



BEREA COLLEGE:

A living learning environment for sustainability



At Berea College, sustainability is a continuation of a century-long tradition.



Overview

Founded in 1855 as the first interracial and coeducational college in the South, Berea College is a Christian liberal arts work college in Berea, KY. The school is unique in that it charges no tuition and admits only academically promising students, primarily from Appalachia, who have limited economic resources. Berea's commitments and educational programs have brought the college national recognition; *U.S. News & World Report* has repeatedly named it the no. 1 regional college in the South.

Social Responsibility Issue

Although many college students today are interested in the environment, the students who apply to Berea College often are much more concerned about financial issues. The average family income of Berea's 1,500 students is \$27,600, which wouldn't even cover a year's tuition at many colleges. Through grants and required work, low-income students can afford both a strong academic program as well as a holistic approach to social and environmental issues at Berea College.

Solutions

Sustainability on campus has grown in popularity in America over the past few years, but at Berea, it's a continuation of a century-long tradition. In addition to its distinctive socially conscious approach since the 19th century, the school has had a campus-wide commitment to the environment since the 1990s when Larry Shinn became Berea's eighth president.

Back then, the campus developed a strategic plan that included the importance of students understanding their relationship to human fabricated worlds and the natural worlds in the classroom, workplace, and home. Berea's plan has led to \$116 million in campus building renovations that meet LEED® Silver standards.

"Our philosophical framework is built around educating ourselves and our students in sustainable living," Shinn says. Some of its early initiatives include:

- **Developing curriculum.** A multidisciplinary Sustainability and Environmental Studies Program includes both the sciences and policy issues surrounding sustainability.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Company name: Berea College

Location: Berea, Kentucky

Web site: www.berea.edu

Founded: 1855

Scope: Regional United States

Employees: 485

- **Developing sustainable agriculture.** Some 60 acres of the college's 400 acres of land is set aside for organic farming, which is used both as a teaching tool and as a local food supply.
- **Developing an eco-village.** With a large number of singleparents from Appalachia's rural and urban areas, it was important to develop housing where sustainable education and living come together. The apartments and a demonstration home use 50 percent less energy and water than conventional homes, and social components are included, such as a car-sharing program.

"Sustainability is one of the very best tools low-income students can use to succeed, whether they return to a small Appalachian town or—like some of our graduates—go on to Wall Street," Shinn said.

Measurement

Through its extensive, decade-long 26 building renovations, Berea College used 52 percent less BTUs of natural gas in 2009 over its 1999 BTU usage, and provides 15 percent of its cafeteria food from its own farm and local producers.

Other SR Involvement

The college expends more than \$7 million a year in a variety of federally funded educational programs that serve some 4,000 K-12 students in low-income Kentucky counties. Berea's social conscious educational approach also is reflected in its graduates, 52 percent of whom work in nonprofit jobs. For more information, visit <http://www.berea.edu/sens/default.asp>.