



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Office of Sustainability



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# **SUSTAINABILITY HIGHLIGHTS**

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

Texas A&M University opened as a land-grant institution in 1876, subsequently earning sea- and space-grant designations, and leading the way in research and education about human impact on our planet. In March 2008, the Office of Sustainability (OS) was founded and charged with creating a culture of sustainability in Aggieland to enhance these efforts.

Through OS coordination and with guidance from the University Sustainability Advisory Council (SAC), Texas A&M monitors institutional sustainability performance using the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS). STARS is a program managed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

The 2023 highlights in this report come primarily from the campus' most recent STARS submission, where Texas A&M University earned its fifth STARS Gold rating. STARS evaluates institutions based on performance in the following four categories, and this report provides highlights for each. To view the entire submission, visit [STARS AASHE 2023](#).



**ACADEMICS**



**ENGAGEMENT**



**OPERATIONS**



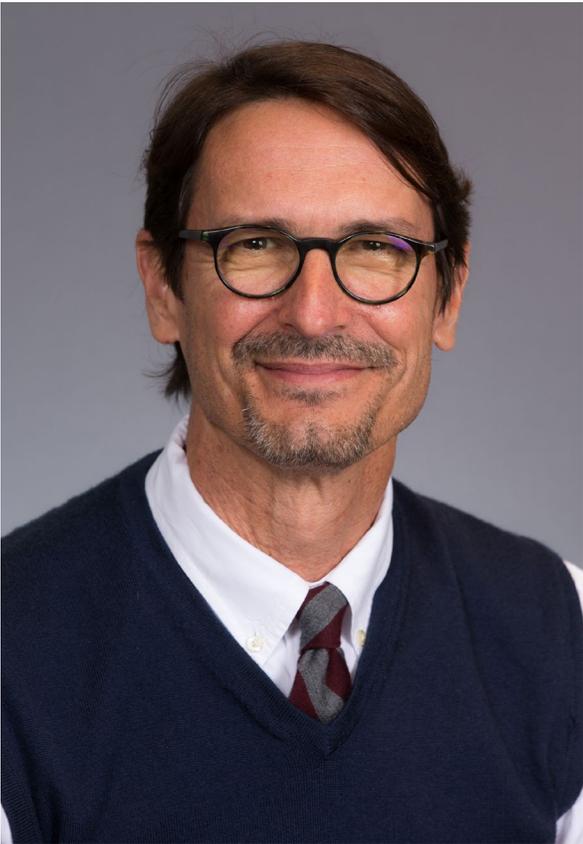
**PLANNING &  
ADMINISTRATION**



**RESPECT. PROTECT. PRESERVE.**

*Texas A&M University defines sustainability as the efficient, deliberate, and responsible preservation of environmental, social, and economic resources to protect our earth for future generations of Texas Aggies, the Texas A&M University community, and beyond.*

# LETTER FROM SCOTT SHAFER



**“COLLECTIVE  
EFFORTS CAN  
MAKE A REAL  
DIFFERENCE FOR  
THE FUTURE OF  
OUR CAMPUS”**

For more than 15 years, the Office of Sustainability at Texas A&M University has been providing hope and change. Hope that collective efforts can make a real difference for the future of our campus and our world. And change that comes from tireless championing, protecting, and promoting of the financial, environmental, and people resources we hold dear. Director Wellman and her team have developed a powerful set of guiding principles that build the way for a brighter, and greener, tomorrow.

Our Sustainability Master Plan (SMP) is the road map to building this future with nine themes, 16 evergreen goals, and 47 targets. The Office of Sustainability steers the course by overseeing this plan, expanding knowledge, and mentoring student and campus community leaders to be ambassadors for the cause.

This report details the important successes the office and their partners have achieved during the 2023 calendar year through data generated for the 2023 Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating (STARS) [submission](#).

I want to encourage every Aggie to contemplate the ways you can provide hope and change with your acts of selfless service to the Texas A&M community and the world around you. Glean ideas as you read this report and engage with the Office of Sustainability to find out how you can get involved. Together, we can make a sustainable difference.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. Shafer'.

**Scott Shafer**  
Executive Director  
Campus & Community Enrichment



# ACADEMICS



The university offers a variety of **sustainability-oriented** programs. Examples include:

- Environmental Studies Major
- Ecology and Conservation Biology Major
- Environmental Geosciences Major
- Minor in Sustainable Architecture and Planning
- Minor in Earth Systems
- Minor in Environmental Geosciences
- Master of Natural Resource Development
- Master/Ph.D. Water Management & Hydrologic Science
- M.S./Ph.D. in Ecology and Conservation Biology
- Sustainable Urbanism (Certificate)
- Women and Gender Studies (Certificate)

In regard to defining sustainability and its three core areas, **76.06%** of students correctly identified social sustainability, **88.80%** were able to identify economic sustainability and **95.75%** were able to identify environmental sustainability. This shows an overall trend of improvement in identifying all three dimensions of sustainability from the 2022 survey.

**89.41%** of students think climate change is at least somewhat important globally, **81.04%** think it is at least somewhat important that Texas A&M addresses climate change resilience, and **87.18%** think it is at least somewhat important for Texas A&M to be using renewable energy.



# ACADEMICS

Our institution offers an immersive sustainability program, **Geography 380**, that utilizes multi-disciplinary research to address social, economic and environmental issues.

- Analysis of environmental hazards with respect to human use of the land. This includes geologic hazards and problems caused by floods and meteorological conditions. Emphasis will be placed on understanding both the human dimensions (risk, disaster mitigation, sustainability, reconstruction, etc.) and the geophysical characteristics (wind speed, surge characteristics, liquefaction, etc.) of environmental hazards (fall 2020).
- Role of urban trees, parks, gardens and natural areas in promoting sustainability, climate resilience and environmental justice (spring 2020 and spring 2021).
- The complex interaction between the cryosphere, atmosphere and hydrosphere, global warming and cryosphere, the impact of cryospheric changes on humans, an equitable tree-planting program, optimal species mix for roadside vegetation buffer for air pollution mitigation, and a program to assess mental health benefits of green space (spring 2022).

**17.02%**

*of courses offered are sustainability-focused or related.*

**25%**

*of continuing education courses offered by Texas A&M Extension Services address sustainability.*

**83%**

*of academic departments offer at least one sustainability course and/or include sustainability.*

*More than*  
**50%**

*of sponsored researchers at Texas A&M are engaged in sustainability research.*

*More than*  
**70%**

*of Texas A&M departments with sponsored researchers conduct sustainability research.*



# ACADEMICS

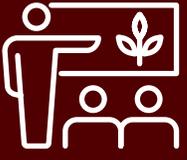
Texas A&M demonstrates initiative by using campus resources to turn campus into a **living laboratory**. Examples include:

- Utilities and Energy Services tours, internships and class projects
- Chartwells/Aggie Dining internships
- Leach Teaching Gardens
- GIS Technicians
- Howdy Farm
  - Rainwater harvesting
  - Promoting recycling, composting, etc.
- OS Internship Program
- OS Student Employees
- Winnie Carter Wildlife Center

The University Libraries supports faculty use of **Open Educational Resources (OERs)** in 11 courses at Texas A&M that, to date, has served over 45,000 students and contributed potentially to more than **\$2 million in student savings**. The accessibility of OERs as digital documents, that can be freely shared in a wide range of ways, directly support student learning and success.

Texas A&M has formally adopted policies and procedures that give positive recognition to **interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research** during faculty promotion and/or tenure decisions.





# ENGAGEMENT

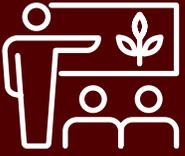


Texas A&M is firmly committed to promoting and fostering a culture of **community service**, so much so that one of its six core values is “Selfless Service.” This past year:

- The Big Event facilitated the contributions of 14,983 Aggie volunteers, who collectively provided 29,966 service hours on March 25, 2023.
- CARPOOL provided more than 28,000 service hours giving safe rides to students and community members.
- Fraternity and sorority members provided more than 52,000 service hours.

The **Aggie Eco Rep Program** is an organization created by the Department of Residence Life in which students educate their peers about how to live a sustainable lifestyle. Aggie Eco-Reps educate their fellow students by hosting informational presentations in the residence halls and on-campus apartment communities, participating in campus-wide events such as Campus Sustainability Day, Texas Recycles Day, and Earth Day, and promoting a sustainable lifestyle by living as an example for fellow students.

The goal of the Office of Sustainability’s **Internship Program** is to bring people from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives together to create a dynamic team that works to create a culture of sustainability at Texas A&M University. To date, the program has served **157 students**.



# ENGAGEMENT

The Department of Residence Life has partnered with Chartwells (on-campus dining services) since 2015, to promote and execute a bi-annual program entitled **“Project Clean Plate”** which identifies and educates students in the Texas A&M dining halls about **food waste and proper disposal**.

The Department of Residence Life hosts the **“U Challenge”** where teams of students (graduate and undergraduate) **study utility and energy consumption** for assigned residence hall communities as well as student engagement patterns in those communities. Overall, the **utility consumption has gone steadily down** from over \$10 million to just over \$7 million for Residence Life-managed facilities, while square footage has increased.

Texas A&M participates in the **Texas Regional Alliance for Campus Sustainability (TRACS)**, which serves as a forum for regional campuses to share ideas and strategies for **enhancing sustainability efforts**.

Through the Texas Targets Communities program, Texas A&M engages in formal **community partnerships to advance sustainability** across the state, working with groups such as Liberty County, Jefferson, TX, and Southeast Texas Urban Integrated Field Lab.

*More than*

**\$2.6 M**

*has been distributed by the Aggie Green Fund to empower students, faculty and staff to take action and bring about novel and creative sustainability initiatives on campus.*

*Between*

**50-74%**

*of staff members participate in sustainability-themed training or professional development.*





# OPERATIONS



**100%** of waste from Texas A&M-owned electronics is disposed of through Logistics Services' **University Surplus Property Program**. Electronics are either repurposed or recycled sustainably through Responsible Recycling certified recyclers.



Sbisa Dining Hall achieved **Green Restaurant Certification** for sustainable practices through a partnership with the Green Restaurant Association.



Aggie Dining works with **Brazos Valley Recycling** utilizing yellow barrels to collect post-consumer food waste that can be converted to animal feed.

Aggie Dining has a new partnership with Emerald Brand to sell their **compostable and ethically-produced paper products** at our campus markets and convenience stores.

About **74%** of students use more **sustainable commuting options** as their primary mode of transportation.



# OPERATIONS

Even though full-time equivalent students, faculty and staff increased by almost 68% and gross floor area of building space has more than doubled, Texas A&M has **reduced potable water use** on campus by **67%** since 1991.

During this year's annual "**Stream Clean**," 29 volunteers removed 29 bags of trash, three tires and other miscellaneous forms of trash from the creek bank at Hensel Park.

## **Diverted** from landfills this year:

- Over 65% of campus waste through recycling, composting, and/or donation and reuse.
- Over 87% of all the construction and demolition waste produced by Texas A&M.

As of August 2023, 12 buildings in the **Energy Performance Improvement** program show a cost avoidance of \$5.76 million in utility costs.

**21%**

*of total food and beverage purchases sourced by Aggie Dining were plant-based in 2023.*

**100%**

*of janitorial paper products purchased are eco-certified.*

**99%**

*of managed grounds are in accordance with an Integrated Pest Management program.*

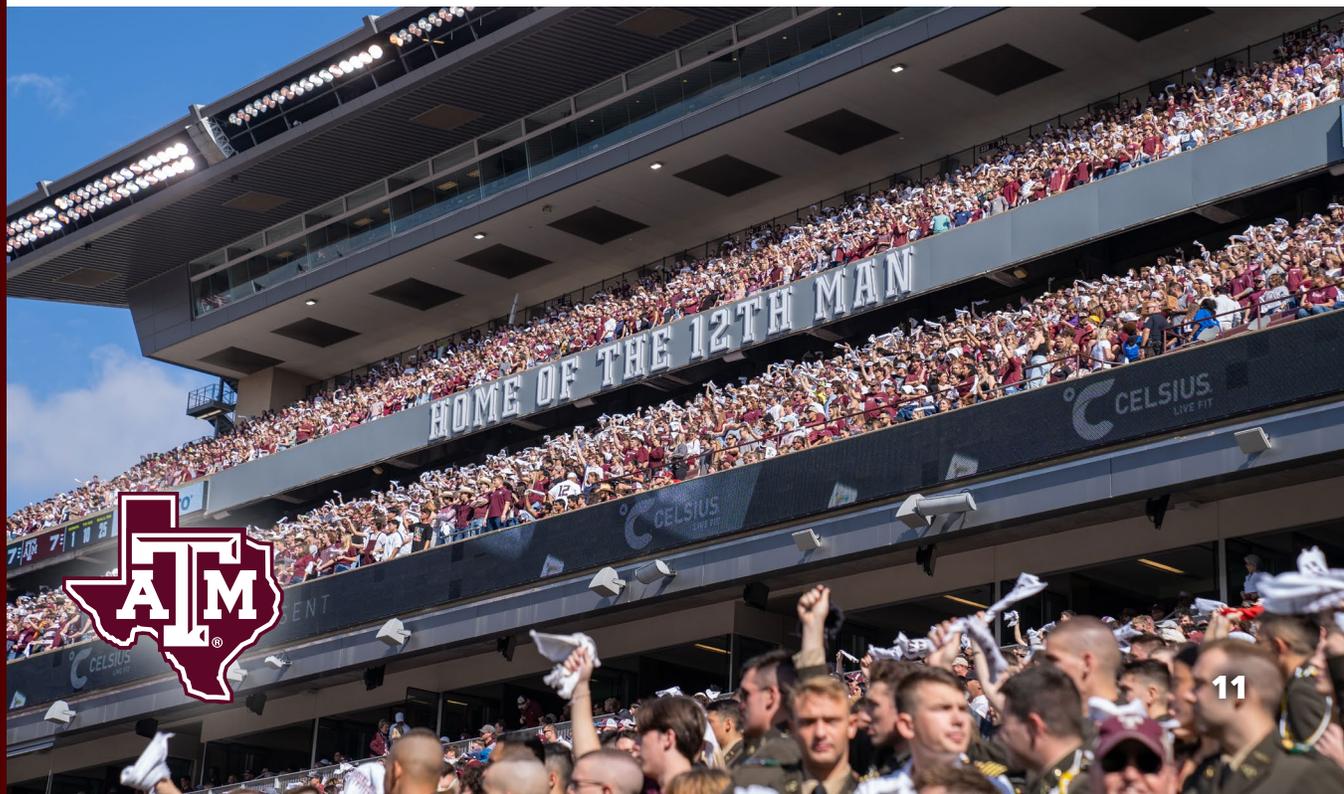




# OPERATIONS

## From the **Texas A&M Athletics Department:**

- The Texas A&M Athletics Department stepped to the forefront of national sustainability efforts with a first-of-its-kind **Athletics Sustainability Master Plan (ASMP)**. The purpose of the ASMP is to create a living strategic document that complements and serves as a guide for how the athletics department will support Texas A&M University in achieving the goals and actions set forth in its 2018 Campus Sustainability Master Plan for the next decade and beyond.
- Texas A&M Athletics recently joined the **Green Sports Alliance**, the environmentally-focused trade organization that convenes stakeholders from around the sporting world to promote healthy, sustainable communities here in Aggieland and beyond. Athletics will be able to create more opportunities through the resources, experience and expertise that Green Sports Alliance provides to those who work in the collegiate athletics space.
- Texas A&M Athletics was able to step into the public eye by presenting on the Athletics Department Sustainability operations and ASMP at several conferences this year including TRACS, Green Sports Alliance and AASHE.





# PLANNING & ADMINISTRATION



In October, Texas A&M kicked off its **“No Aggie Stands Alone”** campaign to improve mental health on campus.

Texas A&M’s School of Performance, Visualization and Fine Arts supports Aggies in the arts through **technology-forward education**.



**Aggie Green Fund**

The **Aggie Green Fund** empowers students, faculty and staff to take action and bring creative sustainability initiatives to campus. Since its launch in 2011, the Aggie Green Fund has awarded approximately **\$2.6 million** to over 100 projects.

*Texas A&M is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution*

**HSI**

*by the Department of Education.*



**FAIRTRADE**

*Texas A&M has been a Fair-Trade Campus since 2017.*

*Texas A&M strives to make being an Aggie accessible and affordable.*

**71%**

*of students receive some form of financial aid.*

# THE 2023 SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS

The Office of Sustainability hosted its awards ceremony in April 2023 to recognize members of the Aggie community who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to making Texas A&M more sustainable.

## CHAMPION AWARD RECIPIENTS



**MK Futrell**  
Undergraduate  
Student



**Thomas Jistel**  
Graduate  
Student



**Kelley O'Neal**  
*Pictured: Alana Campbell*  
Staff

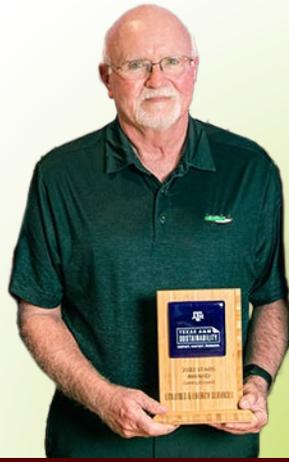


**Mobility Master Plan Implementation Team**  
Team

# THE 2023 SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS



## STARS AWARD RECIPIENTS



**Utilities and Energy Services**



**University Architect and Campus Planning, Design & Construction**

Gaining Ground Award



**Residence Life**  
Overall Top Performer Award



**Government Relations**  
Most Improved Award