

Western Kentucky University  
**OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY**  
2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

| Prepared by Christian Ryan, Sustainability Coordinator |

### Accolades and inclusions

Western Kentucky University was selected as the Kentucky Pollution Prevention Center's (KPPC) Douglas C. Griffin Environmental Sustainability Award winner for 2016. KPPC created the award in 2009 to recognize those Kentucky companies that have demonstrated a commitment to the principles of sustainability by reducing waste, lowering energy use and practicing environmental stewardship. The award is presented each year in conjunction with National Pollution Prevention Week.

WKU was included for the 8th consecutive year in the 2016 The Princeton Review's Guide to 361 Green Colleges.

WKU's composting program was profiled in the first Organics Recovery Program Development Tool for Colleges and Universities published by the University of Louisville Environmental Policy and Management Environmental Finance Center: Serving EPA Region 4.

### At the OoS

#### *Services and service.*

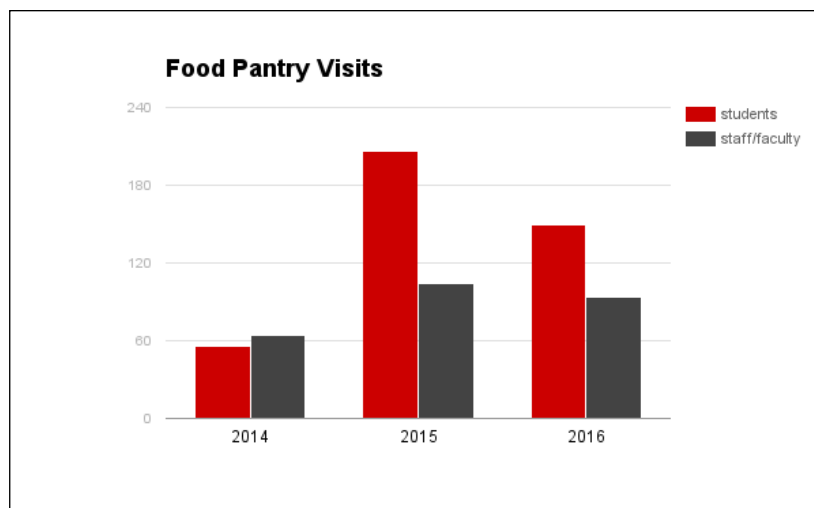
In 2016, we **rented Big Red Bikes to 68 students**. The bad news is that we had to turn many students that requested bikes away, due to limited inventory. The good news is that many of these students have appealed to Student Government Association to support the Big Red Bike program so that we may increase our capacity to serve. We are looking forward to that collaboration in the coming year.

Students come to the Office of Sustainability for many reasons, but the primary reason is that they want to get involved in and support the programs and services we offer. In 2016, we logged **401 volunteer hours** at the Office of Sustainability. These include hours spent gardening, in the Food Pantry, working on bikes, and many other activities around the OoS.



### *The Food Pantry.*

In 2016, the Office of Sustainability partnered with the Gatton Academy High School to begin offering service opportunities to Gatton students. Gatton students now spend an average total of 8 hours each week volunteering for the Food Pantry.



### *Bees.*

After much planning and anticipation, bees finally became part of the OoS family in the spring of 2016. The Italian honey bees live in the Project Grow Garden and are tended by the Project Grow Fellows, with support by the Big Red Beekeepers.

The bees made the news, featured in the College Heights Herald and Bowling Green Daily News.



### *Changing the landscape.*

The summer of 2016 brought change to the OoS landscape. With successful completion and defense of student Alex Hezik's Honors capstone project, the front yard of the Office of Sustainability was transformed from an edible garden project to a landscape that demonstrates a low maintenance sustainable alternative to the traditional high-input lawn. The transformation

allowed for both beautiful and practical

changes that improved the accessibility and appearance of the Office. A new stone wall and walkway grace the front entrance, highlighting reuse of salvaged and surplus materials. The green space will serve as a blank canvas for rotating seasonal student gardens.

### *Plots for partners.*

All green thumbs (and aspiring green thumbs) are welcome in the Project Grow Community Garden, but in 2016 we began formally offering “rental” plots for individuals, departments, groups, and organizations. Plots are 4x8 and we supply seeds, tools, and gardening advice to plot gardeners. Plot partners currently include the HRL Sustainability Task Force, SGA, the Wholesome@WKU dietetic interns, and GreenToppers and this fall the WKU Football players will grow a garden plot.

### *Scholarship.*

Honors student and Project Grow Fellow Alex Hezik completed and defended her Honors/ Capstone Project, as part of a self-designed sustainable Agriculture major. Alex received the President’s Award for Sustainability in 2015, and is now serving her Capstone Year in Nanjing, China, after which she will enter upon an Environmental Protection Agency Greater Research Opportunities (GRO) Fellowship.



### *Developing students.*

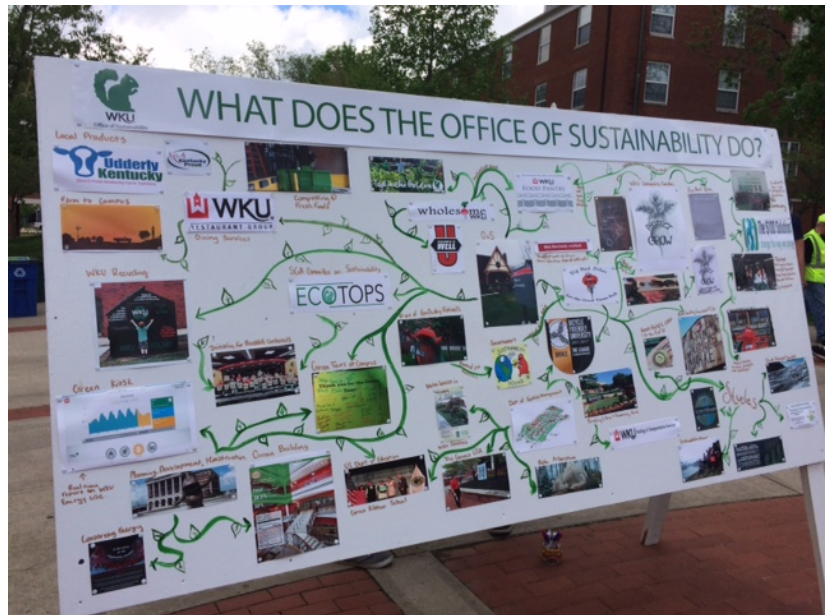
With support from Sodexo, 5 students attended the AASHE annual conference in October. Students Alexis Corbin, JR Morrow, Julia Borders, Nic Conrad, and Courtney Martin traveled to the conference on bus with students from other Ky campuses. The journey was as valuable as the destination - friendships were formed and plans were made for future student-led collaboration among the Kentucky colleges and universities.





### *Reaching out.*

In 2016, the Sustainability Coordinator guided 12 Green Tours, reaching more than 240 campus and community members. She made 16 class visits, reaching more than 470 students. And she appeared as a guest WKU PBS Outlook with Barbara Deeb and on the WKU National Public Radio broadcast twice during 2016.



### *Collaborations*

#### *For shifting the culture.*

The Office of Sustainability partnered with the SGA Sustainability Committee, GreenToppers, WKU Recycling, WKU Dining and many campus and community partners to celebrate Earth Day with the 10th annual WKU Earth Day Festival in April 2016. It is estimated that more than 500 students, faculty, staff and community members attended the event.





### *For sustainable dining.*

The Office of Sustainability collaborated with Student Government Association and Dining Services on sustainability efforts in 2016 that will lead to reduced waste and promote sustainable habits. In the fall of 2016, the Reusable To-Go container program was rolled out at Fresh Food Company and bag-less became the default at Subway. To date, 29 students have enrolled in the reusable container program, and Dining Services reports plans to extend the program to RedZone and Bene Pasta this spring.



President Ransdell joined the movement to ditch the bag at Subway with SGA Sustainability Committee members Olivia Eiler, Savannah Molyneaux, and Julia Borders.

### *For reducing the waste.*

WKU participated in the GameDay Recycling Challenge throughout WKU's 2016 football season, and results tell the story of collaboration, determination, and hard work.

- In the category of Waste Diversion, WKU placed 26th out of 47 Colleges and Universities with a Recycling Rate of 42.72%! This is much higher than our current campus-wide recycling rate for 2016, which is 20.1%, so putting in the extra effort made a big difference!



- In the category of Total Recycling, WKU placed 35th out of 51 total Colleges and Universities, recycling 4,433 lbs. during one game. For all 6 home games, WKU recycled a total of 19,313 lbs.!

Although this was WKU's first year to compete in the GameDay Recycling Challenge, WKU placed ahead of other major universities with strong recycling programs, including Auburn University, Louisiana State University, University of South Carolina, and Stanford University. More importantly, participating in the GameDay Recycling Challenge brought the campus community together for a common goal. Student volunteers, fans, the Athletics Department, Sustainability staff, Concessions employees & Dining Services, DFM's Grounds Crew and the Building Services Team worked cooperatively to reduce waste and capture as many recyclables as possible (19,313 lbs. of recyclables, to be exact!).

### *For local food.*

The Office of Sustainability continues to collaborate with the Community Farmers Market to get students eating fresh, local food by supporting the Big Red Dollars Double Dollar program. In 2015, \$2,455.50 Big Red Dollars were spent at the Community Farmers Market. 76% of those dollars were doubled through the double dollars program. So \$4332.00 worth of fresh food directly from local farmers to students in 2015.

In 2016, \$4,032.28 Big Red Dollars were spent at the Community Farmers Market. (A 160% increase!) 92% of those dollars were doubled through the double dollars program. So, \$7,743.56 worth of fresh food directly from local farmers to students in 2016. (179% increase from 2015 to 2016!)

### *With our farmers.*

In Fall of 2016, the Office of Sustainability hosted Farmer Fridays, a guest speaker series featuring



local farmers, their food, and their farm stories. Each Friday we hosted a different farmer, each with a very different story.

Project Grow Fellows prepared a lunch with ingredients produced by our guests, including things like pumpkin chocolate cookies and beef stew.



## Coming in 2017...

We begin 2017 with the goal of completing a Climate Ready Campus Plan for WKU, in collaboration with faculty, staff and students from across the University.

In March 2017, we will submit to AASHE our Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) report, in anticipation of Gold level rating.

In February 2017, we will roll-out a green office certification program, the Green Squirrel of Approval to the campus community. This program will increase awareness of sustainability efforts and those opportunities for departments, offices, and individuals to support our commitment to a more sustainable campus. The program recognizes such efforts with Green Squirrel Approval ratings at the 1, 2, 3, and 4 acorn level.

In February 2017, we will conduct our first Sustainability values, behaviors, and awareness survey to WKU students, faculty and staff. This survey, developed by students will help us to identify those areas which offer the most opportunity to engage and educate our campus community and allow us to benchmark and measure the success of those efforts.



Thank you for reading this report. Comments, questions, or suggestions should be directed to Christian Ryan at the Office of Sustainability. christian.ryan@wku.edu or 270-745-2508 An electronic version of this pdf can be downloaded from the WKU Office of Sustainability website at: [www.wku.edu/sustainability/documents/](http://www.wku.edu/sustainability/documents/)

Thank you to Alexis Corbin, Beth Gafford, and Paul Francis Wilson for their contributions to this report.