

Student Orientation: Sustainability at SOU Academic Year 2023/2024

Southern Oregon University consistently ranks as one of the most sustainable universities in the United States. We have been recognized on two separate occasions as having the best sustainability program in the country, we were the first campus to certify as a Bee Campus, and our commitments continue to inspire. In his first year as President of SOU, Rick Bailey announced our intent to become the first university in the country to produce 100% of our own electricity. In May 2022, we achieved a Gold STARS rating for Sustainability on campus. There are numerous ways to get involved and help SOU achieve its sustainability goals.



SOU Sustainability Office: SOU's Sustainability Office works with faculty, staff and students to develop and achieve SOU's goals and uphold its sustainability values. This includes climate action, energy use and generation, waste and material management and biodiversity. Sustainability jobs for students in this office are advertised on Handshake. The Sustainability Office also oversees the SOU Sustainability Council, which has opportunities for students to serve on the Council and share their ideas. More information on SOU's Sustainability Goals can be found in its [Strategic Plan](#), on SOU's Sustainability [website](#), or by following the Instagram page at @sustainability_sou. For more information, please contact SOU's Director of Sustainability, Becc Walker, email walkerr6@sou.edu.

Student Sustainability Team: The Student Sustainability Team works as part of the Social Justice and Equity Center, offering many resources for students. These include the Student Food Pantry, information on sustainability initiatives, access to basic needs resource information, and other yearly resources, like free cap and gown rentals for graduating seniors. Learn more about the team [here](#), or by following their Instagram page, @sou_studentsustainability.

Environmental Affairs Committee: Many committees have been established on campus and run through student government, ASSOU. The main committee involved with sustainability is the Environmental Affairs Committee (EAC) with the main purpose of overseeing the use of the Green Fund, which provides students with funding to execute sustainable and environmentally regenerative project initiatives on campus. Students who are not connected with student government can join committees as a 'Student-at-Large' and have a vote on the committee's operations. Learn more about the [ASSOU committees](#).

Institute for Applied Sustainability: The Institute for Applied Sustainability, located on the campus of Southern Oregon University, brings together scholars and practitioners to advance knowledge, lead, and collaborate to create solutions for a beautiful future. The Institute facilitates collaboration and creates innovative projects to demonstrate sustainability. There are also student internships that run through the Institute. Learn more [here](#).

Agriculture

The Farm at SOU: The Farm at SOU is a student-operated educational center for sustainable and organic food production. The Farm contributes fresh produce to the SOU dining facilities, as well as local elementary schools. The Farm also composts pre-consumer food waste from dining, helping to reduce waste and improve farm operations. Consider joining the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program that allows you to purchase fresh produce direct from the Farm at a reduced price! Learn more about the Farm at SOU [here](#). and click on 'produce' for information about the CSA program

Local Resources: Visit the Rogue Valley Growers and Crafters markets, usually in Ashland on Saturdays and Tuesdays from 8:30a-1p during the growing season from March to November. If

you have SNAP food stamps, some market items are available for 'double-up bucks', giving you twice as much for your EBT! Learn more [here](#).

The Rogue Valley Food System Network is involved in working to build a resilient food system in the valley. They have created a yearly Rogue Flavor Guide, which keeps the community up to date on events, educational materials, and food offerings in the Rogue Valley. Learn more [here](#) (<https://rvfoodsystem.org/>)

Food & Dining

Student Food Pantry: The Student Sustainability Team operates a Student Food Pantry throughout each term. All students are eligible to pick up free items from the pantry each week, including non-perishable foods, perishable foods, and toiletries or menstrual products. Learn more about the Food Pantry by visiting the Office of Student Activities in SU 312 or visit the [website](#).

SOU Dining: The dining facilities at SOU are working to improve sustainability in their operations. Each fall and spring, surveys are given out for students, staff, and faculty to provide feedback on dining experiences, which has led to introducing a new smoothie bar, more ethnic cuisine offerings, and improved visibility of allergen information. SOU Dining and the Residence Hall Association also co-host a biweekly Food Committee meeting for anyone to come and speak directly with SOU dining managers about their experiences on campus. Free samples of new recipes and potential products are offered at every meeting, and being a Food Committee member makes you eligible for the Secret Shopper Program! This program helps dining to regularly check customer service and food quality at the dining services on campus to improve the overall dining experience at SOU, plus the Secret Shopper gets a free meal! The SOU Dining website also includes information on healthy eating and the benefits of plant-based diets, which are significantly more sustainable in many ways. Learn more about dining at SOU [here](#).

Raiders Helping Raiders: Raiders Helping Raiders helps students fight food insecurity by providing access to free meals at the Hawk! Registered SOU students who do not currently have a dining package can apply for three free meal cards per month for use during lunch and dinner meal times. For more information on basic needs resources available to students, visit [here](#).

Material & Waste Management

Reduce: This is the best way to reduce waste, by reducing what is purchased in the first place! To stay eco-friendly, try only packing necessities when moving-in for school and avoid unnecessary purchases. This will also help reduce the items left behind during move-out.

Reuse: Bring or buy reusable items; like water bottles, mugs, plates, bowls, and utensils to reduce single-use plastics. SOU has water bottle refill stations in buildings across campus to make it easy for students to stay hydrated. The buildings also have “free stuff shelves” with books, binders, and other items students can have for free. The Hawk dining commons automatically enrolls incoming first-year students into a program to receive green to-go containers by first giving out a coupon that they can exchange for their container. These reusable containers greatly reduce the number of disposable containers used at SOU dining facilities.

Recycle: SOU’s student founded, on-campus recycling center is dedicated to processing many types of valuable materials and diverting them from landfills. Recycling bins are located throughout campus. Blue bins are for Mixed Recyclables and the red bins are for glass. Always make sure to rinse all containers and please do not include plastic lids, styrofoam, plastic bags, food, take-out / to-go containers, or waxed items when trying to recycle. Learn more about what can be recycled at SOU [here](#).

Energy Use & Generation

Solar Generation on Campus: We have ambitious plans to generate 100% of our electricity use by solar on campus. This will involve installing solar on more roof spaces as well as covering our parking lots in solar carports and integrating electric vehicle charging with the solar carports. This significant infrastructure transition comes with opportunities to integrate into our academic programs and research to ensure our students are getting hands-on experience.

EV Charging: SOU currently has 12 charging ports, 6 double stations, on campus and a single charger for a partnership project with the City of Ashland for an EV car share program funded by Forth Mobility. We have plans to increase our charging infrastructure in recognition that demand is increasing.

Tips on Energy Reduction: As well as generating renewable energy, we are looking to conserve energy and be more efficient with our energy use. You can help us by turning lights and equipment off that are not in use.

Transportation

Reduce Cost Bus Passes: SOU has partnered with the Rogue Valley Transportation District (RVTD) to give students greatly reduced prices on bus passes! Students can get their discounted pass for each quarter by filling out this [form](#) and downloading the UMO Mobility App, then signing in with your student email.

Biking & Cycling: SOU is a bike-friendly campus, supported by free bike tune-up events, bike swaps, and other incentives. The outdoor program even has a self-serve bike shop open during normal business hours so cyclists can use the OP's tools to service their bike.

SOU Transportation Options: Learn more about Transportation Options at SOU [here](#).

Other Opportunities to Get Involved

Events: The Student Sustainability Team puts on several events throughout the school year, the largest being the February Food Drive and Earth Day celebrations. Programs each year vary, so keep up to date on upcoming events by following the Instagram page, @sou_studentsustainability

Clubs: There are many clubs on campus that are great for those interested in Sustainability. In the past, these clubs have included the Sustainability Collective, the Sustainable Tourism Club, the Holistic Teaching and Learning Club (HTLC), Biology Club, Pollinator Club, and the Outdoor Program. Make sure to attend the Club Involvement Fair, usually occurring early in the Fall and Spring terms, to learn more about the clubs currently running on campus. Or visit this [website](#) for the full list of current clubs and organizations on campus.

Employment Opportunities: Look out for positions on Handshake for the Student Sustainability Team, the Farm at SOU, the Social Justice & Equity Center, or other programs on campus for employment opportunities. Find the list of current positions available [here](#).