

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

College sports are the public face of our nation's most important centers of learning, and as part of the growing sports greening movement, collegiate sports departments across the United States are making a powerfully visible commitment to greener practices. In doing so, they're engaging millions of students and other college sports fans in protecting the planet. Fans now compost and recycle on game day, ride their bikes to the stadium, and root for their favorite teams under solar-powered stadium lights, all the while helping save universities hundreds of thousands of dollars in overhead costs. More to the point, as teams and venues promote a public commitment to ecological stewardship, environmentalism becomes a mainstream issue—one that resonates with loyal college sports fans across the country, who make up the largest and most diverse audience in all of sports.¹

Photo courtesy of University of North Texas



THE VALUE OF COLLEGE SPORTS GREENING

CUTS OPERATIONAL COSTS:

Improving resource efficiency can save money and enhance facility performance, benefitting the Athletics Department, Recreation Department and Facility Management.

★ For example, see the *University of Minnesota case study on page 53* and the *Williams College snapshot on page 81*.

EDUCATES & EMPOWERS STUDENTS:

Sports greening programs can provide students with professional development and leadership opportunities, putting their sustainability coursework into practice.

★ For example, see the *Yale University case study on page 68* and the *University of Washington case study on page 63*.

ENHANCES ATHLETICS & INSTITUTIONAL BRANDS:

Environmental initiatives can improve brand image and provide a point of market differentiation, which is increasingly important to incoming recruits and prospective students.

★ For example, see the *Ohio State University case study on page 34* and the *University of North Texas case study on page 29*.

ATTRACTS SPONSORS & PARTNERS:

Sports greening can lead to sponsorship opportunities with existing or new partners who also prioritize environmental stewardship in their business operations.

★ For example, see the *University of Colorado at Boulder case study on page 22* and the *University of California at Berkeley snapshot on page 78*.

STRENGTHENS COMMUNITY TIES:

Sports greening programs can serve as models for local stewardship, improve community relations, and strengthen alumni connections (which can help raise money).

★ For example, see the *University of Florida case study on page 39* and the *University of Oregon case study on page 49*.

REINFORCES INTER-DEPARTMENTAL TIES:

Sports greening initiatives can help foster stronger working relationships between sports departments and an institution's administration, faculty, and campus facilities by working collaboratively towards campus-wide goals.

★ For example, see the *Arizona State University case study on page 44* and the *Penn State University snapshot on page 75*.

ADVANCES CAMPUS-WIDE SUSTAINABILITY GOALS:

Greening programs help reduce the environmental impact of large sports venues, which can advance campus-wide environmental commitments to divert waste, reduce carbon emissions, or use more renewable energy.

★ For example, see the *University of Arizona case study on page 57* and the *Sonoma State University snapshot on page 86*.

CREATES A HEALTHIER WORKOUT ENVIRONMENT AND PROMOTES ATHLETE PERFORMANCE:

Green building practices and operations improve indoor air quality (and water quality in pools), among other benefits, to advance athlete and user wellbeing.

★ For example, see the *University of Pennsylvania snapshot on page 77*.

Driven by student demand and university commitments to sustainability, college sports are joining all major professional sports leagues to send stronger environmental signals to society and the marketplace. With greener efforts on the field, in their arenas and rec centers, colleges and universities are demonstrating that a care for the earth's finite resources—in order to protect natural ecosystems that we, and many other species, depend on—is central to how we educate our students and train our finest athletes. In fact, students are leading the charge, from launching sports gear recycling drives and installing systems to power gym cardio machines with their own sweat to writing senior theses on improving resource efficiency at sports venues. Student-athletes are modeling greener habits—like bringing their own reusable bottles to workouts and taking shorter showers to save water and energy.

It's a trend that has been evolving in the professional sports industry for years. Greening efforts at collegiate athletics and recreation departments nationwide are helping to expand students' expectations about sustainability, advance campus-wide environmental goals, and enhance how business is done. This is also helping to popularize environmentalism and greener choices by spurring mainstream conversations about the future of our energy, food, and medical systems.

Increasingly, collegiate athletics and recreation departments are investing in energy efficiency, water conservation, recycling, renewable energy, safer chemicals and fan engagement focused on remedying some of our most pressing environmental problems. The benefits are many. The University of Colorado Boulder's athletics-focused sustainability efforts and "Ralphie's Green Stampede" sports greening brand gave the school an entry point to new sponsors. The University of North Texas powers 30 percent of its LEED Platinum stadium with wind. Located at one of the busiest intersections in the country, the stadium's three turbines are seen by an estimated 24,000 drivers daily, a visible sign of the university's environmental commitment. In 2012, The Ohio State University's dedicated fans helped achieve a top waste diversion rate of 98.2 percent in a single game and averaged 87.2 percent over the season. At Yale University, student-athletes created the nation's first Green Athletics Team Certification program for all varsity and club teams.

On campuses across the country, sports greening programs are having ripple effects. At the University of Arizona, faculty are developing an environmental course which will require students to identify sustainability opportunities within sports facilities and across campus. At the University of Florida, the "Neutral Gator program" has expanded from an athletics initiative to educate fans about their carbon footprints to an inter-departmental commitment to carbon emission reduction.

The collegiate sports greening success stories featured in this report provide valuable lessons for all campus departments and other organizations, whether they are directly involved with the sports industry or not, highlighting what sports departments, students, venues, and championship events are doing to protect our planet and educate their fans. *Collegiate Game Changers* demonstrates the many benefits of greening sports, including cutting costs, enhancing university brands, strengthening community ties, developing new sponsorship opportunities, and providing a healthier workout environment. Each campus case study explains (1) what motivated



the campus sports department(s) to implement more environmentally preferable practices; (2) how each program got its start; (3) challenges each school faced, tactics used to surmount them, and ongoing issues still being addressed; and (4) important lessons from the field as departments implemented their green initiatives.

Key findings from this report and an affiliated 2013 survey² include:

- At least 216 collegiate sports departments (97 athletics and 119 recreation) have installed recycling infrastructure throughout their sports facilities. 177 athletics and recreation departments also have a recycling program in their offices, and 163 sports departments have installed recycling bins in non-public spaces such as kitchens.
- At least 88 collegiate sports departments (41 athletics and 47 recreation) have built to LEED green building design standards when pursuing new facilities, major renovations, and/or existing facilities. Of these, at least 24 collegiate sports venues have been awarded LEED certification, with more than a dozen others anticipating LEED certification in the coming months.
- At least 162 collegiate sports departments (68 athletics and 94 recreation) have installed bike racks and other infrastructure to promote bicycle commuting at their sports venues.
- At least 146 collegiate sports departments (60 athletics and 86 recreation) have invested in more energy-efficient practices by upgrading their lighting and controls. 118 collegiate sports departments (50 athletics and 68 recreation) have conducted energy audits of their sports facilities to identify further opportunities for energy savings. 109 sports departments (45 athletics and 64 recreation) have a purchasing policy prioritizing energy-efficient models for all electronics.

- Among all athletics conferences, the Ivy League has the best-developed conference-wide environmental stewardship program. The Big Ten, SEC, and ACC also have noteworthy environmental initiatives.
- At least 122 collegiate sports departments (50 athletics and 72 recreation) procure greener cleaning products. 114 collegiate sports departments (47 athletics and 67 recreation) have also trained their custodial staff on greener cleaning practices and products.
- *For more data on environmental initiatives at athletics and recreation departments on campuses nationwide please see infographic on page 19 and the full survey results on page 106.*

Each year, more and more collegiate athletics and recreation departments across the United States are joining professional leagues, teams, and venues to avoid millions of pounds of carbon emissions, save millions of gallons of water, and shift millions of pounds of paper products toward recycled content or eliminate them altogether. Their efforts are making meaningful change and are educating millions of students and fans about protecting our planet for seasons to come. Colleges are just beginning to tap into the enormous potential to empower their students, benefit their bottom line, and engage their vast communities of sports fans by prioritizing sustainability.

1 <http://www.imgcollege.com/why-college>

2 In the lead up to this report, the University of Arizona Office of Sustainability conducted a survey during May and June 2013 in partnership with the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Green Sports Alliance, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, and NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation.