

Greening the University of Miami

When the University of Miami wanted help going green, the question arose to what Green Seal could do to help this institution go greener.

Like many organizations, local governments, businesses and academic institutions, the University of Miami already recognized the importance of good environmental stewardship and had made a commitment to taking a leadership role. With its GreenU program, it set an admirable, university-wide goal of increasing sustainability through the procurement of environmentally responsible products and environmentally sound maintenance and operations procedures for new and existing buildings.

The University called upon Green Seal two years ago to help identify areas in which it could improve energy efficiency, reduce toxic exposures, maximize natural resources and increase conservation efforts. Green Seal conducted a six-month evaluation, including on-site visits and interviews with staff and management, in which it thoroughly audited the Coral Gables, Marine and Medical campuses and provided a detailed list of recommendations.

Using checklists of criteria developed for similar clients, Green Seal evaluated the University's green progress in areas such as purchasing, lighting and electronics, custodial services and products, landscaping and other areas, such as roofing, parking, pest control and recycling programs. Because of the unique climate considerations in Miami, the audit paid special attention to opportunities to improve the efficiency of the University's cooling and ventilation systems.

Green Seal also identified existing areas of strength at the University—such as its highly efficient and effective purchasing department—to help maximize resources and assets that would help it reach its sustainability goals as quickly as possible. Likewise, it identified areas of leadership—such as the University's conservation initiatives in lighting and electronics—that placed it ahead of the pack in its field.

In many instances, Green Seal was able to find areas in which the University could both improve sustainability and save money. For example, improving the efficiency of heating and cooling systems and reducing energy usage by maximizing natural resources saves money and lowers environmental impacts.

From identifying native plant species that would help conserve landscaping resources, to recommending environmentally preferable architectural paints, Green Seal provided the university with a wide range of opportunities to achieve its goals.

Green Seal also gave the University the tools it needed to continue making progress in the years ahead: criteria with which the purchasing department could evaluate green products; detailed checklists of short- and long-term action items; and recommendations for policies that would help maintain improvements over time.

Finally, Green Seal provided the University with recommendations for training programs that would enable campus staff to achieve continuous gains in environmental sustainability in all areas. Expanded employee training programs are essential for conserving resources, improving efficiencies, reducing potentially hazardous exposures (for example to cleaning products) and enhancing employee pride.

Armed with a thorough assessment of the progress it had already made, and the detailed steps it needed to take to complete its journey, the University of Miami was well positioned to meet and exceed the highest of environmental standards.



Green Seal is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to safeguarding the environment and transforming the marketplace by promoting the manufacture, purchase and use of environmentally responsible products and services. For more information go to www.greenseal.org.