

VCC.ca



Environmental Sustainability Strategy

2014 – 2017

VANCOUVER
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE



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Message from the President's Office

The VCC community is committed to adopting environmentally sustainable practices into campus life and exploring new ways to apply these practices at the college.

We are aware of the issues facing our environment and understand that innovation and change is required in order to adjust our habits and make a difference to our environment.

As part of our 2011 – 2014 Strategic Plan we have committed to integrating sustainability principles into the thinking, actions and culture of VCC as we educate one another about environmental stewardship and seek to reduce our carbon footprint.

In the spring of 2013 we began the process of updating the existing Environmental Sustainability Plan. This collaborative process included significant research and review, and incorporated broad consultations with VCC students, faculty, and staff about what they are hoping VCC will achieve in this area. These steps resulted in the development of our second Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2014 – 2017.

VCC has shown leadership within the post-secondary sector in ensuring free access to water through the elimination of bottled water at the college. We have also made significant progress in waste management, energy reduction, and are working towards increasing the availability of local and organic food on campus.

We have the potential to become a transformational college, leading positive change and reducing environmental impact. This Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2014 – 2017 will guide our actions over the next three years furthering education and engagement about sustainability practices and environmental impact.

Doug Callbeck
VCC Interim President



Introduction

VCC believes that a healthy environment is essential for the health and well-being of present and future generations. We are concerned about the quality of the natural environment and building a sustainable society and want to do our part to make a difference.

We take our responsibility for ensuring our students are prepared to play their role in a sustainable future very seriously. Last year, more than 1,000 students graduated from our college and are living and working in the Lower Mainland. Over 10 years—the life of our long-term environmental vision—we will touch the lives of thousands of families and employees in the region and we hope to inspire them to contribute to sustainability in their homes, communities and workplaces.

We have been promoting responsible stewardship of the environment for decades and formalized our approach in our environmental policy, which we adopted in 1998. In 2011, we included environmental sustainability in VCC's 2011 – 2014 strategic plan by committing to build and implement a college-wide environmental sustainability plan with the following objectives:

- Bring sustainability principles into the thinking, actions, culture and everyday operations of VCC
- Demonstrate our respect for the environment as we educate students, staff and faculty about environmental stewardship
- Seek innovations and improved practices that reduce our carbon footprint

In addition, our 2011 – 2016 education plan includes a commitment to promote and model environmental sustainability practices in all areas of teaching and learning.

We have made considerable progress on these objectives over the past three years and have now renewed our environmental commitments in this 2014 – 2017 environmental sustainability strategy.



Energy Savings

To date equivalent to
101
households



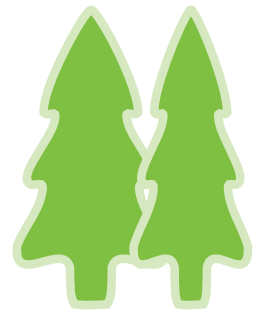
Water Savings

To date equivalent to
12,000
bathtubs



Waste Diverted

To date equivalent to
370
VW Beetles



Paper Savings

To date equivalent to
5,700
trees

Environmental Sustainability Snapshot

Our Progress

Over the past three years we have designated responsibility for implementing our environmental objectives to a director, hired a full-time manager of environmental sustainability, updated our environmental sustainability policy, conducted a review of opportunities to embed sustainability into campus governance and continued to engage a leadership team of staff, faculty and student representatives through our Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group to lead and champion our environmental efforts. Working together across the college, staff, faculty and students have achieved a number of milestones.

Energy

VCC set a goal to reduce its carbon footprint 10 per cent below 2010/11 levels by 2016. In order to meet this target, VCC has developed and implemented a strategic energy management plan (SEMP) in partnership with BC Hydro, which identifies opportunities to reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions and the associated costs. Since 2010, VCC has been purchasing carbon offsets to mitigate its greenhouse gas emissions and achieve carbon neutrality.

Success Indicator: As of December 2013, VCC has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions from energy use (weather adjusted) by 12% below 2010/11 levels, meeting our target ahead of schedule and achieving savings of \$79,000.

Waste

VCC's goal is to minimize its production of waste and maximize landfill diversion. In order to meet this goal, VCC completed its first waste management plan (WMP), which included conducting a waste assessment and audit, expanding recycling systems, establishing organics recycling (composting), and developing a green procurement policy to minimize waste and reduce packaging. A second WMP has launched with a goal to increase landfill diversion from the 11 per cent baseline to 90 per cent.

Success Indicator: In the first nine months of the new WMP, VCC's waste-diversion rate has jumped from 11 per cent to 73 per cent.

Water

VCC's goal is to practise water conservation and ensure free access to potable water on campus. In order to meet this goal, VCC has eliminated the sale of bottled water on both campuses, conducted a water audit to identify opportunities to use water more efficiently and committed to reduction projects where economically feasible.

Success Indicator: VCC eliminated the sale of bottled water, renovated 25 existing water fountains and added nine new fountains with automatic bottle fillers. As of March 31, 2014, the automatic bottle fillers have been used to fill more than 245,000 reusable water bottles.



Food Systems

VCC's goal is to increase availability of local and organic food on campus. In order to meet this goal, VCC is working toward establishing a garden on campus where organic produce grown can be offered in our cafeteria and food kiosks, and students and staff can grow their own produce.

Success Indicator: Feasibility studies were completed on two options to grow food on campus (one at the Downtown campus and one at the Broadway campus), and VCC is exploring community partnerships to enable a garden to be available to students.

Education and Engagement

VCC's goal is to engage and educate the VCC family and local community to help realize a sustainable future. In order to identify initiatives to meet this goal, an institutional sustainability review was conducted to assess current strengths in environmental sustainability in VCC programs and to determine how to strengthen curriculum in this area. VCC is implementing initiatives that raise awareness and reduce environmental impact supported by the cross-campus Environment and Sustainability Advisory Group, the VCC Green Team and the Student Union.

Success Indicator: VCC's new 2011 – 2016 year education plan includes a commitment to ensure that students graduate with a competency in sustainability. VCC holds many successful events to engage students, staff, faculty and the community including Green Living Fairs, Bike to Work Week, Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup and a Lights Out campaign.



“I just turn ‘em off.

How hard can it be? These baby steps move us towards bigger and better ways to save energy. Turning off the lights, when you don't need them, it's all part of growing up. ”

– Daniel Rohloff (with Elliott)
Graphic Designer, VCC's Marketing Department



Lights Out October

Planning Process

In the spring of 2013 we began the process to update our 2011 – 2013 Environmental Sustainability Plan. We turned to the College’s vision and values for guidance.

VCC Vision and Values

Vancouver Community College is an accessible urban college that engages with the many diverse communities within the Vancouver area to provide learning opportunities that change lives.

VCC is a college with a heart, where instructors demonstrate their enthusiasm for teaching and where students are treated with respect. VCC respects the environment and seeks to reduce its environmental impact. VCC actively supports downtown, East Vancouver and Metro Vancouver communities through a variety of programs and events.

Peer and sector review

We studied the approaches of peer institutions in B.C. and beyond. We found that, like us, most post-secondary institutions have made considerable progress reducing the direct environmental impacts of campus and facility operations, including energy and renewable energy use, waste and water management, planning and development, procurement, buildings and renovations, transportation, food and urban agriculture, and landscaping. Most are committing to embed sustainability into teaching and learning, and there are early steps in this direction. Many are also committed to engaging communities in environmental sustainability, although there is less reported progress here than in environmental footprint reduction. We reviewed the North American sustainability benchmark tool for colleges and universities to gauge sustainability progress (AASHE STARS) and found similar approaches.

Alignment with our other plans

To ensure alignment with our other College plans, we looked for opportunities to integrate our sustainability ethic into our business and education plans. Notably, our business plan commits us to bring sustainability principles into day-to-day operations. Our business plan includes intentions to strengthen our connections with industry and the community to ensure our education is relevant for today’s and tomorrow’s needs—we believe sustainability will play a bigger role in education in the future. The business plan also recognizes that there are opportunities to train our students while also making a positive difference in the community in which we operate, and includes plans to have strategic partnerships and collaborations for innovation and growth. Our new environmental sustainability strategy builds on all these ideas.

The education plan commits us to promote and model environmental sustainability practices. We plan to adopt sustainability practices in all areas of teaching and learning and embed sustainability units and green economy principles within selected courses and programs.

“We leave VCC well-equipped with new knowledge, new strength, new skills and new hope for the future.” —VCC Student, Education plan

Current state assessment

We assessed our progress on our first environmental sustainability plan. Our review revealed we have made great progress reducing our direct environmental footprint—our building energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, water use and waste—but have further to go to embed sustainability into more of our educational programs. We realize we lacked a clear direction on engaging with our students and communities in environmental stewardship efforts. While we have a strong baseline and foundation, we need to stretch ourselves further to play a meaningful role in transitioning the region and ourselves to sustainability. We also recognize we can improve communication of our environmental efforts to our stakeholders.

Our government partners

To inform our environmental priorities, we will pursue initiatives that align with our government partners—the City of Vancouver and the Province of B.C. The City is implementing its Greenest City 2020 Action Plan and the Province of B.C. has mandated that the public sector—including colleges and universities—will maintain carbon-neutral operations. Many of our strategy's measures build on our government partner priorities.

Consultations

From the spring to fall 2013, we consulted staff, faculty and students for their input on our refreshed environmental plan. We found that they want VCC to:

- Aspire to zero environmental impacts where possible, building on our carbon-neutral achievements
- Find areas where it can not only reduce its negative environmental impacts, but also contribute to positively restoring the environment
- Develop a roadmap for full embedment of sustainability into all its educational offerings where it makes sense
- Play a role enabling the green economy by offering trades training in emerging green careers
- Provide opportunities for students to join green clubs to learn about and participate in personal, community and career sustainability options
- Act as a green community centre, engaging in community projects on and off campus to advance regional sustainability with its community partners

Transformation

We considered where we want to be along a continuum of reducing our environmental impacts in areas we control directly, engaging employees, students and faculty in environmental learning, collaborating with our suppliers, communities and employer and industry partners in contributing to a sustainable future. We agreed we want to be active in all of these areas as a transformational college.

These steps resulted in the development of our second environmental sustainability strategy spanning 2014 – 2017.



Our Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Over the next 10 years, VCC will strive to bring its long-term environmental sustainability vision to life.

Vision

By 2023, VCC's approach to environmental sustainability will be a key reason VCC is an educational institution of choice. Over 10 years, VCC will advance toward zero—and in some cases restorative—environmental impact. VCC will be a green community hub, catalyst and partner. VCC students will graduate with the competencies, connections and inspiration to play a leadership role in the region's transformation to sustainability.

We have organized our three-year strategy into three pillars, or themes, of lead, live and learn, which go beyond our direct operations to address all our impact areas. We have set 10 objectives for ourselves to achieve by 2017.

Being accountable

To achieve our aims, going forward we will enhance the systems by which we hold ourselves accountable for our results. These measures include:

- Integrate our environmental aspirations into the College's vision, mission and values to set the tone at the top
- Renew our environmental deliverables in the refreshed college business strategy
- Develop measurable targets for our objectives
- Assign responsibilities for targets to departmental leads
- Review and publicly report our progress a minimum of once a year

Our detailed strategy, objectives and goals are summarized in the following table.



LEAD	Three-year objective	Three-year goal
	Environmental governance best practices are achieved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated college vision, mission and mandate includes environmental sustainability commitment A strategic environmental key performance indicator is included in VCC's business plan Metrics and targets are established and cross-campus accountability, tracking and progress monitoring and reporting are in place We use tools and procedures that embed sustainability factors in college decision-making
	Internal and external awareness of College's eco-plans and progress is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental sustainability messaging is included in branding, advertising, marketing and recruitment materials and internal communications
	On-campus environmental behaviours are increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-campus student, staff, faculty and community engagement in green activities is measured and increasing

LIVE	Three-year objective	Three-year goal
	Our environmental footprint is reduced in ways that move us to become restorative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon-neutral status is maintained; greenhouse gas emissions from energy use are reduced by 20 per cent between 2010 and 2017 One hundred per cent of curriculum content is available on-line/hybrid/mobile technology, reducing paper use Ninety per cent waste diversion at both campuses Thirty per cent water use reduction achieved over three years and free, potable water is available throughout VCC Green building practices and features are adopted in any proposed Downtown campus redevelopment Plans for becoming restorative in key areas researched and developed
	Environmental impacts of purchasing are reduced and number of local suppliers reducing their ecological footprint is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental purchasing capacity of internal stakeholders (buyers and end users) is strengthened Sustainability is included as a regular consideration in the procurement process Suppliers provide information on the environmental impact of their products and services and their approach to environmental innovation and management
	On-campus local and organic food production and availability is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offerings of local and sustainable food at both campus cafeterias are increased Opportunities exist for for students, staff and faculty to participate in growing food
Number of staff, faculty and students using alternative transportation is increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key alternative transportation infrastructure improvements which take potential campus redevelopment into account are identified and implemented 	

LEARN	Three-year objective	Three-year goal
	Sustainability is integrated into select courses and programs and all teaching and learning practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability competencies are defined and a plan for integration in courses and programs is developed A plan to integrate sustainability into select courses and programs and all teaching and learning practices is implemented and a plan for full implementation in the next phase is developed
	Opportunities for training in green trades are identified and advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research into opportunities for training on green trades and begin program development is completed
	An approach to becoming a green community catalyst, hub and partner has been developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and begin implementation of a plan to become a green community catalyst, hub and partner Faculty and students are engaged in leadership opportunities

Get Engaged

Successful implementation of our plan will require campus-wide innovation and collaboration. Whether you are a community member, student, faculty or staff we hope to hear from you on ways you would like to contribute, become involved or improve this plan. We hope to engage students in green inner-city and other leadership projects. We hope to collaborate with community partners in realizing our vision to become a green community catalyst. We hope faculty and staff will seize this opportunity to innovate in curriculum and operations.

Follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/greenVCC

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/pages/VCC-Sustainability

Contact us—we would like to hear from you

If you have any feedback on this plan, suggestions for actions we can pursue or would like to help advance our environmental sustainability vision of a sustainable region, contact:

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