an ongoing Sustainability Strategic Planning Process, and the Environmental Studies Senior Seminar is developing the Climate Action Plan – these planning documents will be published over the summer and early fall of 2009.

### **Campus Sustainability Academic Framework (CSAF)**

This program was designed as a collaborative project by a group of Canadian university sustainability professionals. The scope of CSAF is much broader than STARS and includes a through examination of equality issues around staff, student and faculty populations, school financing, campus governance structures, health and well-being, education and community. The Sustainability Office and Macalester College is working to define Sustainability as a holistic idea that goes beyond the environmental impacts of water, energy and material use, and CSAF helped to examine where we stand on these issues in a way that STARS is currently unable to do.

CSAF does not work like STARS in that it gives us a final score we can use to compare to other schools. Instead, Macalester used it as a source of information for our long-term Sustainability Plan. There are 168 indicators, only 85 of which we were able to locate enough information to calculate/answer. The best way to use

CSAF is to look within the 8 main categories for answers to specific questions – the contact people are also listed so it can be useful to look at CSAF to determine who may have the information that you need.

#### Main Categories

- Air
- Water
- Land
- Materials
- Energy
- Knowledge
- Health & Well-being
- Community
- Governance
- Economy & Wealth

Any questions please contact Suzanne Hansen ([shansen2@macalester.edu](mailto:shansen2@macalester.edu)) or Justin Lee ([justinjeffreylee@gmail.com](mailto:justinjeffreylee@gmail.com))