



Sustainability

STRATEGIC PLAN

2025-30

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Indigenous Peoples’ Land & Territory Acknowledgment

Founded in 1889, The University of New Mexico sits on the traditional homelands of the Pueblo of Sandia. The original peoples of New Mexico — Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache — since time immemorial, have deep connections to the land and have made significant contributions to the broader community statewide. We honor the land itself and those who remain stewards of this land throughout the generations and also acknowledge our committed relationship to Indigenous peoples. We gratefully recognize our history.



Mission, Vision & Values

UNM Office of Sustainability

Vision

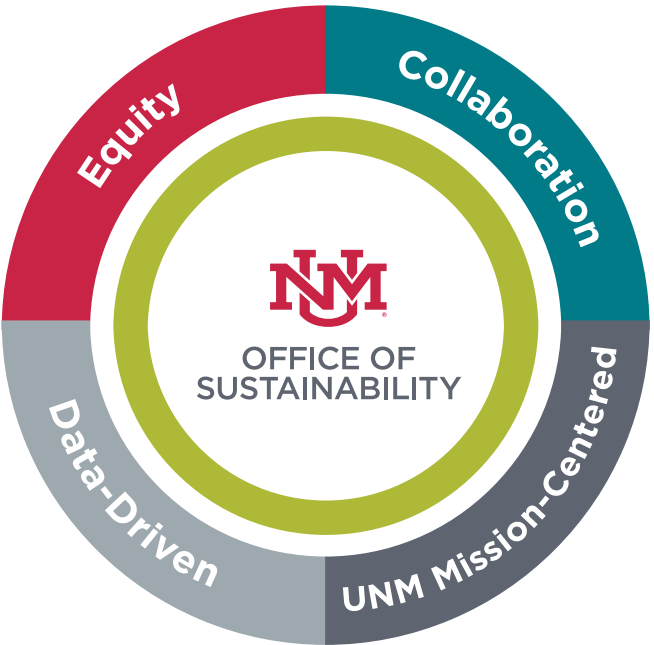
The University of New Mexico is a recognized leader in sustainability and a committed steward of the Earth’s natural resources.

Mission

The Office of Sustainability advances environmental stewardship across UNM’s operations, infrastructure, and engagement to support student success, research, health, and community wellbeing.

Core Values

- Data-driven action
- Equity
- Partnerships & collaboration
- UNM mission-centered: education & research
- Transparency & accountability



Sustainability Definition

Sustainability establishes a system of infrastructure and behavior that allows current and future generations to enjoy the same quality of social, environmental, and economic wellbeing.



Introduction

UNM Sustainability Strategic Plan

The University of New Mexico (UNM) has long recognized the importance of sustainability as a guiding principle in shaping its academic, operational, and community commitments. The foundation for this plan has been built over the past two decades, with sustainability efforts emerging across academics, research, campus operations, energy management, and construction. Throughout this time, students, faculty, and staff have repeatedly prioritized the need for UNM's strong environmental leadership (Appendix I).

The **2022 UNM 2040 Strategic Plan** cemented the institution's commitment to sustainability by naming it as one of the university's five key goals, acknowledging that long-term success requires stewardship of our planet and its resources.¹ Additional recent UNM plans and documents, including the Integrated Campus Plan² and Safe Mobility Action Plan, include sustainability improvements and their co-benefits to health and wellbeing. The State of New Mexico, too, has taken bold action in recent years, committing to aggressive climate goals, investing in clean energy infrastructure, and planning for the state's increasingly arid future.³

This UNM Sustainability Strategic Plan (the plan) responds not only to these campus and state priorities, but also to the growing expectation of a generation of students who believe sustainability should be central to their education, values, and future careers. The five-year plan is designed to center the work of the Office of Sustainability, which was established in 2024, and guide the university's overall strategic direction toward an increasingly sustainable future. While this plan provides a structure to prioritize and invest in sustainability across all dimensions of campus life, embedding it more deeply into the fabric of UNM, the co-benefits of many of these environmental goals extend to increasing UNM's financial and climate resilience, human health, student success, and institutional excellence.

The plan's goals and actions are organized in two core areas:

Transform Campus Operations

Focuses on university physical infrastructure and services that support the institution.

Build Sustainability Engagement & Culture

Embeds sustainability in education, training, events, and governance across campus.

From this foundation, each area is broken into goals and actions, with corresponding metrics and champions, that lay the pathway toward a more sustainable University.

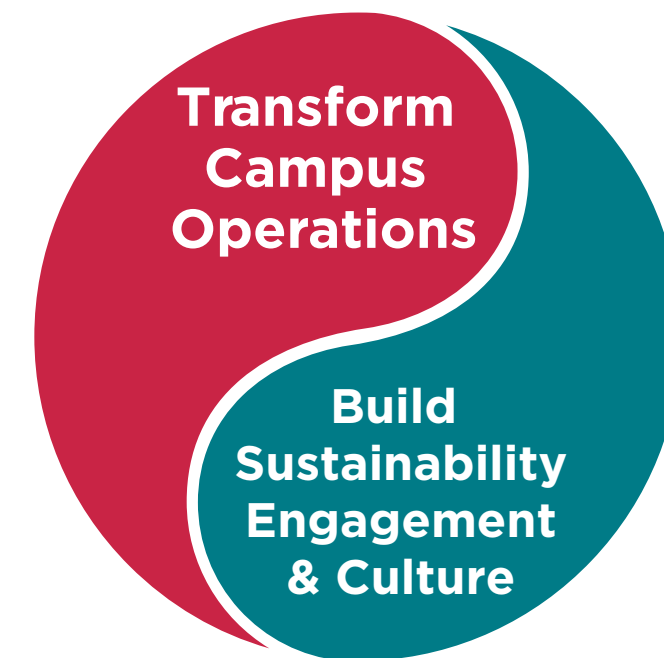


Figure 1. Structure of UNM Sustainability Strategic Plan



Strategic Plan Process

The Office of Sustainability led a year-long, inclusive effort to create this plan, engaging stakeholders from all corners of UNM’s Albuquerque Campus.

The effort began in 2024 with the collection of baseline data, including UNM’s first comprehensive greenhouse gas inventory⁴ in a decade and its inaugural STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) report.⁵ Over the following months, the Office of Sustainability engaged the UNM community through interviews, focus groups, a campus-wide survey, and public meetings, receiving feedback from hundreds of campus stakeholders. A Steering Committee of University leaders helped guide development of the plan, ensuring the plan aligns with broader University priorities.

Strategic Plan Process Timeline

1

Baseline Data Collection

- Quantitative data collection
- Hire consultant & graduate research assistants
- Complete UNM’s first-ever Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS®) application
- Complete Greenhouse Gas Inventory



Apr. – Oct. '24

2

Interviews & Focus Groups

- Qualitative data collection: interviews & focus groups
- Identify 5-7 campus priority areas for the next 5 years
- Convene Steering Committee



Oct. '24 – Feb. '25

3

Town Halls & Survey

- Qualitative data collection: Distribute campus-wide sustainability survey to all students, staff and faculty
- Public Town Halls
- Steering Committee review
- Start draft of UNM Sustainability Strategic Plan



Feb. – May '25

4

Refining & Drafting

- Prioritize & refine key actions
- Draft Sustainability Strategic Plan
- Steering Committee review



May – Aug. '25

5

Approval & Release

- Sustainability Plan editing, layout, vetting and approval
- Plan release



Aug. – Oct. '25

Reading the Plan



Each area consists of several goals:

Transform Campus Operations	Build Sustainability Engagement & Culture
1. Energy & GHG Reductions 2. Water & Land Use 3. Waste Management 4. Transportation 5. Food & Dining	1. Applied Learning & Academic Integration 2. Trainings & Events 3. Communications & Outreach 4. Institutional Capacity

Each goal is accompanied with a table that shows actions to achieve the goal along with its metrics and champions.

	Action	Metrics	Champions
1	Improve data gathering for campus commuting to establish baseline statistics.	% Lobos using alternative transportation; Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for commuters; % solo commuters	• Office of Sustainability • Parking & Transportation Services (PATS)
2	Require new buildings constructed at UNM to be all electric.	% New buildings fully electrified; building Energy Use Intensity (EUI)	• Facility Services • Health Sciences (HSC) Capital Projects • UNM Hospital (UNMH) Planning & Construction

Each action included in this plan is evaluated for impact in strategic categories. These ratings are intended to help guide prioritization across UNM’s sustainability goals, help decision makers balance ambition with practical constraints, and assess the opportunities and challenges of action implementation.

LEVEL OF IMPACT ● LIMITED ● ● MODERATE ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

Shared Evaluation Metrics	
 Cost	The financial investment required to implement the action. Evaluating cost helps ensure fiscal responsibility and identifies actions that may offer high impact at lower expense or where the University may need to seek external funding. The impact of actions on the budget is a critical part of prioritizing projects, along with evaluating environmental outcomes.
 Visibility	How noticeable or high-profile the action may be to the campus community and external audiences, including alumni, community and business leaders, and elected officials. Highly visible actions can promote cultural change, enhance UNM’s reputation, and increase engagement.
 Equity	How the action promotes fairness, inclusion and the just distribution of benefits and burdens across different groups, especially historically marginalized or underserved populations.

Transform Campus Operations	Build Sustainability Engagement & Culture
 GHG Reduction How significantly the action contributes to reducing UNM greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. GHG emissions are the primary driver of climate change.	 Community Engagement Level of opportunity for students to directly participate in or lead sustainability actions, which fosters the skills, knowledge, and values needed to become future leaders in sustainability.
 Human Health Impact How an action improves indoor or outdoor environments, air quality, nutrition, mobility, or other factors that affect the health and wellbeing of the UNM community.	 Student Engagement The extent an action supports sustainability’s integration with academic courses, student academic projects, or research opportunities for students and faculty.
 Waste Reduction The potential of an action to reduce waste generation and/or increase landfill diversion.	 Academics & Research How the action engages with or benefits local or regional communities. This supports UNM’s role as a community partner and public-serving institution.

GOALS

1

Energy
& GHG
Reductions

2

Water &
Land Use

3

Waste
Management

4

Transportation

5

Food & Dining

Transform Campus Operations

Build
Sustainability
Engagement
& Culture

Transform Campus Operations

This strategic area focuses on enhancing the university's physical infrastructure and the operational services that support its mission. It emphasizes the critical role that buildings, energy systems, water use, transportation, waste management, and campus landscapes play in advancing institutional sustainability. UNM has identified five core goals within this area, each designed to align daily operations with long-term environmental, social, and economic responsibility. Together, these goals provide a roadmap to a more resilient, efficient, and forward-thinking campus environment that supports student success and community wellbeing.



Energy Usage & Greenhouse Gas Reduction

1



Advance UNM’s transition to a low-carbon campus by meeting the targets outlined in State of New Mexico Executive Order 2019-003 to reduce GHG emissions 45% below 2005 levels by 2030 and working toward net-zero emissions by 2050 through energy efficiency measures, strategic decarbonization of campus operations, and renewable energy adoption.

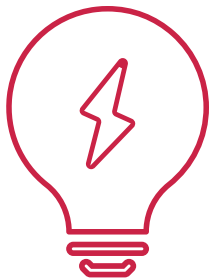
Climate change, driven primarily by the buildup of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane in the atmosphere, poses an urgent global threat to ecosystems, public health, and the economy. Energy use — especially the burning of fossil fuels for heating, electricity, and transportation — is the largest contributor to these emissions.

On-campus natural gas combustion for electricity production and heating is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at The University of New Mexico, accounting for 82% of total emissions included in the 2024 Greenhouse Gas Inventory.⁴ Energy and building efficiency, building electrification, and clean energy generation are essential to achieving cuts in GHG emissions and to align with State of New Mexico climate goals, specifically those in Executive Order 2019-003. This plan provides a path to strategic decarbonization for campus that will strengthen the University’s leadership in climate action.



Goal 1

Energy Usage & Greenhouse Gas Reduction



Actions & Evaluation		Metrics	Champions
1	Pursue campus-level electrification of campus heating with a low-temperature heating system utilizing heat pumps that can be integrated into a future geothermal system to reduce UNM’s Scope 1 GHG emissions.	Annual MTCO ₂ e Scope 1 emissions	- Office of Sustainability - Facility Services - Lobo Energy
2	Require new buildings constructed at UNM to be all electric.	% New buildings fully electrified - Building Energy Use Intensity (EUI)	- Facility Services - HSC Capital Projects - UNMH Planning & Construction
3	Invest in energy efficient and green technologies in new building construction and major renovations with the requirement that new UNM buildings over 15,000 ft ² achieve at least LEED Silver standard; perform a study of LEED points achieved.	# LEED certifications # LEED credits in energy & atmosphere point categories	- Facility Services - HSC Capital Projects - UNMH Planning & Construction
4	Increase the percentage of UNM’s electricity generated by renewable energy.	% Of UNM-generated electricity that is renewable	- Facility Services - Office of Sustainability
5	Develop a process to measure and start tracking UNM’s Scope 3 emissions sources (carbon emissions resulting indirectly from UNM operations, either from upstream activities such as purchasing or downstream like commuting) in the areas of: - Employee and student commuting, - Waste generated in operations, - Purchased goods and services, - Capital goods, and - Business travel.	Annual MTCO ₂ e Scope 3 emissions	- Lobo Energy - Purchasing Department - UNM Food - Office of Sustainability
6	Right-size the UNM campus through implementing new models for administering space ownership, usage, function, and funding.	% Utilization of schedulable spaces - Reduction in unassigned/ single-use rooms	- Campus Capital & Space Planning (CCSP) - Facility Services - Provost’s Office - Information Technology

GHG Reduction	Waste Reduction	Human Health Impact	Cost	Visibility	Equity
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LEVEL OF IMPACT
 ● LIMITED
 ● ● MODERATE
 ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

Water & Land Use

2



Reduce annual potable water use 20% from 2023 levels by 2030, protect and maintain campus trees at the 2025 level, and encourage growth of pollinator-friendly landscaping and campus gardens.

In the arid Southwest, water is one of the region’s most precious and limited natural resources. Climate change is intensifying drought conditions and stressing water systems across New Mexico. As documented in UNM’s STARS report, the university’s Main Campus consumes nearly 310 million gallons of potable water in a single year, with a significant share going to landscape irrigation.⁵ This translates to over 10,700 gallons per UNM student and employee annually. When the university’s golf courses and hospital are included in the water consumption total, UNM consumed over 616 million gallons of water in 2023.

Urban land management — including vegetation, tree canopy, and land cover — plays a critical role in managing stormwater, supporting biodiversity, and mitigating the urban heat island effect. By improving water efficiency, protecting trees, and expanding pollinator-friendly landscapes and campus gardens, UNM can conserve resources, strengthen climate resilience, and model sustainable land and water stewardship.



Goal 2

Water & Land Use



Actions & Evaluation		Metrics	Champions
1	Improve water efficiency in landscaping through installing irrigation system meters and programmable efficient irrigation systems, fixing outdated irrigation systems, reducing non-functional turf and promoting Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) on campus.	- Gallons of potable water used per capita - ft² of non-functional turf reduction # Of GSI projects implemented	- Facility Services - UNM Golf Courses - Office of Sustainability
2	Improve water metering and efficiency in campus buildings, implement building-level water metering, and install water-efficient fixtures in all new construction and retrofits.	Gallons of water used/ft²	- Facility Services - Lobo Energy - HSC Capital Projects - UNMH Planning & Construction
3	Increase pollinator/wildlife-friendly landscaping and care on campus, prioritizing high-visibility and underutilized campus spaces.	# Pollinator-friendly habitat patches on campus - Distance between pollinator habitats - Species counts during City Nature Challenge	- Facility Services - Office of Sustainability - Academic partners
4	Protect campus tree canopy and maintain or increase the number of campus trees, utilizing climate-adapted trees and focusing on projects that may reduce heat island impact. Maintain Higher Education Tree Campus standing and ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation.	# Trees planted per year/# trees lost % Tree canopy coverage - Years Higher Education Tree Campus designation achieved/arboretum accreditation maintained	- Office of Sustainability - Facility Services - Campus Tree & Arboretum Advisory Committee

 GHG Reduction	 Waste Reduction	 Human Health Impact	 Cost	 Visibility	 Equity
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LEVEL OF IMPACT ● LIMITED ● ● MODERATE ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

Waste Management

3



Double the landfill diversion rate by 2030 through expanded waste reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting programs that are supported by campus-wide infrastructure improvements, education, and behavior change initiatives.

Waste reduction is arguably the most visible part of campus sustainability, and improving waste diversion directly impacts greenhouse gas emissions, resource conservation, and operating costs. According to UNM’s most recent waste inventory, in 2024 the institution generated over 3,600 tons of solid waste, yet diverted only about 13% from the landfill through recycling efforts. Much of this waste is preventable or recoverable.

Improving waste management requires systems that prioritize waste reduction and reuse and are supported by strong data tracking, visible infrastructure, and campus-wide behavior change. By enhancing reuse networks, building a culture of waste awareness, and expanding recycling and composting, UNM can significantly reduce its environmental footprint and align with best practices in sustainable resource management.



Goal 3

Waste Management



Actions & Evaluation		Metrics	Champions
1	Increase waste data collection and develop an annual campus-wide waste audit and reporting process to track progress.	- Annual tons of landfill waste, recycling, and compost - Accurate, comprehensive diversion rate	- Facility Services - Office of Sustainability - UNM Food - UNMH
2	Identify opportunities for targeted interventions to expand waste reduction efforts at UNM and focus on these priority areas, such as reducing medical waste.	- Reduction in materials purchased - Reduction in tons trash generated	- Office of Sustainability - UNMH - Facility Services
3	Establish reuse channels for materials, equipment, and furnishings on campus and work with UNM Surplus, Lobo Reclaim, and through other avenues to re-home items at UNM and to other public entities.	- Tons or volume material diverted from landfill # Of items reused	- University Services/Surplus - Residence Life & Student Housing - Office of Sustainability
4	Engage students and staff with behavior-based campaigns and training that make waste reduction visible and actionable.	# Students/staff/faculty reached with outreach material - Increased waste diversion rate	- Office of Sustainability - Facility Services - Institutional Support Services (ISS) Marketing & Communications - University Communication & Marketing (UCAM) - Residence Life & Student Housing
5	Standardize and expand access to recycling infrastructure in highly utilized locations and for major waste-generating events.	# New bins deployed; waste diversion rates at events	- Office of Sustainability - Facility Services
6	Address campus e-waste (discarded electrical and electronic equipment) at UNM, from purchasing to disposal.	# ENERGY STAR®, post-consumer content, or other certified eco-products bought - lbs e-waste recycled	- Facility Services - Purchasing - Office of Sustainability
7	Investigate an on-site composting facility at UNM and enhance organics collection and composting systems.	- Tons of compost collected each year # Collection points	- Facility Services - UNM Food - Office of Sustainability

 GHG Reduction	 Waste Reduction	 Human Health Impact	 Cost	 Visibility	 Equity
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LEVEL OF IMPACT ● LIMITED ● ● MODERATE ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

Transportation

4



Reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles for commuting to campus, and transition the UNM vehicle fleet toward cleaner, more efficient alternatives to support emissions reductions, improved air quality, and more equitable access to sustainable transportation options.

Transportation is a source of greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, and campus congestion and is the second highest source of emissions in New Mexico.⁶ Many UNM students, staff, and faculty commute to campus using single-occupancy vehicles, putting pressure on parking and surrounding roads. In addition, across all its campuses and operations, UNM maintains a fleet of over 900 vehicles, most of which rely on fossil fuels.

Improving access to walking, biking, and public transit, reducing reliance on solo driving, and investing in clean fleet technologies are key strategies for making transportation more equitable and affordable, improving air quality, and lowering emissions. By enhancing infrastructure, shifting policy, and encouraging behavior change, UNM can create a more sustainable campus transportation system.



Goal 4

Transportation



Actions & Evaluation		Metrics	Champions
1	Improve data gathering for campus commuting to establish baseline statistics.	• % Lobos using alternative transportation • Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for commuters • % Solo commuters	• Office of Sustainability • Parking & Transportation Services (PATS)
2	Expand bike, pedestrian, and micro-mobility infrastructure on and near campus, including bike and scooter parking and safer, better connected corridors.	• # Recommendations in Safe Mobility Action Plan and Integrated Campus Plan implemented • # Bike valet users	• Campus Capital and Space Planning (CCSP) • PATS • Office of Sustainability • Student Affairs • City of Albuquerque (CABQ)
3	Investigate a UNM Carpool Program that makes it easier for students, staff, and faculty to connect with ride matches and incentivizes shared commutes.	• # Of active carpool users • # Of carpool incentives issued	• Office of Sustainability • PATS • UNMH Parking & Transportation
4	Increase the efficiency of UNM's fleet: complete a detailed vehicle inventory, downsize the fleet where appropriate, and modify UNM policy to require fuel-efficient vehicle purchases.	• Reduction in # of fleet vehicles • Average mpg-e of UNM fleet	• Facility Services • UNMH • Office of Sustainability
5	Support vehicle electrification by studying and pursuing UNM fleet electrification, where practical. Deploy additional EV charging infrastructure to support fleet and personal vehicle transition.	• # Of chargers installed • # Of EV's in UNM fleet • Utilization rate of campus EV chargers	• Facility Services • PATS • HSC Capital Projects • UNMH • Office of Sustainability
6	Pursue Bicycle Friendly University rating by The League of American Bicyclists and improve UNM's rating in subsequent applications.	Rating level for Bicycle Friendly Campus designation	• Office of Sustainability • PATS • Outdoor Adventure Center

 GHG Reduction	 Waste Reduction	 Human Health Impact	 Cost	 Visibility	 Equity
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Food & Dining

5



Transform academic campus dining operations to reduce food and plastic waste, increase food recovery and donation efforts, and support a more local and sustainable food system, fostering health, equity, and environmental responsibility.

Food systems are deeply connected to public health, social equity, and climate change. Globally, food production accounts for up to one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, with meat, dairy, and food waste as major contributors.⁷ At UNM, dining operations serve thousands of meals daily, creating both opportunities and responsibilities to reduce environmental impact and support students, staff, and faculty wellbeing. Single-use plastics and food waste remain persistent challenges at UNM, despite food insecurity also being a major challenge.⁸

By reducing food and plastic waste, increasing food recovery and donations, and sourcing more food locally and sustainably, UNM can cut emissions, reduce landfill waste, support local economies, and advance food equity on campus. Dining practices are a highly visible and impactful way for the university to demonstrate environmental leadership and engage the campus community in sustainable change.



Goal 5

Food & Dining



Actions & Evaluation		Metrics	Champions
1	Reduce use of single-use plastics at campus dining facilities and events through procurement policies, reusables programs, and alternative material sourcing.	- Quantity single-use plastic items purchased # Plastic-free events - Topanga Box usage	- UNM Food - Aramark - Office of Sustainability
2	Improve forecasting, prep practices, and student engagement campaigns to reduce pre- and post-consumer food waste by 10% annually.	Lbs food waste	- UNM Food - Aramark - Office of Sustainability
3	Recover and redistribute surplus edible food through food recovery partnerships and protocols, targeting a 10% annual increase of food recovery.	% Leftover food recovered and redistributed	- UNM Food - Aramark - Lobo Food Pantry
4	Maintain Lobo Eats app as a tool for recovering leftover food and assisting with campus food insecurity.	Growth in Lobo Eats app users and approved posters	- UNM Food - Information Technologies
5	Increase local food procurement for residential dining to at least 15% of purchases and implement a clear tracking system.	Growth in Lobo Eats app users and approved posters	- UNM Food - Aramark

 GHG Reduction	 Waste Reduction	 Human Health Impact	 Cost	 Visibility	 Equity
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LEVEL OF IMPACT ● LIMITED ● ● MODERATE ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

GOALS

1

Applied Learning
& Academic
Integration

2

Trainings
& Events

3

Communications
& Outreach

4

Institutional
Capacity

**Build
Sustainability
Engagement
& Culture**

**Transform
Campus
Operations**

Build Sustainability Engagement & Culture

This strategic area focuses on embedding sustainability into the fabric of campus life — through education, training, events, and inclusive governance that foster a shared culture of responsibility, awareness, and action. By integrating sustainability into academic and co-curricular experiences, professional development, leadership opportunities, and campus traditions, this strategic area aims to inspire and empower students, faculty, staff, and community partners to contribute to a more just, resilient, and sustainable future.



Applied Learning & Academic Integration 1



Utilize UNM’s campus infrastructure for applied sustainability learning opportunities for students, and integrate campus sustainability infrastructure and operations into curriculum, student projects, and research.

According to the UNM STARS report, over 200 courses across disciplines at UNM already incorporate sustainability topics, and dozens of research and internship opportunities are related to sustainability.⁵ However, there is significant untapped potential to further integrate campus operations into coursework, capstone projects, and student-led research. Connecting students directly with campus systems not only deepens academic learning but also advances operational sustainability goals and fosters cross-campus collaboration.

Hands-on learning is one of the most effective ways for students to engage in complex sustainability challenges and build the skills needed for real-world problem-solving. As the leading higher education research institution in New Mexico — with infrastructure that spans energy and water systems, waste management, food services, and extensive grounds — UNM has a unique opportunity to turn its entire campus into a classroom for sustainability education.



Goal 1

Applied Learning & Academic Integration



Actions & Evaluation			Metrics	Champions
1	Integrate campus systems (energy, grounds, waste) into UNM curriculum, including classes, capstones, and independent studies.		# Courses utilizing campus for sustainability learning # Student projects based on UNM infrastructure	- Office of Sustainability - Sustainability Studies - Colleges and Schools across UNM - ARID Institute
2	Match students with campus operational units (e.g., Facility Services, UNM Food, PATS, Lobo Energy) to apply their skills to campus sustainability needs or pursue applied research and experiential learning projects in priority sustainability areas.		# Students working on sustainability projects in ISS units	- Office of Sustainability - Institutional Support Services - Colleges and Schools across UNM
3	Utilize UNM Sustainability datasets, real-time monitoring, and archival resources for student-led data visualization, analytics and modeling.		# Student products produced with UNM sustainability data # Of publicly displayed data	- Office of Sustainability - CCSP - Lobo Energy - Colleges and Schools across UNM
4	Develop a list of UNM-based projects geared toward various levels of students that address campus or community sustainability needs.		# Sustainability projects publicly listed	- Office of Sustainability - ARID Institute
5	Establish stable funding and student staffing model for Lobo Gardens and expand cultivated beds and garden yields.		# Students employed or in classes at Lobo Gardens - ft² of cultivated space - Lbs produce donated to Lobo Food Pantry	- Sustainability Studies Program - Geography & Environmental Studies Department

 Student Engagement	 Academics & Research	 Community Engagement	 Cost	 Visibility	 Equity
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LEVEL OF IMPACT ● LIMITED ● ● MODERATE ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

Trainings & Events

2



Develop and deliver engaging, inclusive sustainability trainings and events that educate the UNM community, celebrate campus sustainability milestones, and foster a culture of environmental stewardship, increasing participation and long-term impact over time.

Building a culture of sustainability requires ongoing education, engagement, and opportunities for the UNM campus community to connect with environmental issues in meaningful ways. Events and training play a critical role in raising awareness, fostering behavior change, and creating a shared sense of responsibility across students, staff, and faculty.

UNM hosts several annual sustainability-focused events — including the Sustainability Expo, Arbor Day tree plantings, and more recently Bike to UNM Day — but there is potential to expand participation and deepen impact. Many sustainability engagement efforts at UNM are driven by small but committed segments of the campus community. Scaling these efforts through inclusive, accessible programming, expanded community partnerships, and adding broad-based training can amplify reach and help embed sustainability values into everyday campus life.



Goal 2

Trainings & Events



Actions & Evaluation			Metrics	Champions
1	Offer a consistent calendar of at least 5 sustainability-focused events per academic year, such as the Sustainability Expo, Arbor Day celebrations, Bike to UNM Day, campus clean ups, SUST Day of Service, and sustainability-related career panels.		Year-over-year increase in event attendance	- Office of Sustainability - Sustainability Studies - PATS - Facility Services - Outdoor Recreation - HSC Wellness - ARID Institute
2	Create sustainability trainings for students, staff, and faculty.		# Trainings developed - Incorporate aspects of sustainability training into new staff, faculty, and student orientations	- Office of Sustainability - Facility Services - Academic Affairs - ISS Communications - New Student Orientation - Human Resources
3	Partner with academic units, student groups, centers of support, and community partners to co-host events that highlight diverse perspectives on sustainability and climate justice.		At least 2 new partnerships or co-hosted events each year	- Office of Sustainability - Sustainability Studies - ARID Institute
4	Track and analyze event participation data to evaluate reach and engagement across key demographic groups (students, staff, faculty).		Annual participation data that includes demographic information	Office of Sustainability

 Student Engagement	 Academics & Research	 Community Engagement	 Cost	 Visibility	 Equity
● ● ●	●	● ● ●	●	● ● ●	● ● ●
●	●		●	● ● ●	● ●
● ● ●	● ●	●	●	● ●	● ● ●
●	●	●	●	●	● ●

LEVEL OF IMPACT
 ● LIMITED
 ● ● MODERATE
 ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

Communications & Outreach

3



Build a clear, consistent, and compelling sustainability communications program that raises awareness, inspires action, and strengthens campus-wide engagement in UNM’s sustainability efforts.

Clear and consistent communication is essential for building awareness, inspiring action, and creating a shared sense of purpose around sustainability. While UNM has made significant strides in advancing campus sustainability, the Strategic Planning process made clear these efforts often go unnoticed by much of the campus community, and sustainability outreach and engagement remain areas with room for growth.

Effective communications — through newsletters, campus media, social media platforms, signage, and in-person outreach — can make sustainability efforts more visible and accessible. Celebrating progress, showcasing student and staff leadership, and connecting people to opportunities fosters a stronger culture of environmental responsibility. A robust communications program helps ensure that the entire UNM community is informed, inspired, and invited to take part in building a more sustainable campus. It also helps to improve the visibility of the university with external audiences, including alumni, community and business leaders, and elected officials.



Goal 3

Communications & Outreach



	Actions & Evaluation	Metrics	Champions
1	Increase student, staff, and faculty awareness of sustainability resources, initiatives, and results through injecting sustainability content into regular UNM campus-wide communications, social media, and tabling at relevant campus events.	# Press releases, articles, mentions in campus-wide communications # Events tabled	- Office of Sustainability - UCAM - ISS Marketing & Communications
2	Launch a sustainability newsletter and maintain regular content on the Office of Sustainability website and social media channels to highlight ongoing initiatives, events, and opportunities.	- Email/newsletter open rate - Social media engagement growth # Followers and website visits	Office of Sustainability
3	Establish a UNM Sustainability Awards program to highlight exceptional students, faculty, staff, and campus partners who are leading transformational efforts in sustainability.	- Awards program established # Awards, award press	- Office of Sustainability - Sustainability Studies
4	Maintain engaging, regularly updated sustainability-focused content in high-visibility campus locations—such as digital signage, campus arboretum tours, and informational displays.	# Unique signs # People reached with signage # Arboretum signs/tours	- Office of Sustainability - CCSP - Facility Services - ISS Communications - Information Technologies

 Student Engagement	 Academics & Research	 Community Engagement	 Cost	 Visibility	 Equity
● ●		●	●	● ● ●	● ● ●
●	●	●	●	● ● ●	● ●
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LEVEL OF IMPACT
 ● LIMITED
 ● ● MODERATE
 ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

Institutional Capacity

4



Embed sustainability into the structure of The University of New Mexico by reestablishing a Sustainability Advisory Council and launching a student Sustainability Corps, fostering sustainability leadership and ownership across campus.

Achieving long-term sustainability goals depends on strong institutional structures, leadership pathways, and cross-campus collaboration. While UNM has made progress through operational improvements, educational programs, and establishing the Office of Sustainability and Director position in 2024, the university currently lacks a formal advisory body to guide and support sustainability efforts at scale or a structured program to connect students to sustainability in campus operations.

A campus-wide Sustainability Advisory Council will champion implementation of the Sustainability Strategic Plan and provide accountability and alignment across UNM's campus. In addition, launching a Sustainability Corps of trained student representatives will help link students to sustainability in campus operations, into student life, and promote peer-to-peer engagement. These initiatives are foundational for ensuring continuity and building a culture of shared ownership in UNM's sustainability vision.



Goal 4

Institutional Capacity



Actions & Evaluation		Metrics	Champions
1	Establish and formalize a Sustainability Advisory Council with a mission-aligned charter, clear processes, and 15-25 diverse members from at least 8 major campus sectors (students, staff, faculty, operations, academics).	- Advisory Council charter finalized by December 2025 - Membership diversity	- Office of the President - Office of Sustainability
2	Establish transparent reporting and communication for the Sustainability Advisory Council by maintaining a public webpage with meeting agendas, minutes, and reports; assess and adapt Council structure and membership to continuously align with institutional needs.	Website and processes established	Office of Sustainability
3	Launch the inaugural cohort of 10 Sustainability Corps undergraduate students by Fall 2026; create recruitment materials, clear structure and expectations, and a training curriculum.	# Corps applicants - Corps retention rate - Diversity profile	- Office of Sustainability - Academic partners
4	Activate Sustainability Corps to engage in peer education and outreach, including support for events, social media campaigns, and campus initiatives; support Corps-led projects that are aligned with the Sustainability Strategic Plan.	# Of events supported # Of peer engagement touch-points # Of Sustainability Corps projects completed annually	Office of Sustainability

 Student Engagement	 Academics & Research	 Community Engagement	 Cost	 Visibility	 Equity
●	●	●	●	● ●	● ●
			●	● ● ●	● ●
● ● ●	●	● ●	● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
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LEVEL OF IMPACT ● LIMITED ● ● MODERATE ● ● ● SIGNIFICANT

Conclusion

The University of New Mexico’s Sustainability Strategic Plan provides an actionable roadmap for advancing environmental stewardship, equity, and resilience over the next five years. Developed through a collaborative, data-informed process, this plan reflects the aspirations of the UNM community and aligns with broader institutional goals, including those outlined in the UNM 2040 Strategic Plan.

By transforming campus operations, embedding sustainability into academics and engagement, and strengthening institutional capacity, this plan establishes a foundation for long-term, systemic change.

Its success will depend on continued leadership, cross-campus collaboration, and the active participation of students, staff, and faculty. Successful implementation of this plan will also depend on community partnerships and coordination, including with local and state government, utilities, community groups, and non-governmental organizations.

Sustainability is not a standalone initiative — it is a shared commitment to responsible stewardship of our resources, a healthier and more just campus, and a thriving future for New Mexico. This plan can guide UNM to lead by example and create lasting impact for future generations of Lobos.



Appendix

Sustainability Policies & Milestones

*Items with asterisk indicate State of New Mexico Policy

Year	Item
1986	First Co-Generation Unit Installed
2003	District Energy System Upgraded
2004	Utilities Master Plan
2006	Executive Order 2006-001: Green Buildings* Sustainability Task Force established to write University Sustainability Policy 40 Year Water Plan
2007	First Greenhouse Gas Inventory Smart Metering Implemented in Utility System Sustainability Studies Program Begins UNM Signs American College & University President’s Climate Commitment
2008	Energy Conservation Program Established Sustainability Adopted as a Core UNM Value Sustainability Policy 2100
2009	Climate Action Plan Greenhouse Gas Inventory
2010	Lobo Gardens Established
2013	Greenhouse Gas Inventory Second Co-Generation Unit Purchased Utilities Master Plan
2015	Student Fee Review Board Establishes “Green Fund” (\$50,000 total)
2016	Sustainability 5-Year Plan Sustainability Council Established (disbanded 2017)

2017	ASUNM Resolution: Renewable Energy UNM Joins University Climate Change Coalition (UC3) Sustainability Policy 2100 Revised
2018	ASUNM Resolution: 100% Renewable Energy by 2050
2019	Executive Order 2019-003: State Greenhouse Gas Reductions*
2020	ASUNM Resolution 5F: Climate Emergency ASUNM Resolution 7F: Fossil Fuel Divestment Staff Council Resolution 2020 #2: Addressing Climate Change at UNM
2021	ASUNM Joint Resolution 7S: Climate Protection Faculty Senate Resolution: Resolution to Invest in Green Initiatives
2022	UNM 2040: Opportunity Defined
2023	Utilities Master Plan
2024	Director of Sustainability Hired & Standalone Office of Sustainability Established Greenhouse Gas Inventory UNM STARS Silver Designation
2025	Integrated Campus Plan Tree Campus Higher Education Designation ASUNM Resolution 2S: Climate Emergency National Arboretum Accreditation Safe Mobility Action Plan



Glossary

Term	Definition
Applied Learning	An educational approach where students learn by directly applying knowledge, skills, and theories in real-world settings or creative projects.
ArbNet Accreditation	A professional credential for arboreta that certifies arboreta based on their professional standards and practices.
City Nature Challenge	An annual international citizen science effort to document urban biodiversity through observations of wild plants and animals.
Co-Benefits	The additional positive outcomes that arise from an action or policy beyond its primary intended goal. In the context of climate action, co-benefits are the positive effects on other areas like public health, the environment, or the economy that result from measures taken to mitigate or adapt to climate change.
Energy Use Intensity (EUI)	A key performance indicator that measures how much energy a building consumes relative to its size, typically expressed as energy per square foot per year.
Geoexchange	Also known as geothermal heat pump or ground source heat pump, geoexchange is a technology that uses the earth’s relatively stable temperature below the surface to heat and cool buildings.
Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions	The release of gases into the atmosphere — including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide — that trap heat and contribute to the greenhouse effect and global warming.
Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)	Nature-based practices (e.g., rain gardens, bioswales, permeable paving) that capture, filter, and infiltrate stormwater to improve water quality, reduce flooding, and enhance campus landscapes.
LEED Certification	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a globally recognized green building rating system developed by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).

Lobo Eats App	A digital tool to notify the UNM community of leftover edible food available for pickup, meant to address food waste and insecurity.
Lobo Energy Inc.	A non-profit associated with UNM that tracks energy savings, emissions, and advises on utility matters.
Lobo Gardens	A UNM campus community garden that grows produce and is used to teach and engage students in sustainable food cultivation practices.
MTCO ₂ e	Metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, the standard unit to quantify GHG emissions.
Net-Zero Emissions	Achieving a balance between the greenhouse gases emitted and those removed from the atmosphere.
Non-functional turf	Irrigated turf grass that has no recreational purpose or that is primarily decorative. Includes turf in or around medians, roundabouts, parking lots, landscape strips between the sidewalk and the street, commercial properties and industrial properties.
Scope 1 Emissions	Carbon emissions resulting directly from fuel combustion on campus, primarily for electricity generation (stationary emissions) and from the campus fleet (mobile emissions).
Scope 2 Emissions	Carbon emissions associated with the electricity UNM purchases from Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM).
Scope 3 Emissions	Carbon emissions resulting indirectly from UNM operations, either from upstream activities (such as purchasing) or downstream (e.g., students, faculty, and staff commuting or traveling for work and school).
Topanga Box	A reusable container program for dining that reduces single-use plastics.
Tree Campus Higher Education	An Arbor Day Foundation designation that recognizes colleges and universities for effective urban forest management.
Waste Diversion	Reducing waste sent to landfills through reuse, recycling, and composting.

References

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² The University of New Mexico. 2025 (May). Integrated Campus Plan. https://css.unm.edu/campus-planning/adopted-unm_integrated_campus_plan.pdf

³ Some of these commitments include Executive Order 2019-003: Addressing Climate Change and Energy Waste Prevention, the 50-Year Water Plan, expanded state agency capacity including NMED Climate Change Bureau and EMNRD Climate Change Bureau, 2019 Energy Transition Act, 2019 Water Data Act, 2020 Climate Action Plan, 2023 Water Security Planning Act, 2024 New Mexico Building Code, and 2024 Clean Fuel Standard Act.

⁴ The University of New Mexico. 2024. Greenhouse Gas Inventory 2024. https://sustainability.unm.edu/assets/unm-sustainability_greenhouse-gas-inventory_2024.pdf

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⁸ Cargas, S., M. Walsh-Dilley, H. Mechler, and K. Coakley. 2021. Food and Housing Insecurity Among Students at The University of New Mexico: A Basic Needs Research Report. <https://basicneeds.unm.edu/basic-needs-2021-report.pdf>

