

## Mueller Policy Paper #5: Highlight Penn State's Environmental Stewardship Record on the Web

*In an age when many students spend more time socializing on the net through email and instant messaging than engaging in face-to-face dialogue, it is surprising that typing "recycling" into the Penn State Search Engine provides a list of hits but none that take you to the information on how or what is recycled at University Park.*

Among the nation's universities, Penn State has established itself as a leader in applying environmental stewardship. Our list of significant environmentally beneficial actions is long and impressive:

- The Faculty Senate and President Spanier unanimously passed our Ecological Mission.
- We agreed to purchase 5% of University Park's electrical needs from wind energy over the next 5 years. This makes PSU the 2<sup>nd</sup> second-largest user of retail wind energy in the U.S.
- We became an Energy Star partner and committed 24-million square feet of building space to energy efficiency upgrades.
- Our Department of Environmental Health and Safety has been recognized by Gov. Schweiker for outstanding commitment to pollution prevention and environmental protection.
- The School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture Building will be the first new Penn State building designed to meet the national criteria for certification as environmentally-friendly "sustainable architecture."
- And the list goes on to include state-of-the-art environmental centered research and technical training.

However, most Penn State faculty, staff, students, and alumni are unaware of the University's environmental commitments and accomplishments; and only a tiny number of Penn Staters actively identify with the institution's Ecological Mission. This is evidenced in the gap between "best practices" as outlined in Penn State's Mueller Report and the ecological indifference evidenced in the behavior of many faculty, staff and students.

Consider recycling as an example. Thousands of tons of potentially recyclable items continue to be thrown away at University Park each year, thereby ending up in landfills. Moreover, Penn Staters continue to choose products with no recycled content over similar products with high recycled content, even when there is no significant price differential. In general, it seems that many Penn Staters are oblivious to the many benefits of recycling (e.g. saving Penn State money on tipping fees). This situation could be remedied, in part, by

creating space on PSU's web site to stress Penn State's myriad environmental initiatives.

Penn State's many environmental initiatives have increased to the point where they need to be centralized so that both those within and outside the University community can explore and appreciate the breadth of the University's environmental efforts and the opportunities the efforts afford:

As the American public's interest and concern over environmental issues increases, an enhanced Penn State web presence in this area will benefit recruiting new students, acquiring environmentally related grant monies, and overall public relations. In addition, it will assist Penn State alumni in extending the University's Ecological Mission to the Commonwealth and beyond.

### Policy Suggestion:

It is time to emphasize Penn State's "greening" efforts on PSU'S home page specifically. We recommend that Penn State dedicate a space on its home page for environmental stewardship accomplishments and opportunities. This location should provide links to all of the environmental stewardship initiatives underway at Penn State (e.g. at [www.psu.edu/green/](http://www.psu.edu/green/) or [www.green.psu.edu/](http://www.green.psu.edu/).)

In sum, Penn State prides itself on the 19 ways it is making life better in State College, Pennsylvania and beyond<sup>1</sup>. It is time to add #20 to this list: "Penn State: Promoting Environmental Stewardship" . . . here and everywhere.

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This policy paper is the 5<sup>th</sup> in a series of PSU Green Destiny Council suggestions stemming from the Mueller Report. This study shows it is possible to reduce our ecological impact and save money by increasing efficiency, using technology intelligently, and increasing environmental awareness. The full text of the Mueller Report, the Indicators Reports, and past Mueller Policy Papers are available free of charge at: [www.bio.psu.edu/greendestiny/](http://www.bio.psu.edu/greendestiny/)

<sup>1</sup><http://www.psu.edu/ur/about/nineteen/19ways19.html>

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