

# THE PLAN FOR A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS

Sustainability & Resiliency Action Plan 2025-2030





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# Message from the Sustainability Working Group Co-Chairs



Dear Knox Community,

Knox has long held sustainability as a core institutional value, and it is a dynamic force on campus. Since the creation of the Office of Sustainability in 2012, Knox has built two LEED-certified buildings, established a vibrant and robust Knox Farm that annually produces thousands of pounds of produce for the Knox community, and has two solar arrays, including a new one installed at Green Oaks in 2025. We prioritize working with waste as a resource by diverting materials from the landfill and repurposing them through our Share economy, and recycling and compost systems. For its efforts, Knox has received a Silver rating from AASHE's Sustainability Tracking and Assessment Rating System (STARS) program every year since 2015 and continues to be recognized in The Princeton Review's Guide to Green Colleges.



As the Office of Sustainability looks to its future, we are pleased to share with you Knox College's Sustainability and Resiliency Action Plan 2025-2030, that reflects an ongoing commitment to this meaningful work. This plan was developed by the Knox College Sustainability Working Group, which included faculty, staff, and students, and reflects what the Knox community identifies as key areas where the College can make the biggest sustainability impact.

The Sustainability and Resiliency Action Plan takes a comprehensive and holistic approach to integrating sustainability into College academics, operations, and community engagement. The Action Plan identifies ten key themes, including goals and strategic actions, that will guide the College over the next three to five years in our efforts to work together to address the complex challenges in sustainability and higher education.

The Sustainability Working Group will continue to coordinate efforts and innovative ideas to implement this plan, to track and monitor our progress, and to work together as a community to become a more sustainable, resilient, and thriving campus.

Sincerely,

Bradley Nolden, General Counsel and  
Vice President of Administration (co-chair)

Kristina Hope, Director of Sustainability and  
Resiliency Initiatives (co-chair)



# Mission and Values

At Knox College, we're committed to nurturing a culture of social, economic, and environmental responsibility that inspires greater resilience on our campus, in our community, and in the world. We seek to model effective leadership as a regional and national role model providing a clear vision of direction, alignment, and commitment to sustainable values and best practices.

In May of 2014, after a campus-wide survey aimed at understanding the priorities of students, staff, and faculty with regard to sustainability issues, the following values were created by the President's Sustainability Task Force:

## **We believe a culture of sustainability includes:**

- Recognition that humans are part of nature and need to live in balance with Earth's ecosystems.
- Reduced consumption of natural resources to a replenishable rate.
- Reduced generation of waste to a rate at which the environment can assimilate it.
- Decision-making that gives equal weight to natural, social, and economic systems.
- Commitment to place, including conservation and equity in distribution of local resources.

## **Like this definition, sustainability initiatives at Knox are creative, collaborative, and conscientious.**

Since that definition was created, Knox College has received a Silver Stars rating from AASHE for our sustainability initiatives on campus. We have had record numbers of volunteer participation at the Knox Farm, expanded our Community Composting Program, launched an ambitious educational campaign on waste diversion focusing on reducing contamination with our new 3-way waste systems, and hosted many exciting events!

In 2025, the newly formed Sustainability and Resilience Working Group began collaborating on this Sustainability and Resilience Action Plan to provide vision and support to ongoing sustainability efforts and to promote innovations as we move forward. This updated Sustainability and Resilience Action Plan has been developed with involvement from the campus community, faculty, staff, and students.

Working toward our strategic initiative of developing a vibrant and sustainable campus, this Action Plan presents a renewed commitment to:

- building individual, community, and operational resilience and wellbeing in the face of turbulent changes.
- reducing our collective adverse impacts on the environment.
- utilizing the campus as a living lab to put into practice the College's mission and values.

# The Plan at a Glance for a Vibrant and Sustainable Campus



## LEADERSHIP

- Serve as a regional and national role model providing a clear vision of direction, alignment, and commitment to sustainable values and best practices.
- Report annually and publicly on the College's sustainability impacts and progress.
- Institutionalize sustainability on campus and in our community.



## LEARNING AND TEACHING

- Encourage and support development of appropriate curriculum and expand Immersive Learning experiences that pertain to sustainability, resilience, accessibility, and social ecological justice.
- All students graduating from Knox will have exposure to sustainability and resilience principles through their degree program or wider initiatives.



## RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORK

- Encourage and support excellence in sustainability and resilience-related research and creative work.
- Increase opportunities and support for presentations and publications by faculty, students, staff, and community members on sustainability and resilience-related topics.
- Report annually and publicly on research and community engagement.



## ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION

- Increase participation in renewable energy projects coupled with annual reductions in energy consumption and emissions for the campus.
- Develop a Sustainable Transportation Strategy for the campus.



## WATER

- Achieve annual water consumption reduction.
- Increase utilization of green infrastructure.
- Ensure water quality on campus.



## FOOD SYSTEMS

- Increase availability of sustainable and locally produced foods.
- Continue to support a campus-wide food accessibility, recovery, and diversion program.



## LAND MANAGEMENT AND BIODIVERSITY

- Complete a Landscape Management Plan by 2028.
- Maximize the use of green space on campus and maintain college grounds in ways that promote environmental responsibility.



## MATERIALS AND BUILDINGS

- Develop, renovate, and maintain buildings in ways that achieve best practice, innovation, and cost-effective environmentally sustainable design.
- Increase sustainable procurement policies.



## WASTE AND RECYCLING

- Achieve Minimal Waste Campus of 75% diversion by 2030.
- Continue campus coordination to reduce contamination in organic and traditional recycling and increase the repurposing of materials.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING

- Promote a community-centered culture that prioritizes individual and collective wellness, supports retention, and contributes to a shared sense of belonging.
- Increase collaboration on sustainability and resilience themed events on campus and in the broader community that promote greater participation and awareness.



# Leadership

At Knox College, we understand that leadership requires inspiration that manifests itself in transformative action in the world. Central to our Mission is inspiring others to envision and work towards a world that is more just, more responsible, and that values the wellbeing of others (both human and non-human alike).

Knox College embodies such leadership by integrating sustainability and resilience principles into decision-making and programming. Notable examples of successful action we have already achieved include:

- 1) The Office of the President eliminating all single use plastics at Convocation, Commencement, and Community Meals.
- 2) Dining Services' commitment to use of BPI certified compostable materials to replace disposables.
- 3) The installation of a solar array on the new Knight Living and Learning Center at Green Oaks.
- 4) The annual collaboration with Campus Life, Facilities, and the Office of Sustainability to recover over 10,000 lbs of material during the spring student Move Out and its free redistribution in the Campus Share Shop.
- 5) The participation of 20% of our student body at the Knox farm and the annual production of over 2000 lbs of food shared with our campus community.

Most importantly, Knox College remains steadfast in its commitment to help shape the education of the next generation of transformative leaders.

**Goal 1.1: Serve as a regional and national role model providing a clear vision of direction, alignment, and commitment to sustainable values and best practices.**

**STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Coordinate with senior administration to adopt portions of this plan in the next Strategic Planning Framework.
- b. Work with the Board of Trustees, Office of the President, and the Senior administration to support sustainability and resiliency initiatives with organizational and financial resources.
- c. Coordinate with local partners, such as the City of Galesburg and Carl Sandburg, on sustainability and community resilience initiatives impacting the Galesburg community.

**Goal 1.2: Report annually and publicly on the college's sustainability impacts and progress.**

**STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Publish a Sustainability and Resiliency End of the Year Report, accessible on the Knox Sustainability website.
- b. Expand visibility of Sustainability and Resiliency initiatives on the Knox website, social media, and marketing.
- c. Create centralized data sets and an assessment template for campus partners to share reporting and assessments.
- d. Create a standardized protocol for tracking faculty and student sustainability and resilience-related research.

### Goal 1.3: Institutionalize sustainability on campus and in our community.

#### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- a. Increase communication and coordinations across campus departments.
- b. Increase training for faculty, staff, and students.
- c. Expand Student Leadership opportunities.
- d. Collaborate with Human Resources and New Student Orientation to ensure that all new students, faculty, and staff are introduced to sustainability resources as part of the onboarding and orientation process.
- e. Secure dedicated funding for faculty and staff professional development and training related to sustainability.
- f. Partner with the Bastian Family Center for Career Success to identify, explore, and build competitive employment opportunities, core competencies, and connection with Knox alumni working in related fields.



### SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS RECOGNIZED INTERNATIONALLY

At Knox, we're committed to nurturing a culture of social and environmental responsibility that inspires a commitment to greater resilience on our campus, in our community, and in the world. Our sustainability efforts at Knox have received a Silver Stars rating from AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) for the past 10 years.



# Learning and Teaching

Knox College is a community of individuals from diverse backgrounds challenging each other to explore, understand, and improve ourselves, our society, and our world. We understand that learning is a lifelong process, one that can be proactively and creatively shaped. Our mission is to facilitate the co-construction of knowledge and skills of our students, staff, faculty, and Galesburg community members in order to expand the capacity to learn and adapt to dynamic and increasingly turbulent social, ecological, and climatic environments. This adaptive capacity, coupled with the foresight to anticipate and mitigate systemic disruptions, is fundamental to individual, community, and institutional resilience and long-term sustainability efforts.

From its founding in 1837 to this current moment, Knox College has been committed to promoting greater participation and accessibility to the tools and skills of knowledge production. We provide an environment where students and faculty work together closely and where teaching is characterized by inviting and expecting students to reach their own reflective but independent judgments. Our aims throughout are to foster a lifelong love of learning and a sense of competence, confidence, and proportion that will enable us to live with purpose and to contribute to the well-being of others.

**Goal 2.1: Encourage and support development of appropriate curriculum and expand Immersive Learning experiences that pertain to sustainability, resilience, accessibility, and social ecological justice.**

**STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Reach target of 25% of curriculum with sustainability and resilience relevant content.
- b. Coordinate with The Office of Faculty Affairs on Faculty Development Workshops to bring sustainability and resilience into the curriculum.
- c. Host an ongoing sustainability and resilience lecture series and keynote speaker events.
- d. Expand immersive learning opportunities on campus as a living lab, at Green Oaks, and in the community.
- e. Increase sustainability focused internships and independent study opportunities.
- f. Coordinate with Seymour Library to support these goals.

**Goal 2.2: All students graduating from Knox will have exposure to sustainability and resilience principles through their degree program or wider initiatives.**

**STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Increase participation in bi-annual sustainability literacy assessments to include a minimum of 20% of the campus community.
- b. Organize an ongoing series of invited speakers, trainings, and workshops.
- c. Expand sustainability-focused educational programming during New Student Orientation.
- d. Increase collaboration across campus on educational campaigns, such as three-way waste at events, Campus Race to Zero Waste, and Earth Month activities.
- e. Expand the Sustainability and Resiliency student leadership peer educator program.



# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action



From Fall 2021-Fall 2023, Knox offered over 50 classes that focused on or included sustainability in the course syllabus. Some classes that regularly engage the campus as a living laboratory and the Knox farm in ways that foreground social and environmental responsibility provide new skill sets, and steward the space include Urban Agriculture, Food systems, Soil Science, Environmental Science, Examining the Anthropocene, Field Botany, Landscape Painting, and Ornithology.

Associate Professor Andrea Ferringio's spring Landscape Painting class draws inspiration from the edible forest garden at the Knox Farm.



Professor Peter Schwartzman's Environmental Studies students tour the Knox Farm.

# Research and Creative Work

At Knox College, we are committed to working to understand and respond to complex “wicked” problems of the 21st century. These challenges require multifaceted and increasingly collaborative approaches that bring together a synthesis of analytics, interpretation, and creativity. This is the hallmark of a liberal arts education at Knox College. Research and Creative Work at Knox College emphasizes direct, experiential engagements with diverse yet interrelated topics that provide a meaningful sense of purpose, relationship, and responsibility for our individual and collective actions.

Knox College nurtures a robust culture of research and creative work, which include many opportunities for students interested in conducting research or doing creative projects focused on sustainability and resiliency. We celebrate the already extensive opportunities for student and faculty research and creative work across campus, and we envision innovative ways to further support these efforts, especially as they align with the Knox College mission and our values of nurturing a culture of sustainability and of building individual, community, and institutional capacity to adapt to accelerating rates of often turbulent change.

## **Goal 3.1: Encourage and support excellence in sustainability and resilience-related research and creative work.**

### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Partner with the Office of Advancement to secure external funding and/or grants for sustainability and resilience-related research.
- b. Increase support for sustainability and resilience research across the disciplines.
- c. Expand and promote sustainability and resilience research projects within the Knox Summer Scholars Program, summer collaborative research projects, and senior research/capstone projects with the Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study.

## **Goal 3.2: Report annually and publicly on research and community engagement.**

### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Coordinate with the Office of Communications to highlight noteworthy research projects.
- b. Develop institutional channels of communication to facilitate the sharing of information on research and community engagement.

## **Goal 3.3: Increase opportunities and support for presentations and publications by faculty, students, staff, and community members on sustainability and resilience-related topics.**

### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Increase support of students presenting at the Vovis Center’s Horizons Conference on campus, at regional conferences, and national conferences
- b. Expand the collaborations on campus for community workshops, presentations, and mini conferences
- c. Explore and implement collaborative Research Apprenticeships
- d. Coordinate with the Library to create an archive of past students’ sustainability and resilience research to inspire and allow for collaboration.



# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action

Outside of coursework, the Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study and the Bastian Center for Career Success partner with the Office of Sustainability to provide opportunities for students to explore sustainability and resiliency.

Each year, students design exciting independent projects focused on topics like improving on-campus composting systems, designing and planting rain gardens, or creating public art about sustainability.

Additionally, over the last five years, Knox faculty members have designed and implemented seven innovative collaborative research projects for 71 students, spanning topics from bioregional herbalism to community-scale compost to microplastics. These experiences, funded by the Vovis Center for Research and Advanced Study, aimed to encourage students inexperienced with research to engage with it in a supportive group setting.

These experiences, along with other faculty-led independent research projects throughout the year, have contributed to a significant increase in the visibility and vibrancy of sustainability-related research on campus.



Students in the Community Scale Compost collaborative research group, led by Professor William Hope, managed all food scraps on campus during the summer of 2022 and expanded community composting at the Knox Farm.



Students from the 2025 Biophilic and Resilient Design summer collaborative research group presented a rendering of a Knox Farm Learning Center that is inspired by Living Building Challenge and sustainable design principles to alum Celia '75 and Mark Godsil.



Student Teagan Springer '25 painted this mural on the tool shed at the Knox Farm as part of her ASSET summer research in 2023. The mural, which flows across all four walls of the shed, tells the story of planting, growth, harvest, and rest at the Knox Farm.



# Energy and Transportation

Knox is committed to exploring the procurement of renewable energy and examining the sources of this energy such as participating in community solar and production of energy through installation of solar arrays. We will also continue exploring and building creative solutions to reduce energy usage and reduce emissions in all areas, including transportation.

## Goal 4.1: Increase participation in renewable energy projects coupled with annual reductions in energy consumption and emissions for the campus.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Reach at least 75% clean and renewable energy purchase for the institution by 2030.
- Secure accurate data sets for electric usage.
- Complete a greenhouse gas emissions study by 2028 and pursue options for reduction.
- Explore options to reduce fossil fuel consumption.
- Evaluate the viability of participation in community solar projects.
- Evaluate the possibility of SMC roofs for deployment of solar as part of upcoming renovations.

## Goal 4.2: Develop a Sustainable Transportation Strategy for the campus.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Increase the number and efficiency of EV charging stations on campus.
- Evaluate transitioning to EV or hybrid college vehicles and fleet.
- Increase Active Transportation rates (Bike and Walk) amongst staff, faculty, and students, including Ride Share options for students travelling during breaks.
- Increase bike fleet to 75-100 bikes by 2030.
- Explore the construction of bike shelters to reduce bike theft and increase bike accessibility on campus.
- Increase collaboration with other departments on management of the Bike Shop and training of student mechanics; including financial support of bike mechanic interns.
- Coordinate with Student Development to implement a transportation option for students to access Green Oaks on a regular basis.



# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action



In 2025, the Office of Sustainability, MakerSpace, Physics Department, and Student Senate collaborated to install custom light shields (left) and replace all lightbulbs in Knox's globe-style outdoor lamp posts (right). These new lower temperature and selectable-lumen lightbulbs, combined with the light shields, are more efficient, reduce light pollution, and create a safer and more comfortable nighttime experience for people and wildlife.



At Knox's on-campus Bike Shop, trained student mechanics loan and repair bikes and locks to students for free. The Bike Shop is recognized by The League of American Bicyclists as a Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Business for 2024-2028, in recognition of our outstanding efforts to support and encourage bicycling!



# Water

Water is essential to the well-being of our entire ecosystem and all who inhabit it. In an effort to reduce water consumption, Knox is working to reduce water usage by replacing older water fixtures with high-efficiency fixtures and designing water-conserving upgrades to the heating plant. Additionally, by adopting efficient technologies, promoting sustainable behaviors, and integrating innovative solutions, Knox aims to conserve this precious resource, to protect water quality, and to promote the health of our community and our environment.

## Goal 5.1: Achieve annual water consumption reduction.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- a. Reduce water usage by 20% by 2030.
- b. Invest in more water-efficient fixtures and technologies.
- c. Partner with the City of Galesburg to better manage stormwater and protect watersheds.

## Goal 5.2: Increase utilization of green infrastructure.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- a. Expand use of bioswales and rain gardens on campus.
- b. Explore use of permeable hard surfaces.

## Goal 5.3: Ensure water quality on campus.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- a. Replace or transform all existing water fountains to include water bottle fillers with filters.
- b. Increase the number of water filling stations on campus.
- c. Investigate additional treatment and purification measures.





# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action

Rain gardens, also known as bioretention basins or bioswales, are shallow landscaped areas that capture rain water, preventing it from adding stress to the sewer system, while also slowing stormwater runoff thereby providing for greater infiltration of rainwater into the soil. Planted with wildflowers and other native vegetation, campus rain gardens provide an aesthetically pleasing, bio-diverse, and multi-functional component to the Knox College campus. Knox College has four rain gardens: at the Library (2016), WAC (2018), the Knox Farm (2024), and the Sustainability Cottage (2025), three of which were designed and constructed with Knox students.



# Food Systems

At Knox College, we recognize that sustainable food systems are vital to fostering a healthier campus and a more resilient future. We practice sustainability in our food systems by growing local food inspired by regenerative agriculture techniques at the Knox Farm and by featuring local and plant-forward food options in the cafeteria. We also share excess cafeteria food with community partners via Food Recovery Network and maintain community-scale and industrial compost systems that divert all food waste and organics from the landfill to create a nutrient rich resource.

## Goal 6.1: Increase availability of sustainable and locally produced foods.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Increase utilization of local food providers by Hard Knox Cafe to 25%.
- Increase production and distribution of food from the Knox Farm.

## Goal 6.2: Continue to support a campus-wide food accessibility, recovery, and diversion program.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Expand Food Recovery initiatives.
- Increase collaborations for managing our on-campus food share pantry to ensure food accessibility.
- Expand community and institutional scaled Composting Programs on campus and education to decrease contamination.
- Explore reducing food waste at events with a real-time notification Free Food app available to students on campus.
- Explore food recovery and composting with local businesses and Riverbend Food Pantry.

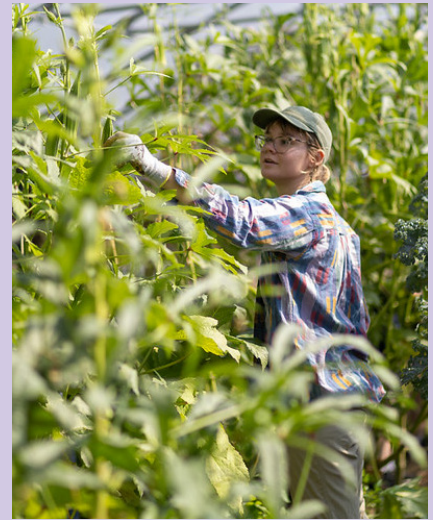




# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action

The Knox Farm is an on-campus urban farm managed by the Office of Sustainability, with support from a student farm crew, Grounds, Facilities, community members, and many dedicated volunteers.

The Knox Farm provides opportunities to engage local food systems in a way that strengthens community connections, teaches practical skills, and provides quality, fresh produce that's grown with regenerative agricultural methods that nurture the soil food web, biodiversity, and our community. All of this work contributes to greater resilience for our students and campus community.





# Land Management and Biodiversity

We recognize that our built environments always tell a story of who we are and what we value. We envision collaborative approaches that coordinate our land management operations with our educational mission and our ecological imperative of promoting ever greater biodiversity. We recognize the importance of approaching our design of the built environment in ways that: 1) make sense in relation to our Midwest geography, with its historic prairie and oak savannah ecologies, while also incorporating components that represent our global relationships, 2) are efficient and manageable in the distribution of labor and resources, and 3) that are meaningful and consequential to members of the Knox College community and beyond.

## Goal 7.1: Complete a Landscape Management Plan by 2028.

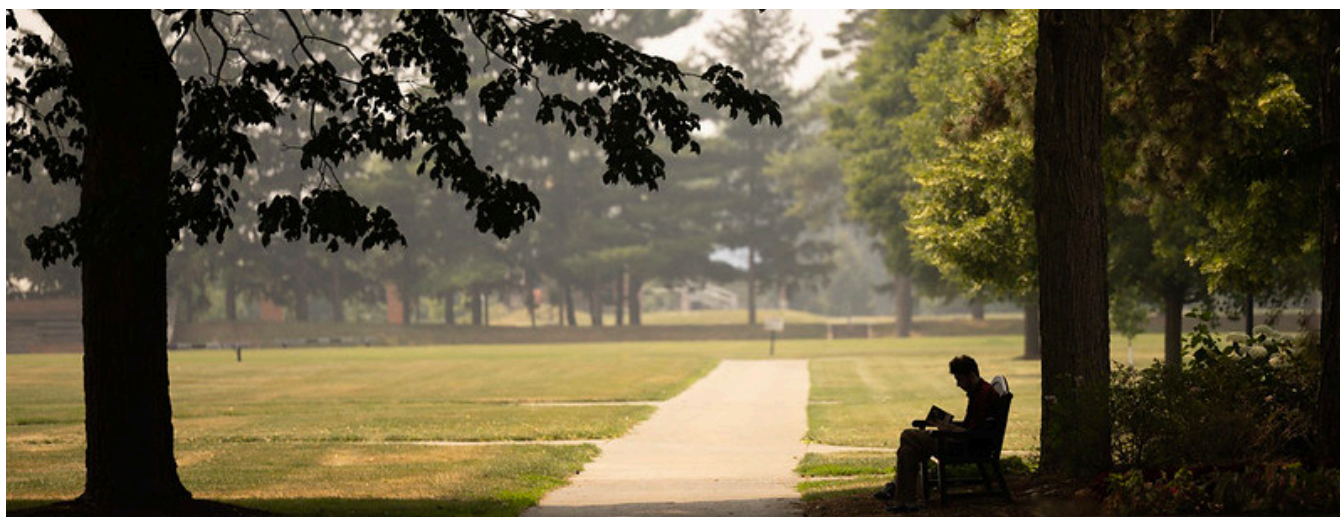
### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- a. Increase biodiversity throughout the Campus, Knox Farm, and Green Oaks.
- b. Convene a group to investigate options to reduce frequency and/ or the area that requires mowing on campus.
- c. Decrease pesticides, herbicides, fertilizer usage (from the Red List).
- d. Invest in drought-resistant landscaping and Green Infrastructure.

## Goal 7.2: Maximize the use of green space on campus and maintain college grounds in ways that promote environmental responsibility.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- a. Create more perennial pollinator plots.
- b. Ensure management plan for continued Prairie burns at Green Oaks and prairie plots on the Knox campus.
- c. Pursue projects that utilize and beautify campus green space with outdoor study areas, covered solar-charging stations, and public art.





# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action



Each spring, Professor Stuart Alison and a team of students and community volunteers gather to burn the prairie at Green Oaks. Controlled burns, originally used by the Indigenous Peoples who stewarded the land before Knox, help regenerate this threatened habitat. Knox has been working to restore and care for the Green Oaks prairie since the 1950s, making Green Oaks the second-oldest tallgrass prairie restoration site in the country.

Each year, the Knox Farm hosts an Arbor Day event, where the Knox community comes together to plant trees, shrubs, and medicinal plants in the farm's edible forest garden. These planting sites help increase biodiversity and soil health on campus, while creating opportunities to teach our community about the importance of regenerative landscaping.





# Materials and Buildings

At Knox College, we are committed to integrating sustainable building practices and mindful material use into the design, construction, and maintenance of our campus facilities. By adopting environmentally responsible methods, we aim to reduce our carbon footprint, enhance resource efficiency, and create healthy, durable spaces that will serve our community for generations to come.

## Goal 8.1: Develop, renovate, and maintain buildings in ways that achieve best practice, innovation, and cost-effective environmentally sustainable design.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Incorporate sustainability design into future building projects, including the Umbeck Science-Mathematics Center (SMC) renovation
- Create minimum design standards for new construction/significant rehabilitation focused on sustainability & resiliency
- Dedicate a percentage of annual capital costs to projects which have a sustainability component
- Improve processes and procedures for chemical disposal

## Goal 8.2: Increase sustainable procurement policies.

### STRATEGIC ACTIONS:

- Reduce or eliminate toxic cleaning chemicals (from the Red List) and implement a Sustainable Cleaning standard
- Replace all disposables used in Dining with BPI certified compostables
- Reduce disposable packaging and replace with reusable options
- Publish a Sustainable Events Guide for the Knox College campus
- Seek to incorporate local and recovered materials in new construction and renovation projects.



Students learn about sustainable timber and renewable building materials at Trillium Dell in Knoxville, Illinois, as part of the Biophilic Design collaborative research project in summer 2025.



# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action



## Alumni Hall Renovation (2016): LEED Gold certification

Compared with minimum code requirements, Alumni Hall's LED lighting and other energy-efficient systems reduce energy use by 47%, water control systems reduce waste by 37%, and the ventilation system provides 30% more fresh air. Additionally, occupancy sensors reduce lighting and ventilation when areas are not in active use.

## Whitcomb Art Center (2018): LEED Gold certification

Whitcomb Art Center is notable for its energy efficiency, reduction and recycling of construction waste, reuse of historic building materials, and the high quality of the indoor spaces for teaching and advanced work in the visual arts and art history.



## 2025 Knight Living & Learning Center at Green Oaks

In 2025, Knox College built the new Knight Living & Learning Center at Green Oaks, which features a 77kWDC solar array with 140 panels, which is expected to generate 103% of energy needed for the building. This building offers space for students and our community to connect with and study the environment as they participate in Green Oaks Term and other programs.

# Waste and Recycling

At Knox College, we work from a waste-to-resource paradigm. We divert tens of thousands of pounds of materials from the landfill each year through our composting and recycling programs, food recovery initiatives, and through our collection and redistribution of gently-used items via the Share Shop, warehouse, and other locations.

Knox manages organic material through two kinds of composting systems. We work with Better Earth Logistics and Dining Services to industrially compost our food scraps and BPI compostables. And, we manage food scraps from participants at our on-site community-scale composting system, which generates nutrient-rich compost that supports our local food production at the Knox Farm. This initiative provides opportunities for research, hands-on learning, and special events.

We also work to reduce waste by sharing resources, including lending free bikes through the Bike Shop, distributing reusable dishes for take-out food and Zero Waste Events, and maintaining a Share Shop and Office Supply Share. Additionally, in 2024, the Office of the President eliminated plastic water bottles and disposable dishware at Commencement, Convocation, and Community meals.

## **Goal 9.1: Achieve Minimal Waste Campus of 75% diversion by 2030.**

### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Eliminate the usage of single-use plastic bottles at all official Knox sponsored campus events organized by Office of the President and other departments by 2028.
- b. Achieve zero waste success rates of 60% by 2028 and 75% by 2030.
- c. Establish stronger processes and procedures to manage and document the recycling of electronics waste and non-traditional recycling.
- d. Eliminate single-use plastic bag usage across campus by 2030.

## **Goal 9.2: Continue campus coordination to reduce contamination in organic and traditional recycling and increase the repurposing of materials.**

### **STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Demonstrate efficiency and compliance of standards across campus with current operations of three-way waste stream.
- b. Increase three-way waste systems on campus at strategic places.
- c. Expand educational campaigns to reduce contamination in all waste streams.
- d. Distribute eco-friendly reusable take-out containers to all first years at NSO.
- e. Expand the Re-Use kit program to provide reusable dishes and silverware for small to medium events.
- f. Collaborate with Dining to collect data on usage of eco-friendly reusable take-out containers.



# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action



## New 3-way Waste Systems

In addition to our collection bins for compostables in Dining and the Gizmo, the Office of Sustainability partnered with Facilities in the Fall of 2024, to implement three new 3-way waste collection systems (compost, landfill, and recycling) in select locations on campus, with an ambitious educational campaign about diverting material from the landfill and reducing contamination in the waste stream.

## Share Shop

The Share Shop at Knox College serves as a dynamic hub for promoting sustainability through the donation, reuse, and repurposing of items within our campus community. As part of our broader waste reduction strategy, the Share Shop provides students, faculty, and staff with a space to donate gently used items—such as clothing, books, and home goods—and give them a second life for free. By facilitating the exchange of these items, we encourage a culture of sharing and circularity, helping to reduce waste and minimize the demand for new products, while supporting those seeking affordable or essential items.



Students perform waste audits several times a year to gather data about how accurately the Knox community sorts their compostables, recyclables, and landfill items. From this data, the Office of Sustainability and student leaders develop strategies to reduce contamination and increase diversion.



# Community Engagement and Wellbeing

At Knox College, we value the importance of community engagement that supports meaningful action toward a collective sustainable future. Through collaborative projects, educational programs, and wellness-focused activities, we aim to cultivate a thriving and engaged community where environmental sustainability and wellness is woven into the fabric of daily life in a shared community of practice with students, faculty, staff, and local partners.

**Goal 10.1: Promote a community-centered culture that prioritizes individual and collective wellness, supports retention, and contributes to a shared sense of belonging.**

**STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Coordinate with Campus Life in Student Development on the new student engagement platform Campus Groups to include sustainability and wellness opportunities as part of the choices and to track student involvement.
- b. Support the Knox Health and Wellness Center in the implementation of the KnoxWell Program, a campus wide initiative dedicated to helping students thrive in all dimensions of life.
- c. Design and offer annual resilience retreats for students, staff, and faculty.
- d. Increase programming at Green Oaks to include more opportunities for students, staff, alumni, and community members to engage the space through events, lectures, and creative projects.

**Goal 10.2: Increase collaboration on sustainability and resilience themed events on campus and in the broader community that promote greater participation and awareness.**

**STRATEGIC ACTIONS:**

- a. Partner with Kleine Center for Civic Engagement to increase volunteering opportunities and service projects.
- b. Host regional sustainability conferences and/or Resilience retreats at Green Oaks.
- c. Partner with community stakeholders and local businesses on programming and events at the College.

# Sustainability and Resiliency in Action



Students for Sustainability, Athletics, the Kleine Center, and the Galesburg Park district collaborated to host a community clean up event at the Knox Farm for Earth Month in April 2025.



Local community youth engage and explore the Knox farm and medicinal gardens during the College for Kids summer program.



Students gather to share dishes made with fresh produce they helped grow, harvest, and prepare for the Fall Farm to Fork Potluck at the Knox Farm.

# Acknowledgements

The Sustainability and Resiliency Action Plan was written by the Sustainability Working Group (SWG), which consists of a group of students, faculty, and staff with the goal of collaborating on campus sustainability and resilience efforts that align with the College's Mission and the College's Sustainability Values. The SWG also consulted students, faculty, and staff.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed ideas and feedback to the creation of this Action Plan. Throughout the winter and spring of 2025, small groups of students, staff, and faculty met and shared feedback on strategic actions and furthering our collective values, including Students for Sustainability, Student Senate, and representatives from offices and departments across campus.

## **Members of the Sustainability Working Group:**

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The Sustainability Working Group will continue collaborating across campus to implement strategic actions and design policies and protocols to help us reach our sustainability and resiliency goals. We will also track and report our progress to the Knox community to encourage accountability and celebrate what we achieve together. For this Action Plan to be meaningful and effective, we invite everyone in the Knox community to join us in renewing our commitment to this work individually and as a community. Together, we can create a more vibrant and sustainable campus.

## **Contact us:**

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