



Penn
Sustainability

**COLLEGE HOUSE
SUSTAINABILITY
LIVING GUIDE for
RAs and GAs**

FALL 2020

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INTRODUCTION



As a College House Resident Advisor (RA) or Graduate Associate (GA), you have a unique opportunity to help frame the way your residents understand environmental sustainability at Penn. While every College House has a different culture and structure, learning in the context of residential living has great potential because it is situational, social, and conducive to continual improvement.

Empowering College House residents with knowledge of Penn's environmental initiatives and giving them tips to enrich their understanding of their lifestyle choices will have a significant impact on our campus's performance – and on students' lives – for years to come. For most students, freshman year at college is the first time that they are living on their own, and a critical time for forming long-term habits. We want to help you foster interest in environmental sustainability in your hall, and we're realistic about how difficult a challenge that can be, so here are some tips:

- Don't expect everyone in your hall to jump on the bandwagon. Underclassmen represent the entire spectrum of interest and enthusiasm when it comes to environmental issues. There's always a bell curve, and while many will be enthusiastic supporters, some students will be dismissive or unresponsive to appeals for sustainable behaviors.
- Start small, and celebrate modest successes. It takes time to build a community, especially when everyone has a different starting point in terms of understanding sustainability. The important thing is to get everyone "on the ladder" – then you can work on starting to climb.
- Behavior change projects are the most difficult part of sustainability. You must be persistent, talk to people at their level of understanding and enthusiasm, and take the opportunity of this leadership role to point out examples of sustainable behavior.

Thank you for your service as an RA or GA in helping to make Penn the most sustainable campus it can be.

1 *Encourage Green Living Certification*

The Green Living Certification, offered through the Penn Sustainability Office, provides students with an opportunity to reflect on their environmental impact and to recognize the importance of their daily, individual decisions on the University's sustainability initiatives. Through minimizing waste, reducing energy and water consumption, and building a culture of sustainability at Penn, students will have a large impact within their College House and beyond.

Green Living Certification

Certification is awarded upon completion of two sections: Prerequisites and Optional Actions. The 5 Prerequisites are habits that are relatively easy to accomplish; they provide the foundation for implementing more difficult sustainable practices. All Optional Actions are assigned points based on a combination of environmental impact, difficulty of implementation, and cost. Based on the number of points achieved, participating students can earn one of three levels for completing the program – gold, silver, and bronze. Students who become certified are rewarded with prizes and a sticker to display.

Making sure your residents know about the certification program and encouraging them to apply will play a key role in the success of this program. Think of fun ways to reward residents who achieve certification and to encourage others to apply. You could offer a floor-wide party if a certain number of residents attain certification. You could have a dinner and discuss the certification manual and easy ways to get more points. A little healthy competition between floors could inspire your residents and the residents on another floor to see who can be greener.

Role Model Sustainable Behavior in Personal Lifestyle Choices

Modeling sustainable behaviors is a great way to demonstrate your environmental commitment to your residents. Shopping with reusable bags at farmers' markets, cooking with organic foods, and bringing your own coffee mug are just a few ways to model sustainable behaviors. You can also set a great example by becoming Green Living certified. By doing so, you become a valuable resource for residents who are also interested in becoming certified. Share your experiences and the reasons why living sustainably is important to you.

bit.ly/LiveGreenPenn



2 *Educate Residents on Recycling*

Penn's *Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 3.0* calls for campus to increase diversion of materials away from the landfill. Numerous recycling initiatives on campus such as PennMOVES, single-stream recycling, and special recycling collections all contribute to our campus waste minimization goals.

Initial Floor Meetings: What, Where, and Impacts

The first time you call your residents together is a great time to introduce proper recycling practices for your floor. Protocol will vary between Houses and potentially between halls within the same House. Be familiar with the logistics of recycling in your building. You can visit the [Recycling In Your Residence guide](#) on the Penn Sustainability website for more information.

Since September 2010, Penn has used a single-stream recycling system. This means that all recyclable items (mixed paper, cardboard, glass, metals, and rigid plastics) can be placed together in the same container. However, some College Houses may still have separate bins for recyclables. Penn is in the process of updating the current recycling infrastructure to single stream bins.

Be aware of the trash and recycling signs around your building. If you need more signage, visit the [FRES Waste Management webpage](#) to download and print more signs.

Recycling Bulbs, Batteries, Electronics, and More!

College House residents can recycle batteries and light bulbs in their College House, either in the lobby or in the Information Center. Residents should check with their House Information Desk for specific information. By encouraging your residents to use these receptacles, you're helping divert mercury and toxic elements from entering our landfills, rivers, and ultimately, our drinking water.

Visit the [Penn Sustainability website](#) for more information on [Special Recycling and Reuse Collections](#) around campus, including shoes, writing utensils, and more specialty items. Also, be on the lookout for collection events – academic departments and schools frequently have e-waste drives to collect and safely dispose of computers, printers, cell phones, TVs, and other electronic equipment.

3 Encourage Residents to Get Involved

There are many ways for residents to get further involved in sustainability initiatives on campus. Check out just a few of these ways below.

SSAP

As the student sustainability umbrella group, the Student Sustainability Association at Penn (SSAP) was founded to foster cohesion and interaction among environmentally-focused student groups and create a unified student voice on green issues. Encourage residents to get involved with SSAP student groups (visit the [SSAP website](#) for a full list of the 10+ constituent groups).

Student Eco-Reps

The [Student Eco-Reps program](#) is comprised of about 10-20 students who work in small groups to design, pilot, research, and evaluate projects with guidance from Penn's Sustainability Office. These projects are aimed at improving Penn's environmental footprint in areas such as waste, energy, food, and ecological landscaping, as well as projects focusing on environmental education.

Annual Campaigns

Along with a host of campus partners, Penn Sustainability holds three major University-wide campaigns each year. [ReThink Your Footprint](#) focuses on waste minimization, [Power Down](#) is focused on energy conservation and awareness, and the [30x30 Challenge](#) promotes spending time in nature. Visit the Penn Sustainability website for more information about these annual campaigns.

Green Fund

Penn's [Green Fund](#) welcomes ideas from students, faculty, and staff about ways to improve the University's environmental performance. The Green Fund can provide financial support for projects that would otherwise not be implemented and that support the University's *Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 3.0*.

Nature Rx

[Nature Rx at Penn](#) supports the writing of "prescriptions" to be out in nature, since research has shown that time spent in nature can have a positive impact on our health and well-being. The hope is to encourage the Penn community to go out in nature to reduce stress and anxiety, increase energy, and have protective, restorative time. Find nature now by visiting [our map](#).



5 *Involve Peer RAs/GAs in House Sustainability*

Once your House Training and CHAS Training have taken place, chances are you'll know your peer RA/GA and House staff members very well. One of the best parts of this camaraderie is the knowledge sharing that naturally unfolds during meetings and unstructured time. Not only can you learn about sustainability and become a resource for your residents, but you can also help guide your fellow RA/GA staff to learn about sustainable living.

Share Best Practices

Let your residents and your peer RAs and GAs know about your favorite natural cleaning products, local eateries, or your new notebooks made from recycled content.

Share Green Topics at Meetings

Think about approaching your House Dean or senior staff members to see if you can lead a sustainability discussion at an upcoming meeting or event. By staying current with climate-related news and trends, you shouldn't have trouble finding meaningful and relevant topics to share and discuss.

Ensure Staff Meetings are Green Meetings

Green meetings are based on a sustainability framework which balances environmental, economic, and social impacts in the context of an organization's business needs. Here are some action items to consider when planning greener in-person staff meetings in your College House:

- Ask participants to bring their own water bottles, plates, and utensils so there's no need to provide single-use disposables.
- Choose a room with natural lighting to minimize electricity from lighting.
- Close windows if the heating or cooling are running.
- For many more suggestions on minimizing the environmental impacts of events, see Penn Sustainability's [Green Events Guide](#).

**While very few in-person events are being held during the Fall 2020 semester, we encourage you to keep these sustainability suggestions in mind for the future. If you do have in-person events or field trips, be sure to practice healthy habits like wearing a face covering, physical distancing, and frequent handwashing to protect you and your residents from COVID-19.*

RESOURCES & RECOMMENDATIONS



WASTE MINIMIZATION

Single-Stream Recycling

- What: Visit the [FRES Waste Management webpage](#) for signage on what can and cannot be recycled on campus.
- Where: Make sure your floor has recycling signage throughout common spaces! For information specific to your College House, see the [Recycling In Your Residence guide](#).

Recycle Special Waste Items

Visit the Penn Sustainability website for more information on Special Recycling and Reuse Collections around campus, including batteries, light bulbs, shoes, and more specialty items.

Composting

All members of the Penn community are welcome to drop off food waste at the collection behind Harrison College House (located on the pathway between Harrison and the LGBT Center). Please visit the [Bennett Compost website](#) for a list of accepted items.

Reuse/Share

With a little bit of planning, eliminating unnecessary waste can be quite simple.

- Eat and store food with reusable containers, plates, & silverware.
- Drink from reusable coffee mugs and water bottles.
- Buy in bulk. Save money and packaging, and share with a neighbor or hall mate.

Revitalize

Make use of old items by repurposing or revitalizing gently used objects, such as sheets, t-shirts, picture frames, or crates. Bring in some paint, thread, glue, or scissors, and get creative.

Reusable Water Bottles/Filters

There's a quick return on investment for a filtered water pitcher versus buying bottled water! Philly tap water is safe and healthy; it's treated and tested to make sure of that before it reaches your home. Did you know tap water is held to a stricter standard than bottled water? [Drink Philly Tap!](#)

RESOURCES & RECOMMENDATIONS



ENERGY CONSERVATION

Unplug and Turn Off

Ensure all unnecessary appliances are unplugged when not in use. 10 to 15% of residential energy use comes from devices in standby mode (the device is not in use but is still plugged into the socket). Consider using surge strips with switches. Plug all of your chargers and other small devices into the strip and simply turn off the strip when its not needed.

LED Bulbs

Compared to general-service incandescent lamps giving the same amount of visible light, LEDs use one-fourth to three-fourths the electric power, and last 8 to 15 times longer.

College House Windows

Set a good example and help keep energy consumption down. Watch the windows in your room, in the hall lounges, and around your College House, and practice the following steps:

- Keep windows closed when the cooling or heating is working
- Keep the blinds drawn on summer days to block heat gain
- Open blinds on winter days to allow natural sun in the room
- Keep your vents unobstructed so air flows freely
- Report issues with heating/cooling so necessary repairs can be made
- Keep room temperatures at reasonable levels

Reconsider Appliances

It might be possible to purchase fewer appliances and still achieve the same results within your kitchen encourage roommates and neighbors to discuss the sharing of appliances, so needless purchases are not made.

Smart Power Strips

Smart Strips monitor power consumption and can sense when computers and other devices are being used. The strip can shut power to fully charged devices, eliminating the idle current drawn from them. Encourage residents to try a Smart Strip in their rooms.

RESOURCES & RECOMMENDATIONS

WATER CONSERVATION



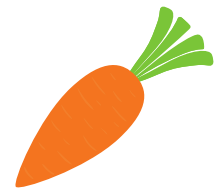
Turn Off Water

Turn off the water when brushing your teeth, doing the dishes, combing your hair, or shaving. Try to start thinking more consciously when the tap is on.

Full Laundry Loads

While College House laundry services are "free" financially, they still have an impact on the environment. Only do laundry when you have a full load, and use cool water instead of hot to eliminate extra power usage it takes to heat that water.

DIETARY CHOICES



Reducing Meat Consumption

The consumption of meat accounts for 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions. According to the UN, people should have at least one meat-free day a week if they want to make a personal and effective sacrifice that would help tackle climate change.

Local Food

Purchasing local food supports the community's economy, reduces pollution from transportation and shipping, and encourages the consumption of fresh, rather than packaged produce.

The Food Trust's website has information on farmers' markets in Philadelphia, including which are open year-round and which are seasonal. The University Square Farmers Market outside of the Penn Bookstore at 36th and Walnut is open on Wednesdays from 10am-5pm, year-round.

RESOURCES & RECOMMENDATIONS



SMART PURCHASING

Clothing

Sustainable clothing refers to fabrics derived from eco-friendly resources, such as sustainably grown cotton or linen, or recycled plastic water bottles. Also check out second-hand stores (including the student-run thrift store [Penn Closet](#) right on campus) for new-to-you clothes at a discount.

School Supplies

The [Penn Bookstore](#) has a multitude of options for purchasing textbooks. You can save 25% by purchasing used books, save 50% by renting and returning, or save 60% by purchasing e-books. When the semester is over, you can return your books and earn cash back. Not only will you be saving money, but you'll also save emissions created during production and transportation of supplies.

Reduce Impulse Buying

When you are considering buying something, try the 30-Day Rule: wait 30 days after the first time you decide you want a product to make your decision. This will help eliminate impulse buying!

Buy Less

We can individually make decisions on how much or little we consume. Try to minimize purchases as much as you can. When you do need to buy new, look for Green Certification Labels (listed below), shop local, and patronize minority-owned businesses, including women-owned & Black-owned shops.

Green Certification Labels

See below for a partial list of sustainability labels to look for when shopping:

- Household Items: Original Green Seal of Approval
- Chlorine-Free Products: Chlorine Free Products Association
- Energy-Efficient Products: EPA's ENERGY STAR Program
- Organic Produce: USDA National Organic Program
- Wood and Paper Products: Forest Stewardship Council

Check out the [EPA's website](#) for more recommendations for greener products and services.

RESOURCES & RECOMMENDATIONS



TRANSPORTATION

Penn is a compact, urban campus that is well served by a variety of modes of alternative and public transportation. The core campus is entirely pedestrian, and the campus as a whole is situated in a dense network of public transportation options.

Bicycling Choices

Penn offers a number of resources for cyclists including free bike registration to prevent theft, bike repair stations on campus, and ample campus bike parking. Penn's campus bike map also provides locations of all bike-related services on campus.

If you don't have your own bike, utilize Indego — Philly's bike share program with several bike stations located on and around campus. It's a quick, convenient, affordable, and sustainable way to get where you need to go!

Penn Transit

Penn Bus East and Penn Bus West: The Penn Bus East and Penn Bus West operate Monday through Friday from 5 p.m. to 12 a.m. year-round. For a map and schedule of stops, visit the Penn Transportation website.

PennRides on Request: Penn Transit operates an evening shuttle service, which provides transportation free of charge to and from campus pick-up locations to any address within the service boundaries. Faculty, staff, and students may ride free of charge. You can access this service using the PennRides on Request app.

Pennovation Works Shuttle and FMC Shuttle: Penn Transit provides shuttle services to and from central campus for both Pennovation Works (3401 Grays Ferry Ave) and the FMC Tower (2929 Walnut St).

RESOURCES & RECOMMENDATIONS



ACADEMICS

Majors and Minors

There are a number of sustainability-related majors, minors, concentrations, and certificates available to students. Learn more about all of these programs on [the Penn Sustainability website](#).

Sustainability Course Inventory

The [Sustainability Course Inventory](#) is a step towards the *Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 3.0* goal of expanding the awareness and availability of information about sustainability courses at Penn. This document is an effort to make public and centrally available the broad range of classes relating to sustainability that are available. While not an exhaustive list of all the sustainability courses at Penn, the inventory captures the majority of environmentally-relevant courses across Penn.

Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships

The Center for Undergraduate Research and Fellowships (CURF) helps undergraduates become involved in research by helping to identify resources, narrow the topic search, and connect students to faculty mentors and funding. Penn Undergraduate Sustainability Action Grants are sponsored by CURF and are provided for students studying climate change through any academic field related to sustainability.

Academic Centers

There are many [academic centers](#) at Penn engaged in environmental research, instruction related to sustainability, and outreach related to issues of climate change. These are non-degree granting educational units of the university grown out of a desire to integrate sustainability into existing areas of study or practice.