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Greening Brock: the results are in

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At the beginning of the school year, a group of concerned organizations at Brock hired a campus sustainability officer to audit the university based on 169 factors of sustainability; 10-15 of which applied specifically to Brock.

The exploratory phase has been completed and a 25-page research report has been published and presented to the university's deans and heads of department.

"The environmental movement has reached Brock," said Milicia Njegovan, director of Brock's Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) in the report.

OPIRG, the Fair Trade and Ethical Purchasing Policy Committee, the Brock Environmental Advocacy Network, Eat Local Niagara and others collaborated in implementing the initial stages of a Brock University Sustainability Audit using a well-piloted tool known as the Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework (CSAF), looking at areas on campus such as water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, land use, governance, health and ethical purchasing.

With the initial phase of the CSAF completed, the research team is currently working on running the full audit based on 169 sustainability indicators no later than the fall of 2009.

According to the audit findings, Brock University generates 642,483 kilograms of solid non-hazardous waste per year. Of this amount, 282,463 kilograms of waste were recycled with

81,864 kilograms composted.

Although the Brock campus fared well in several audit indicators, group member Professor Richard Mitchell of the Child and Youth Studies department admitted that some findings "call for immediate attention. The second phase [of the audit] will nail down harder statistics, and allow us to set new benchmarks for reduction which are objectives of the enterprise".

He added that Brock is recycling most of its old electronic components and the solid waste audit has also given Brock high scores.

The findings of the audit reveal that the Physical Education Complex is the largest venue for waste generation after the Schmon Tower Complex, making up 35 per cent of the solid non-hazardous waste generated on campus.

In nearly all facilities, the report states that "Brock failed to stay along the lines of desired 80 per cent for recyclables. Thus, the university could move forward to ensure that all recycle bins and containers be used for effectively, emptied often to avoid recycles thrown away in regular bins and located strategically to avoid unethical recycling".

Group member, Tom Saint-Ivany, Associate Vice-President of Facilities Management, expressed his desire to work with Brock University's Student Union (BUSU) and the Graduate Students Association (GSA) to "determine the most effective way to engage the students that they represent in supporting current and new sustainability initiatives".

"There are many possibilities for sustainability issues to be explored by undergraduate and postgraduate students in their academic studies, pursuits and research," said Saint-Ivany.

Some recent and ongoing green initiatives at Brock include a Campus Bicycle Master Plan, conversion to "green cleaning products" and practices by Custodial Services, fluorescent light tube recycling, co-generation plant emission initiatives and the use of environmentally-friendly ice-melt on sidewalks, walkways and building entrances.

While those involved in the audit continue to lobby for these sustainability changes, they are encouraging staff, students and faculty to make small changes in their everyday routine to lead a more sustainable life.

One such change strongly encouraged is the use of a reusable coffee mug.

"Bringing your own mug for coffee and not just discarding the cups [...], demanding that all business outlets serve Fair Trade products like coffee and chocolate [...] these are just first steps that will inspire the same shift in consciousness for older members of the Brock Community," said Mitchell.

"The biggest sustainability issue facing Brock may be apathy," said Njegovan in the report. "I hope students and departments will get involved with the project."

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