

# 100 years of commitment to sustainability and creation care, from farm-grown food to LEED buildings

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*With thanks to Kenton Brubaker, Beryl and Mark Brubaker, Clair Mellinger, Eldon Kurtz, Jonathan Lantz-Trissel, Ed Lehman, and LeRoy Troyer.*



EMU students are provided with fresh, organic produce from our six campus gardens, pioneered years ago by a professor hoping to give students a practical exercise in sustainability.

## 1917

The school opens in Assembly Park.

## 1920

The school adds the 103-acre Whitmore farm to the west. Farmer D. Stoner Krady, paid \$80/month (as much as a faculty member), is employed to work tillable portions of the land. His living quarters are built with funds donated by Brunk. A heifer and three goats are butchered during the '20-21 school year, and the farm provides milk, butter, and eggs to campus.

## **1921**

In the fall of 1921, Krady decides he wants to go to school, which means he, his wife Frances, and young daughters Elva and Ruth must move out of the dwelling. Emanuel Suter becomes the campus farmer.

## **1923**

Farm operations ceased. Equipment, crops, and stock are sold along with 30 acres.

Students provide labor for grounds beautification. Individuals sometimes purchased and planted trees themselves.

## **1927**

Frugality leads to students paying two cents a term for every watt of light above 40.

## **1930**

During the Great Depression (1929-1933), faculty and their families living on campus maintained gardens and kept goats, chickens, and even a cow or two on campus.

## **1946**

The agriculture curriculum includes a “home project,” designed for practical application of classroom learning in which students choose animals to work with, including broilers and laying hens, sheep, pigs, and heifers. This program lasts about two years and is dropped because of a lack of interest.

## **1952**

The high school agriculture program is revived, and farmland is leased. Rural Life Week features an all-school visit to a Sparkling Springs farm, with demonstrations of bread-making, quilting, soap-making, rug-making, and weaving. Dairy practices, stock-raising, soil conservation, and tree culture were also demonstrated.

## **1959**

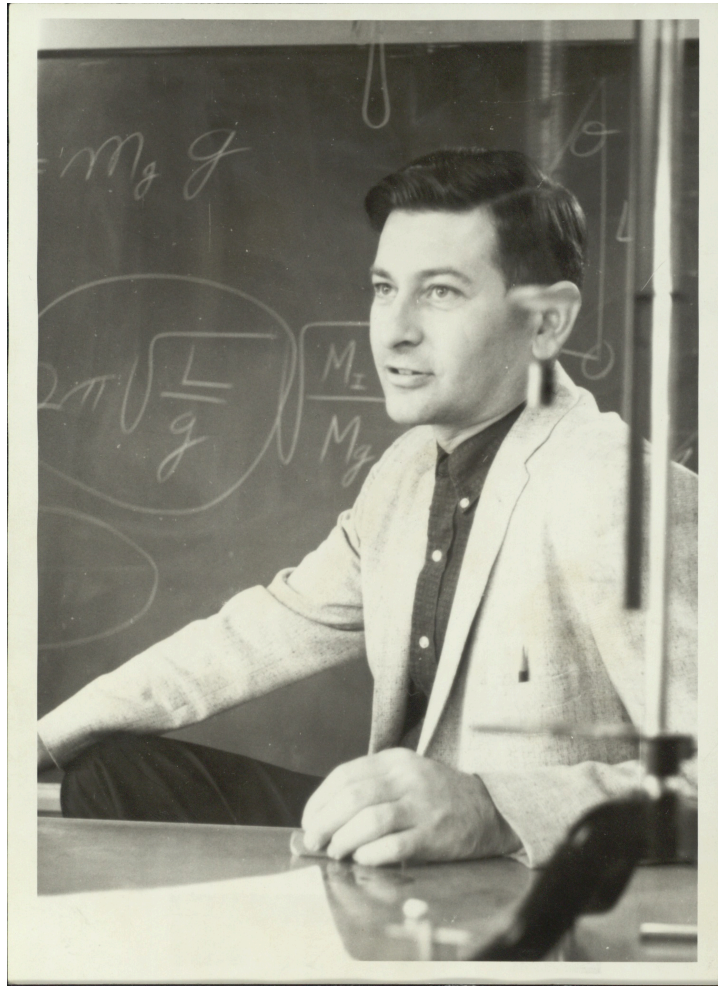
The agriculture program is dropped again.

## **1970s**

During an inter-term all-school seminar on the topic of Christians in a hungry world, [Earthkeepers is founded](#) by students and faculty members Claire Mellinger, Kenton Brubaker, Miriam Martin, Beryl Brubaker, and Mark Brubaker. The group begins recycling newspapers for money and starts a compost pile.

EMU [plants an arboretum](#) and experiments with soil treatment for maximum vegetable production.

## **1976**



Professor Robert C. Lehman was an early proponent of sustainability measures on the Eastern Mennonite College campus. The professor of physics invested his sabbatical time into investigating how the campus could save money and energy. He taught at EMC from 1955-1980. (EMU Archives)

Professor [Robert Lehman spends his sabbatical year](#) studying campus energy consumption. He and Physical Plant Director Herman Schrock are primarily responsible for saving EMC over \$4,000 in energy costs by turning off unnecessary cooling systems, shutting doors to unused rooms, and turning off auxiliary lights. Lehman's research prompts other measures, which save EMC \$66,000 in one year.

## 1978

Architect LeRoy Troyer is hired to [create a master plan](#) for the campus.

Earthkeepers begins recycling glass and newspapers across Harrisonburg, largely using recycling bins outside of grocery stores. "It was the start of recycling in the city before there was curbside recycling," says Sustainability Coordinator Jonathan Lantz-Trissel. The club made around \$27,000 in revenue from this enterprise. In 1978, they received a Special Merit Award for "distinguished public service" from the Keep America Beautiful organization.

## 1986

EMU installs a closed loop water-sourced heating and cooling system (designed by Troyer) in the new Campus Center, [which saves \\$3-4 million in energy costs](#) in its first 10 years.



[Eldon Kurtz becomes physical plant director](#). He maps campus energy usage and works toward even more efficiency.



Eldon Kurtz

## 1998

Kenton Brubaker gets a grant from the U.S. Forest Service to survey Park Woods. Work-study students Jonathan Lantz-Trissel and Micah Shristi '00 mark trees and measure their circumferences. Professors Steve Cessna and Jim Yoder continued to evaluate changes in the forest's health over the years.

## 2005

Jonathan Lantz-Trissel becomes EMU's Recycling and Waste Reduction Manager, leading EMU to become the first university in the U.S. to collect recyclables by bicycle rather than motor vehicle.

## 2006

President Loren Swartzendruber [signs the Climate Change: an Evangelical Call to Action](#) document.

LeRoy Troyer in the winter of 2003-04 before the Campus Center, which he designed. Troyer Group has been EMU's lead planner and designer, under three university presidents, and integrated sustainability into plans for over four decades.

## 2007

EMU ranked third out of 90 U.S. colleges for its efficient energy use.



The Creation Care Council is founded after growing out of an initiative of students, staff and faculty concerned with EMU's practical efforts in accordance with a theology of creation care.

## **2008**

EMU finishes first in Virginia in the RecycleMania national recycling competition.

Professor Peter Dula helps form the Sustainable Food Initiative, which begins to organically grow vegetables for campus consumption, compost food waste, and donate untouched cafeteria leftovers to Our Community Place.

A composting class researches and tests various methods for composting food waste on campus, leading to approval from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to run an on-site compost facility in 2009. "This facility closes, in part, the nutrient cycle from table to food waste to compost to garden and back to the table," says Jonathan Lantz-Trissel.

Fourteen students in Douglas Graber Neufeld and Jim Yoder's Green Design class present semester-long research to the Board of Trustees, [prompting the Board's decision](#) that all new buildings would meet basic Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

## **2009**

Earthkeepers begins awarding mini-grants for projects that "impact the campus in a visible, creative, educational way," such as the founding of the Bike Co-op on College Avenue, which provides bike rentals, repair tools, repair education, and free tune-ups.

## **2010**





In the early fall of 2010, workers installed the largest solar deployment in Virginia on the Hartzler library roof. It has the capacity to generate 104.3 kilowatts of electricity from 328 high-efficiency photovoltaic panels and is projected to eliminate more than 6,000 tons of greenhouse gas emissions over 35 years.

EMU begins [installing the largest solar deployment in Virginia](#) on the library roof.

Jonathan Lantz-Trissel becomes the first Sustainability Coordinator at EMU. “His work includes measuring and reducing the university’s carbon footprint, leading campus efforts to improve bicycle and pedestrian friendliness, speaking on and off campus on a variety of sustainability-related topics, and providing leadership for setting and attaining EMU’s long term sustainability goals.”

EMU submits its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to help fulfill re-accreditation requirements. The QEP, titled “Peace with Creation: Environmental Sustainability from an Anabaptist Perspective,” outlines a five-year plan to promote a theology and ideology of sustainability, and include them in university curricula.

Harman Construction (led by Wayne Witmer ‘88) [builds Cedarwood and renovates Elmwood dorms](#) to be environmentally friendly.

## 2011

EMU [launches its environmental sustainability major](#), with [concentrations](#) in environmental science or environmental and social sustainability.



Student Aly Zimmerman and Supervisor of the Grounds Will Hairston start the edible landscaping initiative on campus. They receive grant funding, and with help from Earthkeepers, transplant 1000 plants for landscaping and food, including asparagus, apples, pears, persimmons, figs, grapes, juneberries, and raspberries.

## 2012



The water cistern sits next to the EMU physical plant, collecting water runoff across 15 acres of campus to supply irrigation to four athletic fields and vegetation. Photos courtesy EMU physical plant.

EMU installs a 100,000 gallon stormwater harvesting and storage tank, which was [named one of the best “green projects” in the nation](#) that year by the National Wildlife Federation.

Renovation finishes on the Maplewood dorm, which along with Cedarwood and Elmwood, [receives an LEED Gold certification](#) from the U.S. Green Building Council.

EMU earns a [Bronze designation for bike friendly universities](#) by the League of American Bicyclists.

## 2013

The EMU President’s Cabinet passes the Conflict Free Resolution, drawn up by the student group Peace Fellowship, which states a commitment to consider the mineral sources in their electronic purchases to avoid contributing to armed conflict over mineral acquisition from the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

President Loren Swartzendruber signs the [American College and University President’s Climate Commitment](#), agreeing to address climate change and its consequences by creating a comprehensive Climate Action Plan for EMU.

## 2014

Professors Jim Yoder and Doug Graber Neufeld win a [\\$200,000 grant from the National Wildlife Federation](#) to fund GIS mapping, hydrology lessons, and restoration design training for students to work towards restoring the German River and Crab Run near Bergton, Va.

[Engineers for a Sustainable World](#), with funding from Earthkeepers, construct a solar powered greenhouse in one day. Its design won second place in the American Society for Engineering Education undergraduate regional competition the previous spring.

EMU [joins a university collaboration](#) led by the University of Virginia (collaborated on by EMU alumna Laura Cattell Noll '09) to [research its nitrogen footprint](#), its effects, and alternatives. The [final report](#) is published in 2015.

## 2015



As the early summer sun begins to rise over The Farm at Willow Run, students involved in Eastern Mennonite University's Sustainable Food Initiative club pick green beans. The farm is owned by Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, and the vegetables help feed the residents. (Photos by Michael Sheeler)

The [Climate Action Plan](#) is published, in which EMU commits to achieving Climate Neutrality by 2035.

Sustainable Food Initiative begins [partnering with The Farm at Willow Run](#) to learn agricultural skills, contribute labor, and receive produce for their campus market.

Engineers for a Sustainable World, Earthkeepers, Sustainable Food Initiative, and the Creation Care Council [partner to install solar panels](#) on top of the campus chicken coop.



Weaver Irrigation [installs a new irrigation system](#) on EMU's baseball fields which uses non-potable stormwater collected in the cistern near the Physical Plant.

[EMU places in the top 10 out of 125 U.S. colleges](#) in the Campus Conservation Nationals, a competition which monitored the reduction in energy consumption over three weeks in Roselawn, Hartzler Library, Elmwood, Maplewood, and Cedarwood. Our prize was a one-year license to install Lucid energy monitoring equipment on two campus buildings.

## 2016

EMU finishes first again in the state of Virginia in the RecycleMania national recycling competition.

The Sustainable Food Initiative [begins giving away its campus-grown produce](#) for free to EMU students.

EMU leads the [Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions initiative](#), accompanied by Goshen College, MCC, and a one million dollar donation by Ray Martin. The center intends to network nationally and globally, research best practices for sustainable climate solutions, share educational findings and experiment with innovative ideas and methods.



Ray Martin gestures while holding grandson Troy during the launch celebration for The Center for Sustainable Climate Solutions Thursday at Eastern Mennonite University. Martin's \$1 million donation funded the center, which will be housed at EMU in partnership with Goshen College and Mennonite Central Committee. (Photos by Andrew Strack)

Eastern Mennonite University was among the first schools [involved in groundbreaking work](#) that is raising awareness about institutional nitrogen footprints. Laura Cattell Noll '09, a graduate student in environmental sciences at the University of Virginia, works with Professor James Galloway and project manager Elizabeth Castner on the “N-Print” project. Read more [here](#).

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