

University of the Incarnate Word

Annual Sustainability Report

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

This report intends to inform the UIW community and all relevant stakeholders of the University's sustainability impact from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

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

Sustainability—For Whom?

The Poet-Astronomer Omar Khayyam wrote (via Edward Fitzgerald's English translation):

*When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.*

This stanza reminds us that we are only here temporarily — that Creation will outlast us. Nevertheless, for our short ride on this planet, we are called on to protect and sustain our planet for each other and our progeny. Pope Leo XIV reminded us just last fall:



The garden-spider.

God will ask us if we have cultivated and cared for the world that He created for the benefit of all and for future generations, and if we have taken care of our brothers and sisters — what will be our answer, my dear friends?

My students and I sometimes ponder this reminder while digging through the Gorman Garden and removing weeds, which can elicit some uncomfortable questions. God created the world for the benefit of all, yes; but does that have to include the big scary spiders that occasionally pop up in the garden, like the one shown here? What about the nasty Texas cockroaches? Or wasps and mosquitoes? Even protozoa and bacteria are living things. For human health, we sometimes must usher our fellow creatures along to meet their Creator before what would otherwise be their time. But where do we draw the line?

Of all members of our garden community, the chaste tree is perhaps the most beautiful — to the eyes and the nose. It's also a noxious invasive, which spreads aggressively and crowds out space that could be used to grow vegetables for a hungry community. Is it okay for us to kill this chaste tree, deciding that even this majestic creature needs to stay in its native habitat of the Middle East and the Mediterranean?

These questions don't stop at the garden. What do we do about "unwanted" members of the community — those who commit crimes or otherwise behave antisocially? Sadly, we rely on walls: around jail cells, or national boundaries, or our own exclusive clubs and neighborhoods. We cast out what we determine does not belong. To some extent, walls are a fact of life, and we must shoo some invasives from the garden.



But each day I come to campus I am reminded how lucky I am to be welcome in this special community, and how, if the vagaries of the past had gone just a little differently, I might have been the one cast out of the garden. As we envision the world that we will work to sustain, let's heed the spirit of Pope Leo's reminder, and make that vision as inclusive as possible. Let's ask ourselves what walls we are putting up, and whether those really need to be there. Can we take down more walls than we build up in 2027?

Sustainably Yours,

John N. Hooker

Associate Professor of Geology & Environmental Science
Chair, UIW Sustainability Advisory Board

Academics

Nutrition and Environmental Science Team Up to Advance Sustainable Diets for Earth Week



Students in ENSC/BIOL 3410 Research in Soil Conservation and NUTR 3310 Food Security and Sustainability teamed up to grow and serve delicious, nutritious fare at Earth Week!

Academics

UIW Scholars Advance Sustainability Through Research



Tara Hembrough (UIW English) published a study documenting levels of eco-anxiety which systematically vary by ethnicity and gender in college students.

Hembrough, T. (2025). Rural College Students' Eco-anxiety and Attitude toward Discussing Environmental Sustainability Topics Post-pandemic. International Journal of Instruction, 18 (4), 477–498.

John N. Hooker (UIW Environmental Science) published a study that uses numerical modeling of earthquakes to better understand how fluid pressures affect the patterns of these devastating events.

Hooker, J.N., Riegel, H., Mirabella, F., and Casale, G. (2025). How fluid pressures and viscous rheologies affect slip patterns on low-angle normal faults: The example of the Altotiberina fault, northern Apennines, Italy. Journal of Geophysical Research, Solid Earth 130 (10), e2025JB031302. <https://doi.org/10.1029/2025JB031302>



Vinay Kumar (UIW Meteorology) edited a textbook that is part of the Sustainable Development book series from Intech Open, in support of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Kumar, V. (Ed.) (2025). Global Warming - The Impact and Implications. In Sustainable Development. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1006461>

Service Learning

Solar Installation has UIW School of Osteopathic Medicine Going Green!

The 55 kW installation was made possible by a grant from EBSCO information services that funded solar installations for libraries. Won by UIW's Sustainability Advisory Board in conjunction with Big Sun Solar, the project supports UIW's general efforts to advance sustainability in all its activities, and so adhere to Pope Francis's call to care for our common home, expressed through his Laudato Si' encyclical.



UIW School of Osteopathic Medicine Library rooftop solar installation. Source: <https://www.uiw.edu/news/2025/09/uiw-school-of-osteopathic-medicine-commissions-rooftop-solar-project.html>



Left to right: Dimitri Tamalis, Kevin Salfen, John Hooker, Martha Ann Kirk, John Pham, Robert Miggins, and Ben Miele celebrate the solar installation at the UIW SOM Library. Source: <https://www.uiw.edu/news/2025/09/uiw-school-of-osteopathic-medicine-unveils-solar-panel-system.html>

Service Learning

Brainpower Schools Get Serious About Sustainability



UIW's Ettling Center and the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Sustainability Committee of the Incarnate Word Sisters and UIW faculty and administrators funded four K-12 sustainability projects in 2025.

The project was led by Mrs. Patricia Ramirez, UIW Brainpower Connection Director and Ms. Karen Gonzalez, UIW Brainpower Connection Secretary, and made possible with the funding, creativity, and vision of Incarnate Word Sister, JPIC Collaborator, & Laudato Si' Animator Sister Marylou Rodriguez, UIW Ettling Center Director Dr. Ric Gonzalez, and Climate Reality Project SA-Chair & International Collaborator, Ms. Darshana Gupte.

Service Learning



Rainwater Harvesting, Saint Anthony Catholic School

This project became part of the school curriculum. Students learned the importance of water conservation, researched rainwater systems, and presented their findings to peers. The project encouraged interdisciplinary learning by connecting science, technology, and public speaking — and even introduced the students to basic meteorological forecasting.

Previous page

Outdoor Learning Space, Saint Anthony Catholic School

For our youngest climate advocates, an outdoor classroom was created for their ecological learning. Designed for exploration and play, the garden space allows students to engage with nature and cultivate a love for the environment. It also became the future home of the Little Saints Garden Club, helping the seeds of mutual care grow from an early age.

Service Learning

School-Wide Recycling Program, Saint Anthony Catholic School



This comprehensive effort involved a student-led Recycling Club that collected and sorted recyclables across campus. Through weekly meetings and active involvement, students learned about materials, environmental advocacy, and leadership. The initiative emphasized accountability and fostered school-wide awareness of ecological responsibility.

Service Learning

Community Garden Restoration, Blessed Sacrament Catholic School



Several families joined forces to restore and improve the school garden. Middle school students constructed the garden bed frames, while younger students joyfully planted new foliage. Ms. Hart and parent volunteers prepared the soil and oversaw repairs. With the support of the Parent Teacher Committee, the school celebrated "Garden Saturday" as a day of shared labor, love, and learning.

Service Learning

Student Government Association
Organizes

Cardinal Cleanup



SGA organized a massive campus-wide cleanup event, at which student volunteers collected over 22 large bags of litter from Broadway Campus.



Three cheers for our volunteers, especially the many Cardinal athletes and coaches who made the event a success!

Service Learning

UIW and Brainpower Schools Lead Jubilee Pilgrimage of Hope for Creation and Season of Creation Artwork Celebration

A pilgrimage from Confluence Park to Mission Concepcion culminated in a celebration of creativity and creation as students across the Brainpower Connection schools contributed their artistic inspirations.



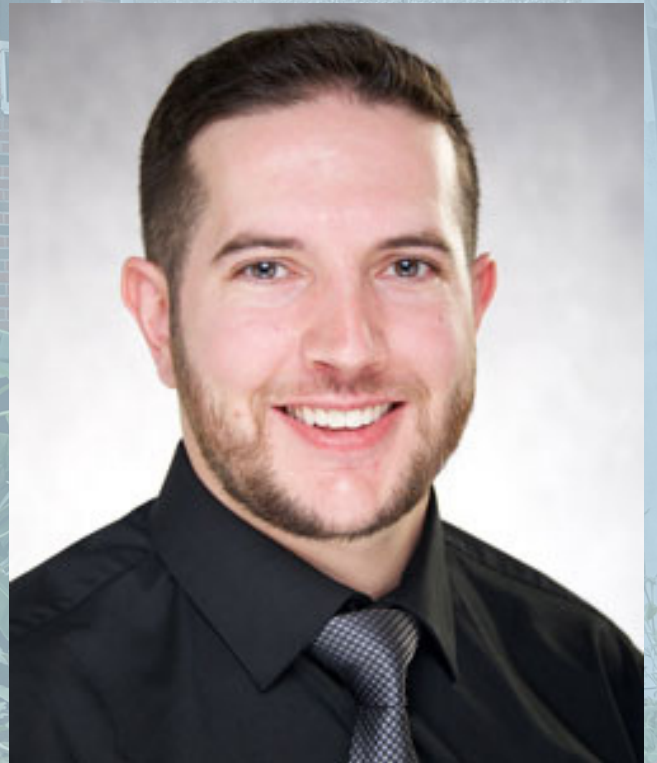
Sr. Martha Ann Kirk and Sr. Mary Lou Rodriguez (CCVI) teamed up with Karen Gonzalez, John Hooker, Patricia Ramirez, Binisa Zentella, and many others to connect the community through prayer and pilgrimage, and to showcase the amazing talents of the Brainpower Schools' students.

Awards

UIW's Ben Miele Wins

Environmental Educator of the Year Award

The City Problem Solver School Educator of the Year Award was presented to a school educator who has shown dedication to their students and community, helping them grow and succeed in meaningful ways. This award honors someone who motivates students to be engaged learners and thoughtful citizens who strive to make a positive impact in the world around them.



Congratulations,
Dr. Miele!

<https://cityproblemsolvers.org/award-ceremony-winners/>

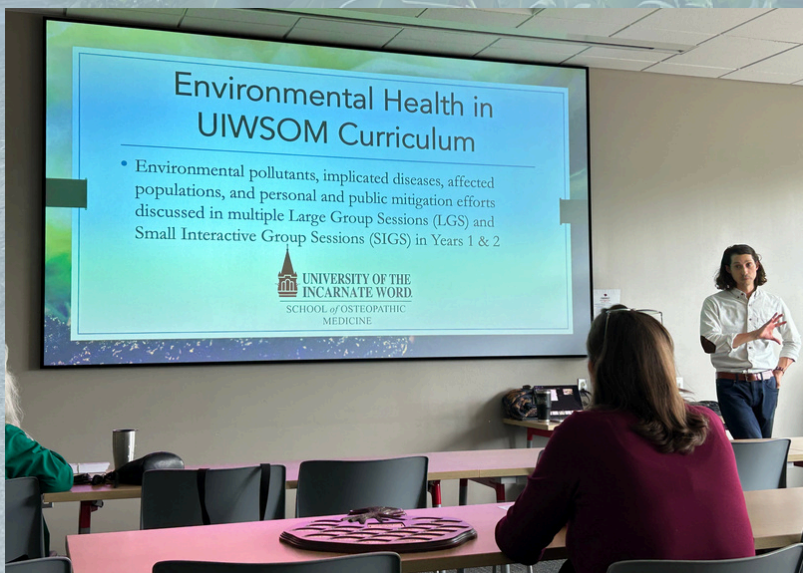
Awards

UIW SOM's Robert Slater III Wins the 2025-2026 William Mulcahy Award

Created in 2007 to honor the dedication and leadership shown by Grounds Superintendent William "Bill" Mulcahy, this award recognizes students, faculty and staff who have exemplified Bill's commitment to ecological conservation and care of Creation.



Source: <https://www.uiw.edu/news/2026/05/uiw-celebrates-earth-day-and-presents-2026-william-mulcahy-award-for-ecological-stewardship.html>



Dr Slater's colleagues describe him as "the guiding force behind the UIWSOM community garden and our efforts to expand recycling at the SOM."

Congratulations,
Dr. Slater!