



1800 Massachusetts Ave,
NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20036
T: 202 828-7422
F: 202 828-5110
www.usgbc.org

LEED[®] and Higher Education

How is the LEED Green Building Rating System related to campus sustainability?

The built environment has a profound impact on our natural environment. In the U.S., buildings account for 39% of carbon dioxide emissions and 71% of total electricity consumption¹. With roughly 240,000 buildings spread across over 4,100 higher education institutions, colleges and universities can benefit from making green building a central element of sustainability planning. Green buildings offer practical solutions for some of the biggest challenges facing our society today.

The LEED certification program promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in six key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, indoor environmental quality and innovation in design. As the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, operations and maintenance of high performance green buildings, LEED provides building owners and operators the tools they need to have an immediate and measurable impact on their buildings' performance.

How can LEED be applied to new buildings on college and university campuses?

The LEED for New Construction rating system is the appropriate certification system for new building construction on college and university campuses.

How can the operations and maintenance of existing campus buildings be improved?

The LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance rating system can be applied to single or multiple existing buildings with shared operating systems. With trained campus operating staff and faculty, and awareness of the sustainable issues being mediated on site, the LEED for Existing Buildings: O&M program will provide valuable savings and gains. In the case of a project pursuing certification for one building at a time, LEED for Existing Buildings: O&M will apply to that building's operations only. More likely, a campus project will be pursuing certification for more than one building at a time. In this case, there are a number of credits within LEED for Existing Buildings: O&M that can be applied to multiple buildings at the same time.

Most Sustainable Sites credits can be documented for use with multiple buildings on the same site. For example, the campus can apply site-wide stormwater and lighting

¹ U.S. EIA, DoE, 2005



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plans that will encompass all buildings in the project. Many of the operating plans required in LEED for Existing Buildings: O&M can be treated in this way. The Materials and Resources (MR) section's Sustainable Purchasing: Food credit can be applied campus-wide and can earn points for any building with food services, and the Solid Waste Management: Ongoing Consumables credit can apply to any building that provides printing services to students.

LEED for Existing Buildings: O&M encourages projects to install and monitor systems meters, whole building and sub-meters. Credits requiring systems meters can be installed once and will count towards credits in multiple projects. Similarly, purchasing Renewable Energy Certificates for the whole campus can help project teams earn points towards multiple building projects.

Can a whole campus be LEED certified?

Special consideration has been taken for using LEED on a campus setting, where multiple buildings share the same amenities. LEED can be applied to situations where one building within a campus is being certified; where multiple buildings are to be evaluated and certified as a package; and where multiple buildings share some of the same characteristics, but will be evaluated for certification individually. The Portfolio Program, which is a pilot USGBC program enabling a volume LEED certification process will allow for streamlining of certification for multiple buildings on one campus.

Does LEED work with other campus sustainability initiatives?

LEED is directly built into the two largest sustainability initiatives in the Higher Education community. The American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) obliges signatories to initiate two of seven listed tangible actions to reduce greenhouse gases. One of these options is instituting a campus green building policy that requires a LEED Silver certification for new construction and major renovations.

The Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System (STARS) developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) awards points in three credit areas for the use of LEED for New Construction & Major Renovation, LEED for Existing Buildings: O&M and LEED for Commercial Interiors.

LEED is also recognized by many other campus-based sustainability campaigns for the direct and indirect environmental, economic, and social benefits that LEED certified buildings generate. The National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program and the Clinton Global Initiative Campus Program are two of the best known.

For more information, please contact leedinfo@usgbc.org