

REGIONAL SPORTS GREENING EFFORTS

Athletics conferences and national organizations have launched programs to support sports greening efforts on college campuses across the country. These initiatives help strengthen collegiate sports greening work by providing technical resources, organizing environmentally themed competitions, holding forums for sharing better practices, and encouraging support for sports greening initiatives from athletics and campus leadership. Some of the institutions leading regional efforts are featured below.

ATHLETICS CONFERENCES

IVY LEAGUE CONFERENCE



In 2012, the Ivy League partnered with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and established the Ivy Green Initiative to make a conference-wide commitment to environmental stewardship. The Ivy Green Initiative is focused on enhancing the environmental profile of Ivy League championship events and providing resources to advance the greening of all Ivy League athletics departments. It is the first athletics conference greening program of its kind in the United States, with support from all Ivy League athletics directors and prominent placement on the conference's website. "This is simply the right thing to do, and it makes very good business sense," says Harvard Director of Athletics Bob Scalise. "We're proud to be involved in this initiative."

"The Ivy League is greening its championship events because we recognize the importance of sustainable initiatives to protect our planet for future generations and the future of sports," says Robin Harris, Ivy League Executive Director. "Promoting environmental stewardship helps benefit all aspects of society, produces jobs and helps protect public health. Through the Ivy Green Initiative, the League is proud to educate its students, alumni and fans about these important issues."

The Ivy League office teamed up with Ivy League athletics departments and NRDC, its technical environmental adviser, to integrate ecologically intelligent practices into the planning and production of championship events. For example, in April 2012, a new policy was established to print all championship programs on paper with a minimum of 50 percent postconsumer recycled content. The Ivy

office also encourages recycling at events by offering recycling receptacles and signs; promotes carpooling and public transit; and sends environmental tips to coaches, athletes, and parents. To date, the conference has produced greening accomplishments lists for championship events including the 2012 and 2013 Ivy League Women's Rowing Championships, the 2013 Ivy League Heptagonal Indoor Track & Field Championships, the 2013 Ivy League Fencing Round-Robins, and the 2013 Ivy League Swimming & Diving Championships.

"Through our environmental leadership on the fields of play, we are supporting the greening interests of our schools and showing our many constituents practical solutions to some of our planet's pressing ecological issues," says Harris. "Our efforts also help prove the business benefits of greening collegiate athletics."

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Photo courtesy of Alice Henry.





BIG TEN CONFERENCE

The Big Ten and Friends Environmental Stewardship Group was formed in November 2009, when financial officers from all Big Ten schools met to identify and plan for long-term issues of environmental stewardship. The group is now made up of sustainability and facilities officials from each of the Big Ten schools, as well as staff from the University of Notre Dame, University of Chicago, University of California, University of Texas, and University of Nebraska.

“Big Ten and Friends institutions came together to discuss the potential to collaborate on energy initiatives and common environmental challenges,” says Jennifer Battle, sustainability director for Michigan State University and coordinator of the Big Ten and Friends Environmental Stewardship Group. “The success of the first meeting prompted the group to organize biannual meetings in the spring and fall. The discussion also evolved to include topics such as materials management, food, strategic planning, student engagement, and institutional metrics. The meetings have resulted in collaborations around energy efficiency and lighting, purchasing, and benchmarking.”

The institutions have learned from one another and from speakers brought in to discuss how the campuses might improve their environmental performance. “The Big Ten Environmental Stewardship Group helps us learn how different colleges are solving the same problem with different approaches,” says Faramarz Vakilzadeh, associate director of the physical plant at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

While the group tackles campus-wide greening efforts, many of its discussions and online offerings focus on sports greening, with links to NRDC, Green Sports Alliance, and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) resources. “The collaborations have created an environment where we can call each other at any time to discuss ideas,” says Battle.

The Big Ten also earned EPA recognition as the 2012–2013 Collective Conference Champion for its purchase of 316 million kilowatt-hours of green power, the highest among all athletics conferences. The contributing schools for this honor included The Ohio State University, Northwestern University, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Iowa.

“BIG TEN AND FRIENDS INSTITUTIONS CAME TOGETHER TO DISCUSS THE POTENTIAL TO COLLABORATE ON ENERGY INITIATIVES AND COMMON ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES,” SAYS JENNIFER BATTLE, SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR FOR MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY AND WEBSITE COORDINATOR OF THE BIG TEN AND FRIENDS ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP GROUP.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION

In 2011, for the first time in the history of the Men's Final Four® basketball tournament, the National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) formed a committee to integrate ecologically intelligent practices into the event's planning and production. NRDC was asked to join as a founding member of the NCAA Final Four® Sustainability Committee, teaming up with LG Electronics, Waste Management, Inc., Reliant Park, the city of Houston, and the George R. Brown Convention Center. The committee began by commissioning a sustainability performance assessment to gauge current sustainability practices at the 2011 Final Four® venues in Houston, identify opportunities for improvement, and establish benchmarks against which to measure achievements.

“WE LOOK FORWARD TO EXPANDING OUR SUSTAINABLE EFFORTS IN THE COMING YEARS, PROVIDING MORE EDUCATION ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY AND ENGAGING MORE FANS IN A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE,” SAYS ELISA HALPIN, COORDINATOR OF THE NCAA MEN’S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS.

In the NCAA, 400,000 student-athletes participate in 23 sports each year with 89 national championship events, and millions follow NCAA events. Many of the 145,000 fans at Reliant Stadium for the 2011 NCAA Final Four® might have noticed the 600 newly installed recycling bins and the JumboTron messages reminding people to recycle. They may have also noticed that their programs were made with 30 percent postconsumer recycled content and FSC-certified fiber. Other noteworthy environmental accomplishments included supplying 100 percent of the energy used by the LEED Silver-certified George R. Brown Convention Center with wind power, thanks to support from the city of Houston. At Reliant Stadium, the committee purchased carbon offsets from wind and solar power projects from the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, resulting in avoided global warming emissions totaling 210 U.S. tons in CO₂ equivalents, representing about 509,000 auto miles.

The 2012 NCAA Final Four® expanded on the sustainability initiative introduced in 2011 with a new educational outreach event called “Greening the Hospitality Zone.” Working with the Greater New Orleans Hotel and Lodging Association, LifeCity, and the New Orleans Local Organizing Committee for the 2012 Men's Final Four®, the 2012 NCAA Final Four® Sustainability Committee invited representatives of the hospitality industry to attend this event to share greening strategies, discuss ecotourism, and promote more sustainable practices in the hospitality industry.

In March 2012, LG Electronics continued the e-recycling project developed the previous year in Houston, allowing New Orleans area residents to drop off electronic waste for recycling at the tournament venue, the Mercedes-Benz Superdome. “The NCAA strives to make an impact on and off the court during the Men's Final Four®,” said Byron Hatch, former NCAA director of championships and alliances, in a press release. “As part of our efforts, we focus on increasing awareness of sustainability each year in the Final Four city.”

In 2013, the NCAA continued its commitment to environmental stewardship at the Men's Final Four games. “To celebrate the 75th anniversary of March Madness® and the NCAA Men's Final Four®, Atlanta boldly embraced a goal to make this the greenest Final Four® to date,” says Tim Trefzer, sustainability coordinator at the Georgia Dome and a member of the 2013 NCAA Final Four® Sustainability Committee. “We engaged fans, student-athletes, and the community to reduce the environmental impact of one of the greatest sporting events. The NCAA made sustainability a priority early in the planning process because of the opportunity to educate the Atlanta community on environmental issues while building a road map for future cities to follow.”

Some of the sustainability practices implemented at the 2013 NCAA Final Four® in Atlanta included recycling infrastructure at all event venues, a community electronics recycling event at the Georgia Dome, a clothing donation drive, repurposing all Final Four banners to create event memorabilia, obtaining paper and plastic materials made with postconsumer recycled content, reusing or recycling the Final Four® basketball courts, partnering with Atlanta's public transit agency to encourage fans to use public transit, providing a free bike valet service for those cycling to the event, and planting 75 trees in two Atlanta neighborhoods in honor of the tournament's 75th anniversary.

The NCAA also purchased renewable energy credits (RECs), predominantly from wind and solar farms in the Southeast, to offset 100 percent of the electricity used to power the Final Four® games at the Georgia Dome. “While we strive to reduce the energy consumed for the Final Four®, the purchase of RECs will help build the market for renewable energy in the United States,” says Trefzer. The 2013 NCAA sustainability committee also established partnerships with hotels including the Omni CNN Hotel, the Atlanta Marriott Marquis, the Westin Peachtree, the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, the Hilton Atlanta, and the Sheraton Atlanta to support and communicate the event's sustainability initiatives to guests. Finally, the committee partnered with eight local restaurants on energy conservation, water conservation, food donation, and composting.

“The NCAA had a strong partnership with the city of Atlanta and we accomplished a great deal at the 2013 NCAA Men's Final Four®,” says Elisa Halpin, coordinator of the NCAA men's basketball championships. “As part of our efforts, we are focusing on increasing green awareness each year in the Final Four® city. We look forward to expanding our sustainable efforts in the coming years, providing more education about sustainability and engaging more fans in a sustainable lifestyle.”

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Game Day Challenge

In 2009, the EPA launched the Game Day Challenge, a friendly competition to encourage colleges and universities to reduce waste, recycle, and compost at their football games. During the challenge, colleges and universities implement, track, and report on their waste reduction and diversion programs at home football games. In 2012, the College and University Recycling Coalition, RecycleMania, and Keep America Beautiful took over administration of the Game Day Challenge, with ongoing support from EPA's National Sustainable Materials Management Program.

"The goals of the Game Day Challenge include lowering the waste generated at college football games; increasing participation by students, faculty, staff, and the community in waste reduction programs; and heightening awareness of waste reduction programs," says Stephanie Owens, EPA deputy associate administrator for the Office of External Affairs and Environmental Education.

"AMERICAN SPORTS TEAMS, VENUES AND LEAGUES HAVE BEEN LEADERS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP FOR YEARS," SAYS EPA DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR BOB PERCIASEPE. "WE MUST CONTINUE TO LEAN ON AMERICAN INNOVATORS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES LIKE WASTE MANAGEMENT, WATER CONSERVATION, AND POLLUTION PREVENTION—THE SPORTS INDUSTRY PROVIDES A GREAT EXAMPLE OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE."

Any U.S. college or university with a football program is eligible to participate in the Game Day Challenge. To join, schools are required to plan and implement a waste reduction program for a selected regular-season home football game. All participants must track and record data on waste generated, recyclables collected, composting collected, and attendance. Schools are then required to report their numbers within a week of the selected game via a form provided on the Game Day Challenge website. Each year there are five award winners for the following categories: waste generation (for the school with the lowest amount of waste per capita), highest diversion rate (recycling plus composting), largest reduction in greenhouse gases, highest recycling rate, and greatest per capita reduction of organic waste.

The EPA offers free technical assistance to all Challenge participants by sharing case studies and "lessons learned" from colleges and universities that have implemented sustainable materials management approaches. "This assistance can help these institutions change the way they think about materials and resources and promotes a more sustainable future," says Owens. The Game Day Challenge website also contains a variety of resources, including toolkits for how to set up and operate stadium and tailgating waste reduction programs as well as information about Game Day Challenge webinars.

"By working together with colleges and universities and other partners, we can use the excitement around collegiate sports to help institutions save money, leverage partnerships, and motivate students to engage in environmental stewardship," says Suganthi Simon, pollution prevention coordinator with Region 4.

Collegiate Sports Sustainability Summit

In 2011, university leaders from the Southeastern Conference (SEC) and the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) joined the EPA, Coca-Cola Recycling, Chick-fil-A Bowl, and the Georgia World Congress Center Authority to participate in the first Collegiate Sports Sustainability Summit in Atlanta. More than 20 SEC and ACC schools participated in the event.

Since its founding, the Collegiate Sports Sustainability Summit has become a national event, tripling in size, with the third annual event in 2013 comprising three days of meetings and attracting more than 105 attendees. The 2013 Summit, hosted by the Georgia Institute of Technology, drew attendance from universities across the country and featured a keynote speech by Gene Smith, the athletics director for The Ohio State University. Attendees represented the SEC, ACC, Big 10, Big 12, PAC-12, Ivy League, and Sun Belt conferences, and Division I, II, and III colleges and universities. The 2013 Summit partners included EPA, Keep America Beautiful, the College and University Recycling Coalition, Green Sports Alliance, Coca-Cola Recycling, Georgia World Congress Center Authority, and RecycleMania.

"The event offers attendees the chance to develop strategies that can make athletic and sports programs socially, economically, and environmentally responsible," explains Suganthi Simon, the pollution prevention coordinator for EPA Region 4 and lead coordinator of the Summit. "It brings together collegiate athletics staff, sustainability professionals, recreational sports, and facilities managers to share experiences of schools that have lowered costs and attracted sponsors to their programs while improving sustainability. It is designed to foster better interdepartmental relationships and increase recognition for each institution's efforts. The growth of the Summit indicates the need for a forum dedicated to the discussion of collegiate sports sustainability."

EPA College and University Green Power Challenge

Each year the EPA issues a Green Power Challenge that is open to all U.S. colleges, universities, and conferences. The agency's Green Power Partnership tracks colleges to determine the conference with the highest combined green power use in the nation. To be eligible for the challenge, an athletics conference must have at least one school in their conference registered as a Green Power Partner and an aggregate green power purchase of at least 10,000,000 kWh.

The EPA concludes the Green Power Challenge each April, naming a champion conference as well as the largest single green power user within each participating conference. The Big Ten took conference honors in 2012–13; the Pac-12 won the prior year, and the Ivy League captured the award in 2010–11.

The combined green power use of the 20 largest users among higher-education institutions within the Green Power Partnership amounts to more than 1.7 billion kilowatt-hours annually. By using green power instead of conventional power, these institutions are avoiding an amount of carbon dioxide emissions equivalent to emissions produced by the annual electricity use of over 182,000 American homes.

GREEN SPORTS ALLIANCE

As of August 2013, Alliance members represent more than 170 professional and collegiate sports teams and venues from 16 different sports leagues, including 15 NCAA sports programs and one additional university. Alliance collegiate members include Arizona State University, Davidson College, The Ohio State University, Stanford University, the University of Arizona, the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Colorado Boulder, the University of Florida, the University of Minnesota, the University of Oregon, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Southern California, the University of Texas, the University of Washington, Washington State University, and the University of British Columbia.

Green Sports Alliance members have made a commitment to reduce waste, conserve energy and water, and eliminate toxic chemicals, among many other ongoing greening initiatives. They are integrating sustainability into their core operations, engaging fans, and saving money in the process. “Our membership in the Green Sports Alliance has served as a tremendous resource as we shape the waste diversion and sustainability strategies of our department’s future,” says Karen Baebler, assistant athletics director of sports operations at the University of Washington. “The case studies provided give us a thorough grasp of best practices and have helped our team generate new thought about our green efforts.”

Alliance resources include an annual summit, monthly webinars, monthly newsletters, and greening “playbooks” for operations, e-waste recycling events, and onsite solar installations (co-authored by NRDC) at sports venues. The Alliance’s “Operations Roadmap” helps sports programs develop plans to reduce energy and water use, minimize waste, and adopt environmentally preferable procurement, among other topics. The Alliance also works closely with organizations such as NRDC, the EPA, AASHE, NIRSA, the U.S. Green Building Council, and NCAA conferences to provide resources specific to the needs of collegiate sports programs.

“A primary value of the Green Sports Alliance is that it enables sports organizations with a wide range of operations challenges, stakeholders, and goals to share their greening experiences,” says Martin Tull, the organization’s executive director. “The collegiate members of the Alliance learn from the successes and challenges of professional sports greening programs and from each other, and they provide invaluable lessons to help all members advance their environmental profile.”

Membership in the Alliance is open to any sports team, venue, league, or collegiate program. The Alliance helps its members reach their environmental goals by providing direct support, facilitating networking with recognized leaders in the industry, compiling better practices in venue operations and communications, and hosting workshops. It works with a wide range of stakeholders at universities, from athletics department staff to facility operators to sustainability and recycling coordinators, and helps to increase collaboration between departments in order to reach common goals.

In addition to its 16 official collegiate members, the Green Sports Alliance has offered advice to nearly 50 universities seeking information on sports greening in the 2012–2013 academic year alone. The Alliance has held discussions on the conference level with the Pac-12, Big Ten, and West Coast Conference. Its staff and members have given presentations or helped design content on sustainability in collegiate athletics and recreation programs at multiple conferences, including the Collegiate Athletic Facilities Summit, the AASHE conference, the Collegiate Sports Sustainability Summit, and the Stadia Design and Technology Expo.

“OUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE GREEN SPORTS ALLIANCE HAS SERVED AS A TREMENDOUS RESOURCE AS WE SHAPE THE WASTE DIVERSION AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES OF OUR DEPARTMENT’S FUTURE,” SAYS KAREN BAEBLER, ASSISTANT ATHLETICS DIRECTOR OF SPORTS OPERATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON.

WHO’S ON BOARD

Since launching nationally in March 2011, the Green Sports Alliance has grown to over 170 teams and venues from 16 sports leagues.

Alliance Members include:

17 MLB Teams/Venues	15 NCAA Athletics Departments	13 NHL Teams/Venues
12 NFL Teams/Venues	7 NBA Teams/Venues	3 MLS Teams/Venues
GREEN SPORTS ALLIANCE	PLUS: AEG Venues, Minor League Teams/Venues, Racetracks	2 PGA Tournaments

NIRSA: LEADERS IN COLLEGIATE RECREATION

NIRSA Commission for Sustainable Communities

NIRSA: Leaders in Collegiate Recreation (NIRSA), founded in 1950, is a member-based organization devoted to collegiate recreation and comprised of nearly 4,000 professionals, students, and businesses serving approximately 7.7 million students. Sustainability is one of NIRSA's core principles and is at the forefront of the value initiatives underlying the association's envisioned future.

"To create the conditions for a more sustainable future, higher education has to provide college and university graduates with the skills and knowledge that will prepare them to meet future challenges," says Pam Watts, executive director of NIRSA. "There are many reasons why collegiate recreation should play a leading role in these efforts. Campus recreation departments interact with a larger percentage of the campus population than nearly any other entity on campus. They also have traditionally had one of the largest carbon footprints on campus. As NIRSA assessed the future of collegiate recreation, sustainability emerged as critical for the work of our members."

In December 2011, NIRSA formed a Commission for Sustainable Communities with the goal of developing a multiyear plan for integrating sustainability into the association and all domains related to the recreation profession. "The sweet spot for NIRSA is inspiring the development of healthy communities worldwide, and sustainability offers students and practitioners in the field the ideal lens through which we can focus our efforts," says Watts. The NIRSA Commission for Sustainable Communities has collaborated with thought leaders and engaged the association's membership to develop a number of resources aimed at moving the culture of collegiate recreation toward sustainability.

Their work has led to the distribution of a visual model for valuing sustainability in collegiate recreation. The model, shown below, is based on three pillars of sustainability—social, environmental, and economic—and is tailored specifically for collegiate recreation. The commission also developed a list of questions to help members think about what sustainability means within their own campus programs and facilities. "As educators, NIRSA professionals have an opportunity to influence future leaders of the world by actively valuing sustainability in collegiate recreation programs," says Watts.

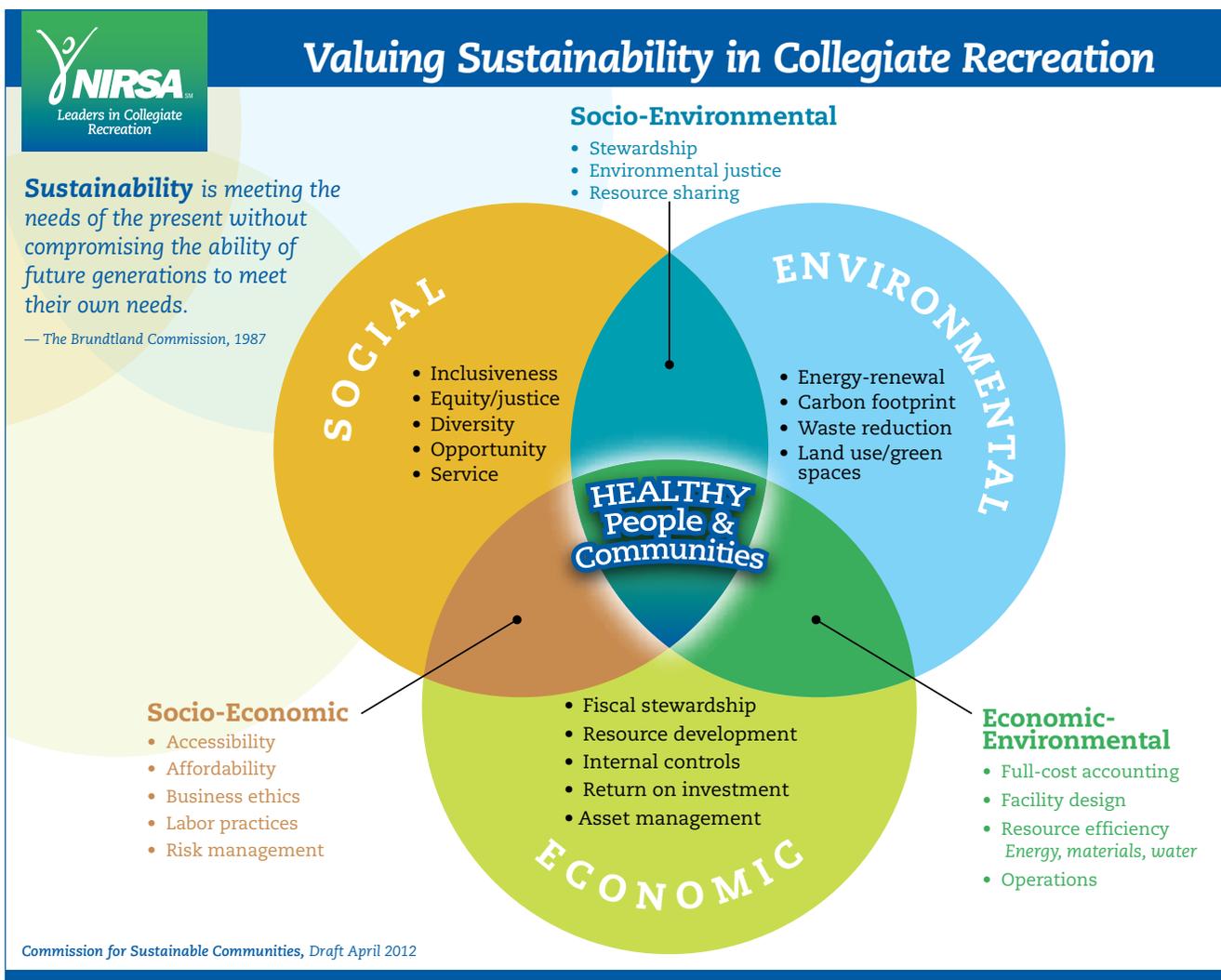


Photo courtesy of NIRSAs, Florida International University.



Photo courtesy of NIRSAs, Florida International University.

Photo courtesy of NIRSAs, University Of Texas San Antonio.



Photo courtesy of NIRSAs, University Of Texas San Antonio.

ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) is an association of colleges and universities in the United States whose mission is to promote sustainability in higher education. The organization, a member-based nonprofit founded in 2001, “provides resources and a network of support to enable institutions of higher education to advance sustainability in everything they do, from governance and operations to education and research,” says Meghan Fay Zahniser, director of programs at AASHE.

AASHE began outreach on sustainability to collegiate athletics departments in 2009. In July of that year, the group released its “Collegiate Athletics Department Sustainability Survey Report,” which indicated that almost 75 percent of respondents expected the emphasis on environmental programs in their campus athletics departments to increase in the future. The survey found that fewer than 10 percent of collegiate athletics departments had developed a formal sustainability plan, but that 15 percent were actively considering one. (The survey was distributed to the 119 athletics departments in the NCAA Football Bowl Subdivision, formerly known as Division 1A, and 97 institutions responded.)

One of AASHE’s most successful programs is the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, & Rating System (STARS). STARS is a voluntary self-assessment for colleges and universities to measure their sustainability performance. STARS recognizes sports greening initiatives within the operations category in areas such as waste, water, and purchasing. There is also an innovation category that gives points for work that is not otherwise captured in the STARS self-assessment that could include sports greening efforts. For example, in 2010, the University of Colorado at Boulder acquired an innovation credit for being the first NCAA football stadium to adopt a “zero waste” policy (see the University of Colorado Boulder case study).

“AASHE has different resources to support collegiate sports greening,” says Zahniser. “A benefit of being an AASHE member is access to guides like the Green Athletic Centers, an online resource that features case studies of LEED-certified athletics and recreation facilities.” The AASHE website also features Campus Sustainability Forums, online platforms that foster conversations within the higher-education community on a variety of greening issues related to sports venues, including turf management and recycling.

AASHE publicizes the sports-related greening accomplishments of its member schools via outreach platforms that include its annual campus sustainability conference (North America’s largest), newsletters, professional development workshops, webinars, a blog, and social media pages. For example, AASHE is collaborating with NRDC and the Green Sports Alliance to promote case studies on the greening of campus sports. “We have an active blog and social media presence with posts that focus on how NCAA rivalries can promote sustainability,” says Zahniser. “And each year at AASHE’s annual conference, sports greening is covered among various topics during the educational sessions. On our website, members can find information on emerging trends in greening athletics.”