

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD



Annual Sustainability Report

JULY 1ST, 2024 - JUNE 30TH, 2025



This report intends to inform the UIW community and all relevant stakeholders of the University's sustainability impact from July 1st, 2024 to June 30th, 2025.



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD Sustainability Commitment

Sustainability balances human development and growth with the welfare of the natural world, both in the present and for the future.

The emphasis placed on social justice by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and the establishment of care for creation as a tenet of Catholic social teaching inspire us to make sustainability a part of our university's legacy. We commit to meeting people's cultural, educational, economic, and ecological needs in ways that protect and restore the natural environment.

– Adopted by the Sustainability Advisory Board on April 1, 2015

Foreword

The 2024-25 academic year flew by at UIW, like academic years do: with great hopes for the future, some longing for the past, and, in the sparse moments when we could manage it, some calm appreciation for the present. Our faculty wrestled with Artificial Intelligence in the classroom; our staff wrestled with keeping our campus growing despite budget constraints; our athletes wrestled the competition into submission; and our students wrestled with the innumerable challenges of balancing work, life, and education.

Through all the struggle, we Cardinals stood united in our camaraderie, our concerns, and our commitment to sustaining UIW as a lamp that lights the path to a better future for San Antonio and beyond. And that lamp has never burned brighter—literally. As Dr. Ben Miele finished his term as Chair of the Sustainability Advisory Board, a 55-kW solar panel system was installed on the rooftop of the School of Medicine's library, a grant-funded partnership with Big Sun Solar which will slash UIW's carbon footprint.

What's more, UIW was awarded a Silver rating in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS). We earned this rating through tireless efforts of Dr. Kevin Salfen, Dr. Judy Ruvuna, and numerous other faculty and staff, who documented our efforts in research, innovation, teaching, and outreach to make UIW a more sustainable institution. But a Cardinal is never satisfied with second place, and so as part of our Laudato Si' Action Plan, UIW stands committed to going for Gold in the next round!

Thanks for your interest in sustainability at UIW. Please enjoy this glimpse into the specifics of all the magnificent endeavors our community is undertaking. Most importantly, reach out and get involved! Wherever you see opportunities to do things less wastefully, we want to hear about it.

Sustainably Yours,

John N. Hooker jnhooker@uiwtx.edu

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR | ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND GEOLOGY
CHAIR | UIW SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY BOARD




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Academics



UIW scientists present climate research at the annual meeting of the American Geophysical Union

In December 2024, Sarai Luciano and Dr. John Hooker presented research at the Annual AGU conference in Washington, DC. Luciano presented Silicate weathering and carbon sequestration in fractured basalt, Uvalde County, Texas, a study about how natural fractures can enhance silicate rock weathering, a process which naturally counteracts climate change.

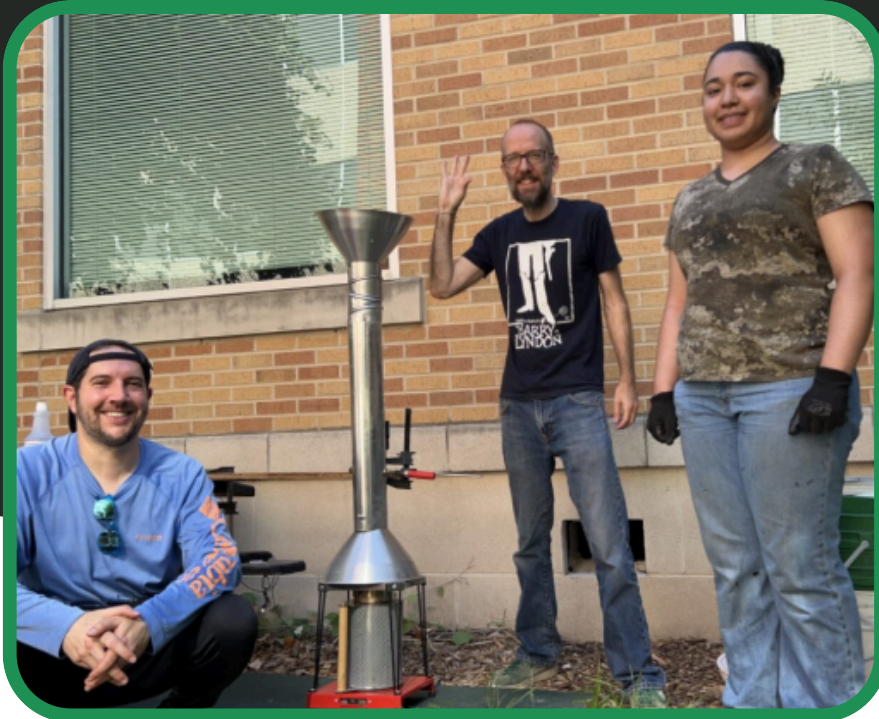


From left to right: John Hooker and Sarai Luciano (UIW Environmental Science) at the AGU conference.

Research in biochar and experimental agriculture

UIW faculty and students are actively experimenting with novel methods to improve agricultural outputs while enhancing rock weathering. Led by Dr. Ben Miele (UIW English) and Dr. John Hooker (UIW Environmental Science), this research focuses on how we can lock carbon in the ground, in soil organic matter or minerals, rather than have carbon in the atmosphere, heating the planet. Drs. Betsy Leverett and Alaka Chaudhuri (UIW Chemistry) are spearheading efforts to accelerate mineral changes using algae. Dr. Hooker and Kevin Salfen (UIW Music) are liaising with the Uvalde community to develop methods to utilize local volcanic rocks to mineralize carbon. Angelica Valencia (UIW Biology) and Genny Castellano, Amanda Hidalgo, and Alexis Martinez (UIW Environmental Science)

are researching impacts of plant growth on rock weathering products. This research is funded in part by a USDA grant between Texas A&M University and UIW.



From left to right: Ben Miele, John Hooker, and Angelica Valencia developing a method to weather olivine while producing biochar.

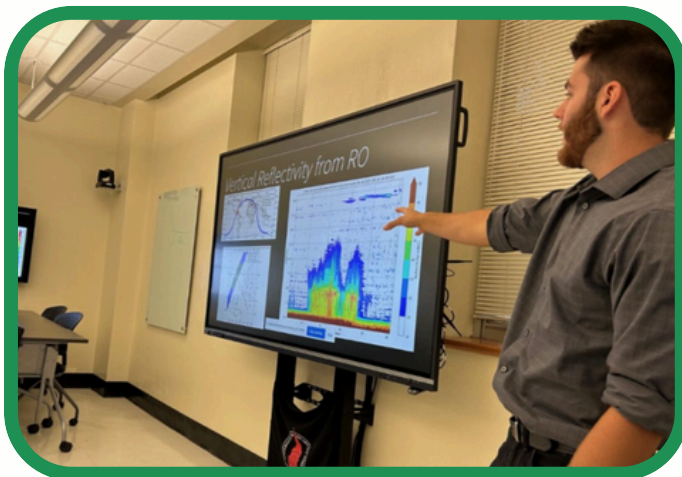
Dr. Ruqayya Khan on Islamic Ecotheology

Ruqayya Khan, Professor of Religion and Malas Chair of Islamic Studies at Claremont Graduate University presented an invited seminar, *Islamic Contributions to Ecotheology*, at UIW on May 14th, 2025. Dr. Khan's work is an exploration of ecological themes in the Qur'an, and how they parallel similar ideas in Christianity and Judaism.



Ruqayya Khan presents her work on Islamic Ecotheology.

UIW & UPRM Summer Internship Symposium



Joe Stockwell (UIW Meteorology) presents research on tropical cyclone convection, performed at University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Meteorology students from UIW and the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez presented summaries of their summer internships, which were provided by funding from the National Science Foundation to Dr. Rosa Cárdenas (UIW Physics) and Dr. Héctor Jiménez (UPRM Physics).

Sustainability and Service Learning



Season of Creation

With the collaborative work of UIW faculty and administrators Dr. John Hooker, Dr. Ben Miele, Dr. Carlos Garcia, Sr. Martha Ann Kirk, Ms. Patricia Ramirez, Mr. Daniel Potter, Dr. Shaylon Rettig, Ms. Beth Villareal, Dr. Ricardo Gonzalez, Headwaters Assistant Director Sr. Cindy Stacy, Laudato Si' Movement Collaborator Maria Trevino, Pax Christi Texas President Arthur Dawes, Incarnate Word Sisters Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Collaborator Sr Marylou Rodriguez, and UIW students, a sustainable Season of Creation Pilgrimage on September 22, 2023, was made possible. The crew gave a pilgrimage tour and environmental education to the Incarnate Word High School and Saint Anthony High School students and faculty, members of the UIW Brainpower Connection, about the value of pollinator gardens, community gardens, and solar-powered houses for the earth's sustainability.



The pilgrim high school students and their teachers listening to Dr. John Hooker and a UIW student volunteer explaining the science behind the UIW community garden.

Season of Creation (cont.)



The high school students took their time as part of the pilgrimage to pause and appreciate the artworks of the younger students as displayed in CHRISTUS Heritage Hall. The younger students from pre-K to 8th grade were invited two weeks ahead of time to paint and draw their reflections on nature. The Blessed Sacrament Catholic School, Saint Anthony Catholic School, and Saint Mary Magdalen Catholic School are members of the UIW Brainpower Connection that participated in this event. The Ettling Center gave the garden improvement funds as a prize to the school where the student of the winning artwork belongs.

From top to bottom: The Winning Artworks in Season of Creation 2023: Redemption from the 6th-8th grade category; Waterway Peace (3rd - 5th-grade category first place); Co-creator (pre-k-2nd grade category)

Season of Creation (cont.)

The participants were reminded that the UIW campus has water refilling stations in each of the buildings. They were invited to refill their reusable water bottles, provided to them from the start of the tour if they did not have one. By the end of the pilgrimage, each of the participants had a popcorn quiz before being given reusable stainless travel utensils, and Texas native seed packets to further put their sustainability into action. This project promoted sustainability and raised awareness of our contributions and duty to care for the earth.



September 22, 2023: The pilgrimage crew with the high-school student participants and the school administrators and faculty at the end of the pilgrimage.

Blessing of the Animals



Sr. Martha Ann, Dr. Darlene Carbajal of the UIW Communication Arts Department, Darlene Jasso and Edwin Mendoza, founders of the Little Angels of Mary in Guatemala

www.LittleAngelsOfMary.org

facilitated the Annual Blessing of the Animals at Our Lady's

Grotto on October 3, 2023 at 6 pm. This has been a tradition for more than forty years. Natural leaves dipped in water were used in the blessing of the animals. Dogs from small, medium, and large, pictures of cats, squirrels, and dogs, and animal stuffed toys paraded the seats of the Grotto. The owners were able to celebrate the friendship and accompaniment that these humble creatures provided for them. Everybody had a chance to smile while some had a memory of their four-footed pets. We will not take care of the creation if we do not appreciate it. Animals and

plants have been part of our diverse nature, making sustainability possible.



Laudato Si' Workshop

As the Capstone for MA in Pastoral Ministry, a youth group from one of the San Antonio parishes from the west side was selected to participate in the Laudato Si' workshop from February 28 - March 2024. There were also two contributors from online and provided valuable input to the study. The workshop involved an assessment of the sustainable practices among the participants before and after being educated with Laudato Si' teachings. The workshop also included the screening of the movie "The Letter" which shows the climate change impact on vulnerable parts of society. Participants were invited to not use bottled water but other sustainable means such as the use of reusable glasses, ceramic plates, and bowls, silverware, natural food, and cloth napkins instead of the disposable resources the group initially was using.



As a workshop project, the participants were encouraged to take sustainability into action. A couple or three of them collected and delivered three boxes of donated clothes to Saint Stephen Ministry, one promoted the movie "The Letter" to her digital network, and a couple of youths contemplated the socio-ecological impact of climate change with their family.

Edwards Aquifer Authority and UIW students monitor water levels



On February 5th, 2025, Roberto Esquilin of the Edwards Aquifer Authority delivered a guest lecture to Hydrology students on the hydrologic cycle of south Texas, including how water is delivered to the Edwards aquifer, from which the majority of San Antonio's potable water derives.



From left to right: Andres Bendana (UIW Biology), Jade Flores (UIW Environmental Science), and Roberto Esquilin (Edwards Aquifer Authority) observe aquifer water levels from the CCVI well next to UIW campus.

Food as Medicine: UIW Students Grow Wellness in the BSH Community Garden



The BSH Community Garden is more than a patch of soil, it's a living classroom where students learn the power of food as medicine. In the fall, the garden

flourished with arugula, lettuce, spinach, basil, peas, and carrots, while spring plantings brought strawberries, tomatoes, basil, banana peppers, garlic, squash, and beans. During the year, students gain hands-on experience in sustainable agriculture and discover how fresh, nutrient-rich produce can prevent disease and promote health. Every harvest finds its way into NUTR 3380/5380 Culinary Medicine, where students transform these vibrant ingredients into dishes that nourish both body and mind.



NUTR 3380/5380 Culinary Medicine is a nutrition course that is open all undergraduate and graduate students. The emphasis of this course is using fundamental culinary skills for the basic preparation of healthy and delicious whole foods. All levels of cooking experience are welcome and encouraged (including NO experience!).

Citizens' Climate Lobby UIW students use biochar production to cook pesto pasta

On April 23, 2025, Vi Nguyen (UIW Communications) celebrated Earth Day with the creation of a UIW chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby (CCL) as a part of their CCL Campus Leader Internship. CCL is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots advocacy organization focused on working with government to address the global climate crisis. UIW's CCL chapter aims to empower students and educators to build political will on campus towards climate solutions. At the informational workshop, students learned about the production and use of biochar from Dr. Miele to cook pesto pasta using all student-grown vegetables and eco-friendly ingredients!



From left to right: Kelly Bansuelo (UIW Nursing), Edith Gonzalez (UIW Healthcare Sciences), Celeste Valadez (UIW Pharmacy), and Vi Nguyen harvesting cilantro from the Campus Garden to make pesto.

Leadership in Sustainability



Creation Care Conference

UIW hosted the Creation Care/Cuidado de la Creacion conference and Environmental Film Festival from September 25-27, 2024. Joined by CIW-Centro IW, Mexico City; Universidad IW Campus Bajio; University of Monterrey; Incarnate Word ministries in the US, Mexico, and Peru; Laudato Youth Initiative - Laudato Si' Club Mountains of the Moon University in Uganda; the Little Angels of Mary in Guatemala; Tanzania LYI; and Climate Reality Project San Antonio, the University showcased new research and trailblazing initiatives to support Laudato Si' through environmental sustainability and climate justice.



Earth Day Fair 2025

As a part of UIW's Earth Day Fair on April 22, 2025, UIW hosted Listen to Earth, an international and interfaith panel focused on the many dimensions of senseless waste brought about by war, including the Palestine-Israel conflict. Moderated by Dr. Laura Cannon (Assistant Professor of History, UIW), featured guests included Dr. Ruqayya Khan (Claremont Graduate University), Peta Jones Pellach (Women Wage Peace) and Sr. Martha Ann Kirk (UIW CCVI).



UIW's environmental organizations also tabled during the fair, raising awareness among students for sustainability around campus.

The UIW Citizens' Climate Lobby chapter tabling during the Earth Day Fair.

Awards

AASHE Silver recognition

UIW has been recognized with a Silver rating from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) for its efforts in the area of sustainability on the UIW Broadway campus. The rating is based on the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS), which measures and encourages sustainability in all aspects of higher education. Institutes of higher learning achieve STARS report achievements in five overall areas: 1) academics, 2) engagement, 3) operations, 4) planning and administration, and 5) innovation and leadership. A team led by Kevin Salfen, Professor in UIW's Department of Music, painstakingly documented UIW's efforts in all five areas. The Silver status reflects diligent efforts across University students, staff, and faculty, and also highlights areas for growth in sustainability. The University's Laudato Si' Action Plan includes development and implementation of a strategy for Gold status by 2028!

