

# WARREN WILSON COLLEGE'S COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY 2015-16



## INSTITUTIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACCOLADES

**DIVESTMENT:** In October 2015, the Warren Wilson College Board of Trustees voted unanimously to divest endowment funds from fossil fuels over the next five years. In a move that aligns the College's investments with its core values, the nearly \$55 million endowment will separate from corporations listed among the Carbon Underground 200, which contains the world's top coal, oil and gas companies. The Board further adopted a Responsible Investment Policy with environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) considerations and management strategies. The trustees made this pronouncement after an effective advocacy campaign from students, faculty and staff.

**NATIONAL RANKINGS:** Sierra Magazine ranked Warren Wilson College No. 54 of 153 "Cool Schools," which is an indication of the institution's "greenness." The College has been named a "Cool School" nine consecutive times, mirroring the total number of lists published since rankings began in 2007.

**COLLEGE MAGAZINE:** Warren Wilson College is second nationwide in College Magazine's "Top 10 Greenest Campuses" list. The magazine notes some of the College's food and wood comes from the sustainably managed farm, garden and forests. It adds, "If that isn't enough, you can skip the mall and do your shopping at the Free Store. Taking recycling to the next level, students save unwanted items from the landfill and donate items to the store where they can find a new home and a new use."

**2015 GREEN COLLEGE OF THE YEAR:** The Western North Carolina Sierra Club recognized Warren Wilson College as the 2015 Green College of the Year. In making the award, the Sierra Club called the College "a champion of the environment" and noted the creation of the environmental studies program in 1980, construction of the recently recertified LEED Platinum EcoDorm, and the decision to divest its nearly \$55 million endowment from fossil fuels.

## EFFICIENCY, PROTECTION AND LEADERSHIP AT WARREN WILSON COLLEGE

The Sierra Club is a renowned leader of the environmental movement in the United States. Three ways the organization meets its mission of protecting the natural environment are:

1. **Protecting land and water resources**
2. **Ensuring resource efficiency and clean energy to solve the climate crisis**
3. **Leading a sustainability movement to include social justice as well as environmental health**

These structural elements of an active environmental movement are core components of the College's work to manage its resources efficiently, to protect College resources and, most importantly, to create leaders that make lasting, worldwide impacts. Environmental leadership is infused into a Warren Wilson College education. The College's student-led Environmental Justice Crew advocates for change on a range of issues. The Recycling Crew brings

responsible waste management to the forefront of the conservation conversation. Faculty members secure funding to do innovative research. Students create advocacy courses and break trips to immerse themselves and their peers in a greater understanding of climate change. These leadership opportunities help students build skills to make impacts in their communities and around the world.



## 1. RESOURCE EFFICIENCY AND CLEAN ENERGY

**FACILITIES:** In October 2015, Warren Wilson College's EcoDorm received a 5-year Platinum recertification under the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) Building Operations and Maintenance system by the U.S. Green Building Council. In 2009, EcoDorm was the first building on a college campus to achieve LEED Platinum certification in the Existing Buildings category. Platinum certification is the highest rating a building can receive under the LEED system. Students track energy use for all buildings on campus and led the recertification process.

▲ The New Academic Building, slated to begin construction in January 2017, includes plans for LEED Gold certification. ▲ Facilities is developing a plan to install solar roof panels to make strides toward net zero energy use. Facilities staff members are planning to build a motor fleet that minimizes fossil fuel use. ▲ Students measure emissions and produce the College's annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory. Students manage the Community Bike Shop where bike repairs are performed at cost for students and employees to keep bikes in action.

**FOOD AND RECYCLING:** Roughly 34 percent of all food in campus dining facilities come from local sources, which includes the student-operated campus farm and garden. The farm delivers 14,827 pounds of meat, and the garden supplies 4,205 pounds of produce to on-campus dining establishments. ▲ Students on the campus Recycling Crew divert 50 percent of campus waste from the landfill through a variety of recycling and reusing techniques, including managing the compost operation that repurposes 100 percent of campus food waste as well as farm and garden waste. Vegetable waste from the local farmers market is also handled by this crew.



## 2. LAND AND WATER PROTECTION

Landscaping Crew students manage 8 acres of native grass and wildflowers incorporated into the campus landscape. Students in conservation biology partnered with the Landscaping Crew to secure National Wildlife Federation Wildlife Habitat designation for central campus. ▲ Forestry Crew students research and manage techniques on carbon sequestration, including inventorying all core campus trees. Students in a variety of environmental studies courses are determining the impact of climate change on various campus plants and animals. ▲ The College earned Tree Campus USA recognition in 2016 from the Arbor Day Foundation.



Ben Linthicum '16

## 3. LEADING A SUSTAINABILITY MOVEMENT THROUGH ADVOCACY, SERVICE AND RESEARCH

**STUDENTS:** Kelsey Juliana '18 walked 1,600 miles from Grand Island, Nebraska, to Washington, D.C., as part of the 2014 Great March for Climate Action. She is also a plaintiff in a potentially precedent-setting case in Oregon. Citing the public trust doctrine, she and her co-plaintiffs contend Oregon is not doing enough to protect its citizens from the effects of climate change. ▲ Ben Linthicum '16 was selected for a Udall Undergraduate Scholarship in the 2015-16 academic year. His contributions include creating a college-level environmental advocacy course, leading fellow students on spring break trip to learn about mountaintop removal, and providing trail maintenance conservation service in the region. ▲ Students on the Sustainability Crew inventoried the on-campus bookstore. Then, they identified sustainable clothing as well as health and beauty product alternatives and sought out suitable vendors. ▲ Jamie DeMarco '16 advocated for a healthier environment, which led to the removal of centrally located smoking huts on campus.

**ALUMNI:** Attorney Jessica Culpepper '04 won a landmark decision in a case involving a large industrial dairy in Washington state's Yakima Valley. A U.S. District Court judge ruled that manure from livestock facilities could be regulated as solid waste. The outcome is one long sought by the plaintiffs Culpepper represented. ▲ Tucker Johnson '15 was awarded the William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India with the American India Foundation. His work focused on bettering the health and livelihood of the resident populations. Brooke Bissinger '00 developed a plant-based nontoxic alternative to DEET.

**FACULTY:** Biology professor Paul Bartels, Ph.D., and students researched over 1000 species of tardigrades, which recently led them to discover a potentially new species on the coast of South Carolina. ▲ Conservation biology professor J.J. Apodaca, Ph.D., received funding in partnership with the Amphibian Survival Alliance and WildSouth to study threatened amphibian species.