

Have a Greener Spring With These Tips From the Office of Sustainability

University Communications
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It's spring in Tucson, yet it's already beginning to feel like summer. As the weather heats up and air conditioning kicks on, there are some slight changes that you can make that could have a bigger impact on the environment than you might think.

Adjusting the thermostat, printing on two sides to save paper and biking to work are just a few of the ways that you can help. Employees like **Ben Champion** ^[1], director for the **Office of Sustainability** ^[2], and **Julia Rudnick**, campus sustainability programs coordinator, provide guidance by helping with the Green Fund grants program and promoting knowledge and practices that contribute to a more environmentally friendly and sustainable campus environment.

In honor of Earth Month, Lo Que Pasa talked with Champion and Rudnick about the importance of going green and the ways that employees can support sustainability efforts around campus, even while sitting at a desk.

Why is it important to be "green" and support sustainability on campus?

Champion: If you take a look at the big picture and the point of universities around the world, we're supposed to be places that are addressing the world's greatest needs through creating knowledge, through helping students find their place in the world and developing students' skills and abilities to find careers – but also be engaged in the needs of the world. We're supposed to be a resource for society. There are tremendous challenges that the world faces in terms of the future of our water in Arizona and the world, our ability to feed a growing population without destroying our ability to grow food in the future, and our ability to supply energy needs to society without destroying the climate. We need to be doing our part and not just in a regulatory compliance sense, but in terms of modeling what it looks like to transform ourselves as a model for transforming society in order to address those big challenges.

Rudnick: It provides a conduit for students, faculty and staff, and the community to come together to work on some common goals. I think that it's our job at the University to have that system available for students and for everyone.

What is one thing employees can do individually to further sustainability efforts on campus?

Champion: Being aware and rethinking the way you would do things. Being aware of the grand challenges, aware of our university's footprint and being a part of those challenges.

Rudnick: Sometimes employees can lose track of why they are here on campus – to support the great mission of this university. So, if they could do one thing to further sustainability, (it would be) to reach out to more student groups and serve as a resource and adviser.

What can employees do in their own workspaces?

Champion: There are many things that require collective action within a department ... but there (also) are things that individuals can do as well. You just start breaking down the categories and energy is one big category, and then you start breaking that down into temperature set points, printer and copier management, computers and related equipment management, lighting management, and there are things like if you have operable windows or blinds/shades. And, then you get into microwaves and coffee makers. Heaters under the desk are huge energy consumers. People don't realize how much energy they use. So, in all of that there are individual things that people can do to change their usage. Waste is another category. Everybody has recycle bins, but there is more that you can do there – you can actually audit your own waste stream. Or there are things that we can do on the purchasing side (like switching to more recyclable materials), or change your practices in terms of the way you do your paperwork in the office to minimize paper usage.

Transportation is another big category. Whether people bike, walk to work or take public transit instead of just driving themselves is a huge thing. And then there are things people can do in terms of building our community and building our involvement levels on campus. Even if you are not doing any of those other things, if you are supporting the conversation in meaningful ways, that is really valuable.

What do you personally do to be sustainable at work?

Rudnick: Personally, I just make the small decisions every day. I think about every purchase before I make it. When I got this job in the Office of Sustainability, I had never even said the word sustainability before. I like to think of it as what you put forth. For instance, I used to show up (at work with) a water bottle. And it wasn't a reusable water bottle, it was just a Dasani water bottle that I grabbed from my refrigerator before I came to work. Literally the first day at my job, my boss just turned to me and asked, "Do you understand this visual that you are creating?" I'm walking around campus with a Dasani water bottle and I work for the Office of Sustainability. So, if you think about stuff like that and ask "what is the visual?" it kind of shapes your actions moving forward. Now I do the same thing at home; I never buy water bottles to give to my

guests at home. It's those small things that we change about our behavior or our lifestyle that make a difference.

What can departments do to make a change and support sustainability on campus?

Champion: You get the bigger impacts by working together as a department or a broader office set of staff, and not just as an individual. Talk about ... encouraging each other to adopt new practices. Our office reached out to Parking and Transportation Services to get some department bikes. We don't use golf carts, unless we are doing an event where we really need to haul stuff. For the most part, we bike around. Another thing is that all of our office paper is 100 percent recycled content paper. It's a small shift that every department can do, and really the price differential isn't large. If everyone on campus purchased all 100 percent recycled content paper, the price wouldn't be any higher than the nonrecycled stuff right now.

What environmentally friendly opportunities and resources exist on campus that people might not know about?

Champion: One new resource that people wouldn't be aware of is that there is a new position on campus – an energy manager for the University. He's just one person so he is in charge of really creating a systematic approach to saving energy on campus. He (**Michael Hoffman**) is building teams of students to help him build energy audits and analyze building meter data and help us wrap our head around what the biggest opportunities are. I think that is certainly a source of information and a potential partnership if a given department were to say, "Hey, we want to be a pilot department on analyzing our energy footprint." Reaching out to Facilities Management and their new energy manager would be a resource. There is also the Green Fund, which is probably one of the biggest resources of them all, which is not just intended for students. It's a resource available to anyone affiliated with the University. Let's say your department is creating a green team and you have got something you want to do that would have an impact, then you can get funding by proposing to the Green Fund committee.

Rudnick: Coming back to Parking and Transportation – they will **loan out free bicycles for departments** [3], for staff and faculty to ride around campus. People don't know about that. They just have to contact them about it. And if you register through Parking and Transportation (if you ride your bike to work every day), they will let you use the Rec Center and shower. Also, if you have an emergency and you ride your bike in to work every day, they will give you a ride home or wherever you need to go in an emergency.

And, the Office of Sustainability is a resource for faculty and staff. So, if they just want to get more involved, they can call us. We will be looking for volunteers for Dodge the Dumpster, the end-of-year dorm move-out project. We would love to have some staff who are interested in working with the students.

*If you are interested in participating in ongoing outreach efforts that address environmental issues, please contact the **Office of Sustainability** [2].*

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Links

[1] <http://www.portal.environment.arizona.edu/node/113> [2] <http://sustainability.arizona.edu> [3] <https://parking.arizona.edu/bicycle/cat-wheels/>