

Antioch University New England: A Path to a Greener Existence



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Above: President David Caruso, left, and Abigail Abrash Walton, assistant to the president for sustainability and social justice.

Antioch University New England not only trains students to help companies and communities create a greener tomorrow, it leads by example. The Keene-based graduate school has given itself until 2020—a mere decade—to attain carbon neutrality. It's a challenging goal, but one Antioch gets closer to each day, from reductions in electricity usage and solid waste disposal to a campus-wide effort to reduce car trips.

Antioch has a relatively small physical footprint compared to other institutions its size, with one 85,000-square-foot building serving 1,000 commuter students seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. And it's doing its best to keep its carbon footprint as low as possible. Between fiscal years 2007 and 2009, the college reduced its electricity usage 19 percent, saving \$19,995 in electricity bills. It did so through such measures as pay-to-print cards that cut down printing by 81 percent and using light sensors in bathrooms to prevent wasted energy.

It also employs a work-study student who offers energy audits to employees. The student comes armed with power strips to reduce electricity use and replaces outdated light bulbs with more efficient ones. "The green guru is like a combination of an Avon sales lady

and a mechanic doing your car inspection," says Abigail Abrash Walton, assistant to the president for sustainability and social justice. "She brings free gifts and works from a checklist."

President David Caruso says the university has made a number of decisions that demonstrate its dedication to the environment, including investing \$8,000 in recycling stations (complete with compost bins.) "We see sustainability and social justice inextricably interwoven," Caruso says of the school's environmental decisions, which includes a purchasing policy requiring products that are both environmentally sensitive and produced under fair-trade conditions.

The campus is a daily demonstration of environmental responsibility. Through the Green Bikes program, students, faculty and staff can borrow free bikes to run local errands. Composting bins have increased solid waste composting by 500 percent a month and



biodegradable or reusable food-service items are used for all events. Outside, the landscaping consists of edible plants such as blueberry bushes that require no watering.

Even the building itself is a demonstration in sustainability. Antioch bought the abandoned furniture factory, a brownfields site, in 1993 and outfitted it with skylights, non-VOC carpets and salvaged hardwood floors. ■



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