

UMB News

Face to Face: Sustainability at UMB

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Polar explorer and environmental activist Robert Swan is famous for positing that “the greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.” Mindful of that reality, the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) has always made sustainability a priority. Within the last year, however, UMB has taken two big steps forward in this regard.

First, sustainability (paired with well-being) has been named as a [UMB core value](#), one of a handful of concepts intended to “guide our academic programs, operating philosophy, and commitment to our constituents, while supporting our dedication to global enhancement and social progress.”

The other big development was the establishment of the UMB [Office of Sustainability](#). Led by interim assistant vice president **Anna Borgerding, PMP**, the office works with every part of UMB, designing, implementing, and monitoring a wide array of sustainability projects, all designed to reduce energy and resource use, save money, and promote equity and a harmonious natural and work environment.

On Oct. 20, Borgerding joined UMB President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, to discuss the status of Office of Sustainability projects and plans and gather feedback and new ideas from the UMB community. Jarrell led off with comments about one of his own sustainability measures — his plug-in hybrid Chevrolet Volt.

“I don’t pay attention to the gas prices anymore. And to be honest with you, I get ticked off whenever I go visit someplace and there’s no charging station,” he said. “So, you get quite amorous about your car. I never thought I’d think that way. But I do love my car. And I hope that you all consider that with your next purchase.”

The University has 21 two-user electric vehicle charging stations sprinkled in each of the garages. Borgerding offered that rising acceptance of hybrid and electric vehicles is pushing UMB to install even more stations.

But electric vehicles are just the tip of the sustainability iceberg. The office works with sustainability officers from every part of UMB, divided into four working groups.

“One of those working groups is green labs,” Borgerding said. “Labs are resource-intensive spaces and also energy-intensive spaces. And what the green labs program aims to do is provide labs with an opportunity to document the sustainable practices that they’re already incorporating and to gather ideas. So, shutting the sash when they’re not there, turning off the lights, and things like that ... reporting leaks, so that we can make sure that our lab spaces are using less energy on our campus.”

Borgerding said that labs — with their strict requirements for ventilation, heating and cooling, and humidity control — make up an estimated 76 percent of total UMB energy use.

During the discussion, Borgerding also described progress on the LED lighting program, educational programs in the schools of social work and medicine, and the addition of UMB’s second green wall in the new School of Nursing annex.

“I know Dean Kirschling [**Jane M. Kirschling, PhD, RN, FAAN**, the Bill and Joanne Conway Dean of the University of Maryland School of Nursing] has been a huge advocate for sustainability and wanted to put in a green wall not only as a showpiece, but it also has a psychological effect on individuals and calming effect as plants do,” Borgerding said. “They also help clean our air. And so, what you’re seeing here is the green wall in the School of Nursing and their new addition, so definitely go check it out. The plants were installed yesterday.”

In the question-and-answer period later in the program, Borgerding fielded questions about recycling and the new recycling center, composting on campus, transportation accommodations, the impact of telework, and much more. Watch the entire program by accessing the video link at the top of the page.

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