

Triton College

Sustainability Guide

2025

Introduction

At Triton College, we recognize our role as an educational institution in fostering a sustainable future. As a commuter campus situated in a vibrant community, we have a unique opportunity to lead by example in implementing sustainable practices that resonate with our students, faculty, and the broader public. This Sustainability Guide is designed to integrate eco-friendly initiatives into all aspects of campus life.

This guide reflects our dedication to promoting sustainable behavior, enhancing our campus environment, and preparing our students for a future where sustainability is not just an option but a necessity. By focusing on the initiatives that matter most, we aim to create a culture of sustainability that empowers individuals to make informed decisions that benefit both the planet and our community.

Through targeted goals, actionable strategies, and collaborative efforts, Triton College is committed to reducing our ecological footprint and inspiring our campus community to embrace sustainable practices in everyday life. This living document will serve as a roadmap to guide our initiatives and foster accountability as we strive for continuous improvement. Together, we can make significant strides towards a more sustainable future for Triton College.

Transportation

Triton College is in a unique position as a commuter campus to make significant strides towards integrating climate friendly transportation options into campus culture. While many of those who visit campus use a car, Triton can be accessible through bus and bike travel as well.

Improvements to bike pathways along North Avenue as well as along Fifth Avenue have greatly increased bike accessibility to campus. There are currently 14 bike racks across campus allowing for convenient lock-up near each building. Participating in campaigns and events such as National Bike to Work Day can help encourage bike travel. Furthermore, campus contests that incentivize biking to Triton can provide a fun and engaging way to promote bike travel.

As we look to the future, Triton college must prioritize infrastructure and initiatives that prioritize sustainable transportation alternatives. As a commuter campus, significant energy is used to get students, faculty, and staff to Triton every day. Campaigns that can bring down the number of commuters using cars will create a more sustainable culture of travel to the college. Incentivizing bus travel, biking, and carpooling are all important devices for making Triton College's transportation more sustainable.

GOALS:

1. Expand bike access to the college through new bike rack locations
2. Implement an annual "bike to school" day with prizes for participants
3. Provide information on alternative transportation methods on the Triton website

Waste

Waste at Triton College can be summarized through three categories: trash, recycling and compost. Trash is by far the largest sum of waste generated at Triton College, but there is much that can be done to reduce the amount of waste that ends up in the trash. Decision making is an important factor that determines where waste ends up after it leaves Triton. Each time we dispose of something we make a decision that determines where that waste ends up. By informing the Triton community about where each piece of waste should go, we can greatly increase the efficiency of our waste system on campus. This will lead to more items being recycled or composted thus reducing waste that would have previously ended up in a landfill.

Triton offers a comprehensive mixed stream recycling program. Mixed stream recycling allows all recyclable waste to be disposed of in any blue recycling bin across campus. This streamlined system allows for easier and more efficient recycling efforts across campus. Every recycling bin on campus can collect the following items: paper, glass, aluminum, and plastics numbered 1-5 and #7. The plastic "number" label can be found at the bottom of most recyclable plastics. Plastic #6, or styrofoam, can not be recycled and is considered an environmental hazard due to the large amount of time it takes to break down. Styrofoam is a major source of pollution in our lands and oceans, and is often difficult to collect or remove from the environment. In response to this, Triton College will work towards eliminating styrofoam products sold on

campus. This initiative will support and protect our local environment by limiting the amount of styrofoam that may end up in it.

A limiting factor to the efficiency of recycling on campus is education and conscious effort. Informational handouts, educational events and other similar efforts are paramount to increasing efficient recycling among the campus community. The success of our recycling program is reliant on the conscious effort of all community members to recycle correctly. Conscious recycling and waste disposal can be possible through community events that seek to educate the public. Triton College is proud to celebrate America Recycles Day every November 15th, a day to educate the public on all things recycling. Other annual events that educate the Triton community include waste audits. These events help participants to make more educated and informed decisions when disposing of waste, which will greatly expand recycling efforts across Triton.

In the coming years, Triton College will continue to expand its food scrap or “compost” disposal program. Currently, 10 food scrap totes are utilized for the collection of compostable waste generated in the HIA lab. Food waste from the culinary program is disposed of in these totes in an effort to decrease waste that ends up in the trash. Many items that may typically end up in the trash can instead be composted. For example, fruits, vegetables, meat, bread, eggs, and more food items can be disposed of in the compost totes. All food scraps, shells and peels can be diverted to compost where it will break down much quicker than it would in a landfill. As Triton College moves towards expanding its composting program, more items and locations will be available for compost. Educational materials and events will again be essential to ensuring successful composting practices across campus. Increased visibility and knowledge of composting among our Triton community will lead to more efficient disposal of food waste in our cafeteria, kitchens, and cafes. According to the University of Indiana, roughly 28% of waste that ends up in the trash is actually compostable. The compost program at Triton College has the potential to significantly decrease the amount of waste that is sent to landfills, thus creating a more sensible and environmentally friendly waste system.

GOALS:

1. Eliminate styrofoam sold on campus
2. Expand compost program to dining hall with student volunteers in the next year
3. Celebrate America Recycles day annually
4. Increase total material recycled in 2025 and beyond through increased signage and handouts/resources for classrooms and faculty
5. Annual waste audit implemented into course curriculum, rotating through different departments and courses

Campus Engagement

Creating a culture of sustainability across campus is integral to supporting the long-term sustainability goals of Triton College. By engaging the campus community through events, educational resources and stimulating conversations, we can create a vibrant culture of sustainability. Through continuous sustainable thinking, new possibilities for sustainable advancement will be attainable. As more community members take an informed and active role in Triton's sustainability goals, sustainability can become part of the decision making that happens everyday on campus.

While Triton College offers many incredible avenues for sustainable thinking and action, the challenge of increasing participation still remains. Increasing participation in Triton's mission towards sustainability is paramount to its success. This can be done by expanding upon the campus engagement work currently done every year. By introducing new events and spaces to engage with sustainability, we can engage those who may not yet be familiar with sustainable action at Triton College.

Goals:

1. Hold 2 annual Greater Maywood Paddling Program trips for both students and faculty
2. Increase student participation in Greening the Campus Committee; maintain at least 1-2 students involved
3. Implement "sustainability speakers" series through library

Program and Workforce Training

Through its 120+ degree and certificate offerings, Triton College is a place where students can explore a wide variety of pathways. Some degree and certificate programs may have direct ties with sustainable thinking, but many more do not. While sustainability may not always share a direct correlation with each course, ties to sustainable thinking can provide value to students of any course. When possible, concepts of sustainability and sustainable thinking can help students find a more holistic and informed viewpoint. Whatever the academic discipline may be, utilizing sustainable thinking challenges students to look for creative solutions in the present in order to maintain a course towards a positive future.

As the world builds towards a more sustainable future, Triton College is providing students with the opportunity to build a career directly involved in that work. The Triton College renewable energy technology degree and certificate programs prepares graduates to pursue a career in the growing field of renewable energy. The Renewable Energy Technology curriculum is designed to meet the increasing demands for skilled renewable energy technicians in solar, wind, and other forms of clean energy. As the renewable energy industry continues to develop,

Triton College can continue to be a leader in sustainability through new degree and certificate programs that will prepare graduates to make real change in the world and build towards a more sustainable future

GOALS:

1. Implement sustainable development goals (SDGs) into the Triton course curriculum
2. Foster direct connections with companies in the green energy industry to connect students with jobs
3. Connect students with green careers in the local industry

Benchmarking Tracking and Reporting

Tracking the progress of sustainable initiatives here at Triton is critical to the future. In order to guide further efforts, benchmarks with appropriate timelines and tracking measures are necessary. Continuous reporting increases accountability while showing the incredible impacts of sustainable progress at Triton. Projects and initiatives that can be tracked and reported are more likely to continue and improve into the future. By reporting these efforts, Triton College also takes accountability for improving the campus and the surrounding communities through environmentally-focused action.

Existing tools for tracking progress include the annual Tree Campus and Bee Campus USA awards as well as the AASHE Stars Reporting Tool. These tools will provide year by year tracking and a way to establish what sustainability work has been done at Triton. Each certification focuses on a specific aspect of sustainability.

Bee Campus USA presents standards for protecting green areas on college campuses and providing safe spaces for pollinators like bees and butterflies. Tree campus provides similar objectives to Bee Campus, but with a more specific focus on tree care and supporting the tree population on campus. The AASHE Stars reporting tool is a comprehensive benchmark for sustainability through the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. It includes a bronze, silver, gold, and platinum tier. Clear goals will be available and set through this tracking tool that will help guide sustainability initiatives for the following year. Additionally, this living document will serve as a tracking tool for continuous progress and new goals.

Each year, new goals can be set depending on resources available to the college and the current goals of Triton College. Goals will be structured so that continuous progress can be made over the course of many years towards a higher standard.

GOALS:

1. Receive recognition from AASHE through Stars reporting
2. Complete monthly sustainability action report

3. Commit to annual update of sustainability plan

Green Spaces

Triton College understands the importance of maintaining high-quality green spaces throughout its campus for people and wildlife alike. Triton has cultivated numerous green spaces on campus and continuously commits resources towards the maintenance of them. The most prominent of these spaces would be the Triton College Botanical Garden. This ornamental garden hosts a variety of native plants, flowers, and trees. Picnic benches and walking paths have also been implemented to enhance the space for visitors. This space is utilized by a vast array of departments at Triton, ranging from educational uses to community-building events. Triton works hard to continuously update and maintain the high-quality green space available at the botanical garden.

Goals:

1. Expand landscape tools to include electric alternatives
2. Achieve Bronze Level of Green Grounds Certification
3. Maintain pollinator-friendly spaces

Energy

Conserving energy at Triton College is an essential component of cultivating a sustainable campus. Triton College works to reduce its energy use whenever possible. Energy conservation can happen through a large array of methods. A crucial time for conserving energy happens when facilities and light/water fixtures are updated. Triton has always committed to implementing the most cost-effective and sustainable fixtures across its campus. These include upgraded light fixtures that utilize LED lights, a more energy efficient alternative. Light timers have been installed in buildings all across campus as well to automatically turn off lights when they are not in use. Strategic upgrades like these help the college save money while also consuming less energy.

As we look towards the future, Triton will seek every energy-efficient solution possible. One area of growth that will be prioritized in the coming years is renewable energy technology. In the fall of 2020, Triton launched its Renewable Energy Technology program for students seeking a career in the expanding field of renewable energy. This program produced the first solar array on Triton's campus, located on the roof of the Cernan Earth and Space Center. This array generates consistent solar energy, utilized by the college.

Goals:

1. Energy audit for college to assess energy alternatives (includes solar feasibility study)
2. Expand renewable energy technology across campus

Conclusion

The Triton College Sustainability Guide outlines our collective commitment to fostering a culture of sustainability on our campus and within the broader community. By addressing key areas such as transportation, waste management, campus engagement, education, and energy conservation, we are not only enhancing our environmental stewardship efforts, but also preparing our students for a future where sustainable practices are paramount.

As we implement our outlined goals, we invite every member of the Triton community to actively participate in this vital journey. Sustainability is a shared responsibility, and each action we take contributes to a healthier campus and a more resilient community.

We recognize that this guide is a living document, meant to evolve alongside our efforts and aspirations. By continuously tracking our progress and engaging in meaningful action, we can ensure that our sustainability initiatives remain relevant and impactful over time. Together, we can create a vibrant campus that embodies sustainable living, inspiring future generations to prioritize environmental conscious actions in their daily lives.