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This month in sustainability...



International recognition for UTAS student sustainability program

The Sustainability Integration Program for Students (SIPS) recently won the International Green Gown Award for Student Engagement.

The International Green Gown Awards recognise the world-changing contributions to sustainability and sustainable development from the international tertiary sector.

The SIPS program has a long history at UTAS. Since its inception in 2010, over 2,230 students and 104 staff members have engaged in real-world projects that contributed significantly to sustainability outcomes on campus.

Some examples of previous SIPS projects include the Dobson Road Bike Hub on the Sandy Bay campus, which was the result of a project involving over 100 students from Geography and Environmental Studies and Architecture and Design, who surveyed students and staff about their requirements for cycling infrastructure, and designed and built components of the bike hub.

Other SIPS projects have included waste and recycling audits, community engagement events, BioBites, podcasts, the development of a zero-waste app, Climate Cafes, community gardens, and more.

"We are very excited to see our student program recognised this way," Corey Peterson, the University's Chief Sustainability Officer, said, "because we believe in the power of students to be leaders in creating a sustainable world."

The University of Tasmania was also recognised as being in the top three in the International Sustainability Institution of the Year category.

SIPS applications for 2023 are now open. Current students who have a passion for sustainability and want to make a real-world impact are encouraged to apply.

Sustainability performance on show at the University's second Sustainability Showcase

The University of Tasmania has recently received several national and international accolades for its sustainability performance, including being ranked #1 in the world on Climate Action by the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking, achieving a Gold rating in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS), winning the Student Engagement category at the International Green Gown Awards, and being recognised as a top 3 institution in the International Sustainability Institution of the Year category.

The University hosted its second Sustainability Showcase on 11 August which delved into the world of sustainability reporting, monitoring, and evaluation, and the various internal and external metrics used by the University to measure its sustainability performance.

The Showcase featured speakers including Craig Barling, Vice-President Strategy, Finance, and Marketing; Corey Peterson, Chief Sustainability Officer; Michele Weir, Chief Marketing Officer; and Carmen Primo-Perez and Ian Ayre from the Sustainability Team, as well as an introduction from Vice Chancellor Rufus Black.

The speakers offered insights into the wide range of sustainability data that the University collects, from managing our greenhouse gas inventory, monitoring transport modes, to surveying staff and students on their sustainability practices and values.

The data collected is used in range of ways, including performance assessment, deciding where to apply resources, and to support student projects and research. Platforms such as STARS allow the University to measure its sustainability performance against sector-agreed metrics for a 'sustainable university', while also providing a framework for future activities.

The results from the Staff and Student Sustainability Surveys are used to ensure that our sustainability performance is meeting staff and student expectations, as well as identifying areas for future focus.

The 2022 Student Sustainability Survey found, among many other things, that an astonishing 42% of UTAS students and 17% of staff experienced food insecurity to varying degrees, which has informed a range of initiatives looking to target food insecurity like the Edible Campus project, as well development of a food security strategy.

Vice Chancellor Rufus Black concluded the session with an acknowledgement of the international impact our institution is having in the sustainability arena, while also emphasising the "extreme humility" that such accolades cause - despite the University's incredible achievements, there is still much more work needed to secure a sustainable future.

The final Sustainability Showcase for 2022 will be held in November, which will reflect on the progress made this year and plans for 2023 and beyond.

University of Tasmania signs CANIE Accord

In late July, the University of Tasmania became a signatory to the CANIE Accord, joining leading universities and other institutions who have made the commitment to a carbon-neutral and climate-literate international education sector by 2030.

CANIE (Climate Action Network for International Educators) is a volunteer grassroots initiative formed by international education practitioners with a mission to support international educators around the world to take bold action on climate change.

The CANIE Accord recognises that international education has contributed to the climate crisis, while also acknowledging the importance of international education to "fostering understanding and respect among different peoples in order to transcend borders, cultures, and languages to solve global problems".

Signatories to the Accord must commit to a minimum of five actions to reduce the carbon footprint of the international education sector at their institutions, as well as increasing the climate literacy of institutions through education.

The University of Tasmania has committed to 59 actions, including the introduction of climate-conscious travel policies, investing in technology to improve virtual international opportunities, and developing climate literacy training modules into programming for all globally mobile students.

"As a university that has a global focus alongside our local priorities as well as significant sustainability commitments, it is important that we seek to ensure that our international education activities align with these," said Corey Peterson, Chief Sustainability Officer.

"Signing the CANIE Accord helps signal to our students and staff that we will focus on the sustainability outcomes from international education while supporting the benefits that arise from international connections and experiences."

The University has already committed to many of the actions outlined in the CANIE Accord under our Emissions Reduction Strategic Plan 2022-2030, which commits the University to a minimum 50% reduction in gross greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Air travel will be a key area for emissions reduction, with an internal carbon price currently being developed for business travel throughout the University.

The University currently offers a number of virtual exchange programs, where students can receive a scholarship to study a range of subjects including Media, Languages, Sustainable Tourism, Business, and Law at international institutions.

There is also a virtual internship program that connects students with opportunities in a number of countries including China, Hong Kong, Japan, Spain, and the USA.

Community focus at Inveresk Plant & Play Day

The University of Tasmania has recently open two new community spaces at the Inveresk campus.

The Esk activity space features basketball courts, table tennis tables, exercise equipment, and a climbing wall, while the new Community Garden boasts an incredible amount of raised garden space for student, staff and community using water from a rainwater irrigation system.



Community members planting seedlings in the new beds

An in-vessel composting machine supported through a grant from the Northern Tasmania Waste Management Group will convert food scraps from student accommodation into compost for the garden in a closed-loop system. A greenhouse also features on the site.

Hundreds gathered from UTAS and the wider Launceston community to get involved in the Plant & Play Day, where they could get their hands dirty and plant vegetable seedlings in the beds, or shoot some hoops on the new courts.

The community garden will provide fresh vegetables and fruit to the 450 students in the nearby student accommodation, as well as members of the public.

The garden will reduce food miles by growing food where it will be consumed, and help to tackle the ongoing problem of student and staff food insecurity.

Both spaces have been developed under the Northern Transformation Project, which has had a focus on sustainability since the early days.

Other sustainability highlights from the project include the carpark including paving made of recycled plastics, 6.5km of recycled steel gas pipelines for building plings, and a 35% reduction in embodied carbon in the construction of the Willis Street and River's Edge buildings.



Chief Sustainability Officer Corey Peterson teaching community members how to sort waste

Sustainability in the paddock The Sustainability Team and a host of volunteers recently saddled up and headed out to showcase the University's sustainability credentials at AgFest.

The sustainability thread ran throughout AgFest, with exhibitors outside the UTAS pavilion showcasing solar batteries, environmentally-friendly weed solutions, eco cleaning products, Farmers for Climate Action, and more.

Inside the UTAS Pavilion, the stage program featured talks such as "Exploring Profitable, Sustainable Livestock Businesses in an Increasingly Variable Climate" hosted by Dr. Karen Christie, "On-farm Adoption of Low-emissions Feed Technologies for Improved Profitability of the Tasmanian Livestock Sector" by Dr. Richard Rawnsley, and "Livestock is going Carbon Neutral - are you?" by Rowan Eisner.

"It was fantastic to engage with so many people at AgFest and share our passion for sustainability with the community," said Ian Ayre, Sustainability Projects Officer (North) and organiser of the UTAS Sustainability component of the UTAS Pavilion.

A key feature of the sustainability focus was the University's ongoing commitment to community gardening, with a seed planting workshop, composting display, and an excellent talk delivered by Community Garden Coordinator Jeff McClintock on home composting made simple.



Community Garden Coordinator Jeff McClintock spreading the good word about home composting

The Emissions Reduction Strategic Plan was also on display, with a University-branded Nissan Leaf acting as a symbol of the University's commitment to electrify its passenger vehicle fleet by 2024.

Waste Officer Mary Gill was on hand to educate the community about waste management and the circular economy, with a fantastic waste sorting activity that challenged participant's knowledge about what goes in what bin to avoid contamination of useful resources.

Perhaps most importantly, only one member of the team got bogged trying to leave the AgFest carpark.

Thank you to Tegan McFarland, Belinda Brock, Sera Goldstone, and the entire UTAS Events team for their impeccable organisation of the UTAS Pavilion, and to Ian Ayre, Jeff McClintock, Mary Gill, Ellen Sorensen, Alex McArthur, Corey Peterson, and all the sustainability volunteers who helped fly the sustainability flag!



Participants reviewing their projects

Game on at the 2030 SDGs Game

In August the University of Tasmania and TUSA teamed up to bring us the Tasmanian premiere of the 2030 SDGs Game, facilitated by Delwyn Langdon.

The 2030 SDGs Game is a fast-paced simulation game designed to teach participants about the Sustainable Development Goals and balanced societies.

Teams work to complete projects such as building sustainable transport infrastructure, investing in sustainable agriculture, or focusing on increasing their nation's GDP.

However, each project delivers a cost (or a benefit) to society, economy, or the environment, and teams must balance the state of the planet with the pursuit of their own goals...



"I had an absolutely fabulous time and I hope the participants did too. I also hope they have a better understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals and their purpose", said Delwyn Langdon, one of only a handful of certified facilitators of the SDGs Game in Australia.

The game was developed by Imacollabo, a Japanese company, and was the brainchild of a video gamer and an environmental scientist who wanted to combine their areas of expertise to teach others about the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Students and staff members from the Hobart, Launceston, and Cradle Coast campuses participated in the games over three days in August, with an additional community game held at the Hobart Sustainability Learning Centre.



We're always looking to share great sustainability stories from across our campuses. If you would like to submit a piece to the Sustainability Bulletin, get in touch with us here.

Next Bulletin Date: October 25

Interact and Engage

Click the button below to download the Useful Sustainability Links PDF, which includes a list of our programs, facebook pages, resources and more.

