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## About LEED® and Campus Sustainability

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### **How is the LEED® Green Building Rating System™ related to campus sustainability?**

Building construction draws 40% of global raw material consumption. In the US, buildings account for roughly 70% of all electricity consumption, 39% of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, and 12.2% of all potable water use. With roughly 240,000 buildings spread across over 4,100 higher education institutions, colleges and universities should make green building a central element of sustainability planning.

LEED promotes a whole-building approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality. As the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation 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.

### **Will the LEED system help us reduce our carbon footprint?**

Yes, the average LEED certified building uses 32% less electricity than a conventional building and saves 350 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions annually. Energy used by buildings can account for 70-90% of direct greenhouse gas emissions on a typical college or university campus, so with energy savings alone, LEED buildings take a big bite out of your carbon footprint.

LEED also addresses many factors that reduce carbon emissions in ways that are more difficult to quantify, like reducing water consumption, re-using building materials, using local materials, and providing for alternative forms of transportation.

### **What are the benefits of LEED certification as opposed to simply building to a LEED standard?**

The LEED® Green Building Rating System™ was produced by a coalition of national leaders from across the building industry, and is continuously improved to reflect market changes and improvements in building performance benchmarks. It is, on its own, a valuable tool for guiding decisions. For this reason among others, LEED has been adopted as a required building standard by many Colleges and Universities, State and Local Governments, and Federal Agencies.

The LEED certification process provides third-party verification that a building truly meets the standards and requirements set out in the rating system. Having a LEED certification also provides an easily understandable and recognizable way to compare green buildings worldwide.

Can you build a *green* building without getting it LEED certified? Yes.

Can you easily show that the building truly is LEED equivalent, or benchmark it against other *green* buildings without certifying? No.



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### **Does LEED certification add a lot of cost to the building project?**

The fee for certification is based on the size of the building and allows USGBC to maintain a rigorous review process, without adding an excessive cost burden. For medium to large buildings, the fee for certification under LEED for New Constructions is \$0.035/sq.ft. This fee is typically less than 0.1% of the total cost of the building project.

The added initial cost of green building, or *green premium*, comes from using practices and products that directly result in added-value for the life of the building. LEED certified projects cost less to operate and maintain than conventional buildings; they are energy- and water-efficient, saving an average of 30% on energy and up to 50% on potable water; are healthier and safer for occupants; they function as living laboratories for multi-disciplinary education; and are a physical demonstration of the values of the organizations that own and occupy them. While in most instances these benefits come with some extra initial cost, as project teams become more experienced, and as more green products and services enter the market, this *green premium* will continue to decrease.

### **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 gasses. One of these options is instituting a campus green building policy that requires a LEED Silver standard 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 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 buildings generate. The National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program and the Clinton Global Initiative Campus Program are two of the best known.