Sustainability 2020

Green Mountain College
Objective:

Through innovative education and research, Green Mountain College|Vermont will achieve *authentic sustainability* by the end of this decade.
Bending the Curve Toward Authentic Sustainability

worldwide capital depletion—taking without giving back

GMC today

giving back more than we are taking

Social, Natural, Financial Capital
Put simply, we’re going to make things better in three ways:

Ecologically
Socially
Economically

Sustainability has been defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” To achieve authentic sustainability, we must go beyond “limited negative impacts” and begin to give more than we take—to restore our “account balance”—in three areas: Natural Capital, Social Capital and Financial Capital. Achieving authentic sustainability doesn’t require perfection; it does require creating a better world for future generations along all three dimensions of the “triple bottom line.”

Authentic sustainability requires us to see sustainability not as “sacrifice,” but as a way to improve our quality of life. We don’t just aim to survive in the coming decades; we aim to have a net positive impact—to thrive.
Initiative 1

Systematically build human and social capital of GMC and the region.
A: Initiate a cross-college emphasis on human health and quality of life that becomes a nationally recognized complement to our environmental emphasis.

Develop marketable undergraduate and graduate programs in this area and integrate the new emphasis into the general education curriculum.

Implement programs that improve human health and quality of life on campus and in nearby communities.

Strengthen the culture of inclusion and diversity in the curriculum and the College community.

B: Strengthen the quality and the practicality of Green Mountain’s liberal arts education.

Prepare students to effectively compete for awards, internships, employment and graduate school.

Integrate the acquisition of practical skills into all majors.

Ensure all students understand and engage in the global context in which we operate.

C: Deepen student and employee engagement in the College’s endeavors to promote innovation and retention.

Identify key measures of student and employee success and ensure that their successes are systematically supported and publically celebrated.

Invest in employee professional development.

Improve faculty and staff compensation.

D: Strengthen college/community partnerships to enhance the vibrancy of the local communities.

Establish an active presence in Poultney and southern Vermont.

Develop short courses in sustainability skills for non-matriculated students.

Increase project-based courses and service opportunities that enhance the social and economic sustainability of our region.
Initiative 2

Restore natural capital and develop students’ marketable sustainability skills and knowledge.
A: Further develop environmental programs with a national reputation for producing graduates for jobs in a sustainable economy.

Strengthen current programs and build distinctive new programs.

Expand the Green Jobs program on campus.

Increase the capacity to provide environmental expertise and research to surrounding communities.

B: Develop a series of innovative projects that enables Green Mountain College to have a net positive impact on the environment.

Reduce waste, pollution, toxics and other negative environmental impacts from the College’s operations.

Meet the College’s energy needs with 100% renewable energy.

Enhance natural capital in the region, e.g. through ecological restoration, community energy or waste diversion projects.
Initiative 3

Increase financial strength and cultivate entrepreneurial spirit across the community.
A: Increase residential enrollment to 1,000 students while increasing the selectivity of admissions.

Improve student success and retention/graduation rates by strengthening the first-year experience, differentiated instruction and the advising system.

Establish a highly mission-driven and systematically assessed admissions process.

Increase affordability in order to make the College more accessible to a greater population of prospective students.

Increase net revenue from undergraduate programs.

B: Create distinctive low-residency academic programs that efficiently adapt to change, build on the College’s strengths, increase net revenue and inspire entrepreneurial drive among faculty, staff and students.

Build low-residency graduate programs to 500 students.

Develop low-residency undergraduate degree completion programs.

Develop one or more centers that attract funding, conduct research, and generate revenue e.g. a center that provides support programs for budding sustainability entrepreneurs.

C: Develop a robust culture of philanthropy to fund investment in the College.

Build the giving capacity of the Board of Trustees.

Develop a corporate giving program supported by the Board of Trustees’ identification, cultivation and solicitation of major corporate gifts.

Grow annual giving among four bases of support—trustees, alumni, parents and faculty and staff.

Grow grant revenue to fund investments in major initiatives and to enhance academic program activities.

Conduct a $10 million capital campaign over seven years to fund three projects that fuel enrollment growth.

D: Fully optimize the campus and facilities year round.
Initiative 4

Create adaptive systems to increase productivity and support our work in all areas.
A: Renovate living, learning and work spaces to enhance comfort, aesthetic appeal, functionality and sustainability.

B: Construct new facilities or systems needed to support enrollment growth, academic programs and sustainability.

C: Develop an IT infrastructure that enables delivery of high quality educational offerings and supports efficient, flexible operations.

D: Strengthen organizational structures, decision-making, and incentive systems and align academic schedules to increase adaptability, foster innovation and reward results.

E: Develop clear measures for our social, environmental and financial impacts and a process for assessing our progress towards sustainability.
Initiative 5

Develop a clear and compelling story of the College that is consistently supported by all constituencies.
A: Establish a brand promise that recognizes the College’s excellence in preparing students for a rapidly changing world and that includes being recognized as a best value college.

B: Develop an active recruiting approach that selects students and employees with the passion and grit to enable the College to live its mission.

C: Communicate student, faculty, staff and college achievements to our community and the world in order to build brand strength.

D: Develop an international reputation as a leading innovator in the study and practice of sustainability in higher education.
Goal: Sustainability 2020

TELLING OUR STORY

SOCIAL CAPITAL
- Human health and quality of life
- Student and employee engagement and well-being
- Community partnerships

NATURAL CAPITAL
- Enhanced environmental programs
- Career prep: Green jobs
- Positive environmental impact

FINANCIAL CAPITAL
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Low-residency academic programs
- Robust culture of philanthropy

ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS
- Organization structure
- Facilities IT Infrastructure
- Clear measures of progress
In pursuing our mission and the Sustainability 2020 objective, our vision is to thrive in an ever-changing world through the knowledge, creativity, resourcefulness and goodwill of our extended Green Mountain College community.

In this new future:

Our students are engaged in a new kind of education where the boundaries between classroom learning and their lifework have dissolved; our students are initiating and leading much of our best work in sustainability; those nearing graduation have exciting career opportunities opening up before them; they begin their new lives free of the burden of debt, eager and poised to lead the world forward;

Academically we are defining a new agenda for sustainability-focused research and education; we are taking the abstract notion of sustainability and making it real and accessible through our practices and measures; we are helping our students put their liberal arts education to good use; as a center of excellence for research and education we are discovering new ways that humans can thrive in a modern but finite world;

As a college community, we are collectively healthier, happier and more prosperous than ever; our faculty and staff are excited about their work and proud of their achievements; we develop and support our people, enabling them to reach their full potential; faculty, staff and students all find creative ways to enrich both the quality of education and the quality of life here;
We have a national and international reputation for being the most innovative college in sustainability; we are distinguished for walking our talk; we are leading the world toward sustainability through our example, demonstrating each day how it is possible to make our world better socially, ecologically and economically; we have extended our impact well beyond our campus by educating others how to follow in our footsteps; visitors from around the world come to Poultney, Vermont to learn about what is so different at Green Mountain College;

Prospective students and faculty from around the world actively seek to become part of our community; influential partners (government, business, non-profit) find ways to help us succeed with our goals; our long-term financial position is more secure than ever; by growing our enrollment, diversifying our student population and developing a variety of new revenue sources, we are now positioned to sustain our progress through continuing investments in our people, our facilities and our innovative programs and initiatives;

We have demonstrated that we can leave our planet better than we found it, and also be happy, healthy and prosperous; and thus we have a powerful story to tell about our journey, of our progress so far, of the challenges we have overcome and of those we still face; we are truthful to ourselves and this helps us learn from our experiences; our progress propels us to reach even higher; and across our community we share a vision for the future and a commitment to work even more closely together to achieve it.

We hold ourselves accountable to our greatest ambitions.
In the spring of 2012, the Green Mountain College Board of Trustees, the Faculty Council, the Student Senate and the Staff Assembly approved the Sustainability 2020 eight-year strategic plan. In 2010–’11, a committee of trustees and staff developed a long-range vision for the College. The following year, a fifteen member strategic plan working group and six sub-committees transformed the vision into a detailed plan. A variety of participatory processes engaged stakeholders in discussing the College’s opportunities, challenges and refining drafts of the plan. An implementation timeline and an eight-year financial model established the feasibility of achieving a bold vision.

Thank you for helping to move Green Mountain College forward.

This piece was printed on paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC®). It was manufactured using biogas energy and contains 50% post-consumer waste.