From the OEP Director

If student engagement is a barometer of success in the realm of campus sustainability, then UConn had one of its best semesters ever. This Spring, we hosted two new events: the UConn@COP Climate Change Cafe and the 2020 Vision Student Summit. The Summit convened current student sustainability leaders and rising stars, including many who have led USG, EcoHusky and other clubs to heightened levels of student activism around environmental issues.

In her "Welcome Back!" email to begin the Spring semester, President Herbst inspired action by officially endorsing the 2020 Vision Plan - it made a difference. Through the efforts of many departments on campus, we've already met, or are fast-approaching, several of our short-term goals! Among them, we completed our most detailed GHG inventory ever, showing a 5% overall reduction in emissions in 2016. This brings us within 2% of our interim Climate Action Plan milestone (-20% by 2020).

In late-April, we welcomed Governor Malloy to campus for UConn’s 10th annual Earth Day Spring Fling, where he joined DEEP’s Deputy Commissioner Mary Sotos and Eversource executives at an event celebrating UConn’s successful energy efficiency and carbon reduction initiatives (watch Eversource video clip). A bright, sunny day attracted 50 exhibitors and a record crowd of sustainability-minded students, faculty and staff to EDSF. To top off the semester, BestColleges.com announced that UConn is ranked as the #4 Greenest University in the U.S. for 2017.

"...we are meeting our pledges with respect to lowering our carbon footprint."

- Gov. Dannel Malloy
@ UConn’s Earth Day Spring Fling 2017
President Herbst Endorses the 2020 Vision for Campus Sustainability & Climate Leadership

President Herbst greeted the UConn community at the start of the Spring semester with an important message regarding our commitment to sustainability. In this message, she endorsed the new 2020 Vision, which advances our 2010 Climate Action Plan with goals and specific metrics.

“With this new roadmap to 2020 in hand, UConn looks forward to continued progress and an even more sustainable future.”

- University President Susan Herbst

Spring EPAC Meeting

The Environmental Policy Advisory Council held its spring meeting in April. Each semester, OEP convenes EPAC - a diverse group of faculty, staff and students appointed by the President - to discuss UConn’s environmental goals, progress, events and initiatives. Highlights from the April meeting, included:

- Plans to replace 300 refrigerators this summer in student residential buildings with new, Energy Star-rated units
- Closed-loop waste diversion options for dining hall food waste that would use a commercial anaerobic digester, which recently opened in CT
- Moving UConn’s main hazardous waste accumulation facility out of a drinking water watershed and into a new facility built near the Tech Park
- A 101-acre addition to the Hillside Environmental Education Park on the North Campus, including plans to expand hiking trails and interpretive signs posted in the HEEP

Dining Services & Menus of Change

The Department of Dining Services has recently adopted Menus of Change, a nationwide movement towards healthier and more sustainable university dining options. Some of the key principles include transparency about food sourcing and preparation, focusing on whole, minimally processed foods, and moving plant-based proteins to the center of the plate.

In addition to joining Menus of Change, Dining Services is now one of the first public universities nationwide to have 100% of its dining halls certified by the Green Restaurant Association. This signifies strong sustainability efforts in the areas of energy, water, waste, food, chemicals, disposables and building.
Green Office Certification

Whether or not you work in one of UConn’s many LEED Silver or Gold certified buildings, you can still practice the behaviors that make for a green office. This year, we certified nine offices under the employee-driven Green Office Certification Program, bringing the three-year total to 42 (with a 2020 goal of 100). In March, we gathered dozens of current and potential Green Office Team Organizers (GOTOs), who shared tips and provided feedback on the program at a lively breakfast meeting. OEP was proud to bring together, encourage and learn from some of UConn’s green champions among faculty and staff.

Recycling Updates

This year, Facilities and the OEP have worked together to increase mixed waste recycling and prevent commingling with trash. New standardized containers, lids, labels and plastic bag liners (clear for recycling, black for trash) have been deployed across 1 million SF of buildings in the core campus. OEP also created a recycling training video for custodial staff with tips like using a dual-container maintenance cart and coupling trash with recycling bins.

What is Recyclable?

Recyclable:
- Plastics 1 – 7
- Metal cans and foil
- Glass bottles and jars
- Milk and juice cartons
- Aerosol cans
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Envelopes and office paper
- Cereal and food boxes
- Paper bags and books
- Cardboard

Non-recyclable:
- 3-ring binders
- Paper plates and cups
- Tissues and napkins
- Wax and carbon paper
- Tyvek or FedEx envelopes
- Photographs
- Plastic utensils
- Styrofoam
- Ceramics and Pyrex
- Plastic bags
- Fuel containers

Basketball Green GameDays

Sporting our new bright-green GGD t-shirts, also proudly worn by the Husky mascot (left) and pep band director, student volunteers led the charge to recycle at Women’s and Men’s Basketball games in February. Green team members greeted fans at the gates and collected recyclables at halftime and after the game.

Refunds from recycled bottles were donated to the Campus Sustainability Fund.
Earth Day Spring Fling

Earth Day Spring Fling fell on one of the most beautiful weather days in EDSF history: 64°F, sunny, and NO WIND! Nearly 50 vendors, including local farms, environmental nonprofits, UConn organizations, and sustainable retailers, along with a sustainable zero-waste barbeque, live music by student Jeremy Ancheril, and appearances by Jonathan the Husky and our favorite Earth Day cow, all came together to make the event a great success! To see photos from the event, please click here. At the same time as EDSF, Governor Malloy spoke about the energy efficient LED lighting in Gampel Pavilion, and the efforts by UConn and EverSource to make our campus more sustainable. The OEP was well represented at the event, which took place in front of the Husky statue.

Arbor Day Celebration

Alongside our Earth Day Spring Fling, the OEP hosted an Arbor Day Celebration on Fairfield Way. Volunteers planted a tree next to the Student Union entrance in commemoration of Arbor Day. Additionally, on April 4th, a separate sugar maple tree planting took place on the Great Lawn, which was recorded to make a celebratory video. This year’s celebration featured another beautiful tree cake designed by Dining Service’s UConn Bakery, which was free for anyone at the celebration. Finally, the Arbor Celebration hosted several tables featuring service fraternity Alpha Phi Omega, CT Agricultural Experiment Station, CT DEEP Division of Forestry, Groundwork Bridgeport, and one for outreach about UConn’s Tree Campus U.S.A. designation.

UCONN@COP

In November 2016, a contingent of students, faculty members, and sustainability staff attended the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Marrakech, Morocco. Following their trip, the group held a Climate Change Café and poster session to tell the UConn community about their experiences. The posters were based on blogs students had posted about their experiences at COP23, which can be found here. In November 2017, a new group of students, faculty, and staff will be traveling to Bonn, Germany for COP23, which will be hosted by Fiji. The UConn@COP Organizing Committee will be releasing the names of the accepted fellows for UConn@COP23 in August.

“The idea that every country can get together to talk about the future of sustainability shows that this is bigger than a political issue. It is a human issue.”

–Joshua Tellier, Climate Change Café reflection
This semester, the OEP said fond farewells to two interns, Matt McCann and Jess Griffin.

Matt started at the OEP in the fall of 2015 and graduated in Mechanical Engineering with a concentration in Energy & Power. He helped solidify our working relationship with Athletics as the lead intern for both football and basketball Green GameDays and was the man behind the camera at most OEP events. Matt’s favorite assignment was conducting UConn’s annual GHG Emissions Inventory and he’s proud of the improvements he made to the difficult process of calculating our carbon footprint. Outside of the office, Matt is on the executive board of the UConn Eagle Scout Association and enjoys backpacking and hiking. Matt is heading to Jackson Hole, Wyoming for his second consecutive summer as a facilitator for an Outdoor Youth Leadership Program.

Jess started at the OEP in the summer of 2015 and graduated with a B.S. in Environmental Science (Natural Resources) and a B.S. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. She helped with a variety of initiatives and contributed to planning UConn@COP22 and Green GameDays. She was our lead intern for completing UConn’s GreenMetric survey. Outside of the office, Jess is an officer in EcoHusky, studied abroad in South Africa and Ireland, and travelled to Paris as a UConn@COP21 Fellow. Jess’s favorite OEP activities were Tree Campus USA and Arbor Day because she learned about tree stewardship on campus and enjoyed the community outreach. Following graduation, she will work as a Research Technician at UVM’s Rubenstein Ecosystem Science Laboratory.