

HIGHLIGHTS

How much do you spend on gasoline each month?

Prairie State College (PSC) has FREE electric vehicle chargers, which can charge up to four cars at a time. If you're in the market for a new car, let PSC help you eliminate fuel costs and carbon emissions from your commute!



PSC is working with a solar developer to put a solar photovoltaic (PV) array on three of our main campus buildings—

the main building, the tech wing, and Adult Training and Outreach Center. The designed array will help the college save on its electricity bill and will serve as a commercial-scale teaching tool for potential renewable energy courses in the future.



The South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC) is a finalist for the Illinois Sustainability Award

for its work with more than 400 students at its Student Sustainability Summit. The awards ceremony is Oct. 23 in Chicago.



UPCOMING



The Coyote Run Golf Course is hosting a Pumpkin Smash from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 3. Dispose of your jack-o-lanterns in a fun and eco-friendly way!



The PSC Sustainability Committee is working to develop a 2019 - 2023 strategy for sustainability efforts on campus. If you would like to learn more about the strategy or have ideas, get in touch with PSC's Sustainability Coordinator Joel Nightingale at jnightingale@prairiestate.edu.



On February 8, 2019, SMHEC will host a Link & Leverage Conference at PSC highlighting community-related sustainability projects including small business engagement, native landscaping, urban agriculture, and tips for funding opportunities.



IN THE NEWS

- **Twenty-seven global cities, including Chicago,** have reached peak CO2 emissions. In other words, their carbon emissions are now decreasing despite growing economies (3 percent per year), and populations (1.4 percent per year). [Read more.](#)
- **The International Energy Agency** estimates that the number of electric vehicles on the road will explode from just over 3 million (2017) to 125 million by 2030. This increase will come from a combination of policy measures and an acceleration due to manufacturers reaching economies of scale. [Read more.](#)
- **Chicago area's car sharing** is turning owners' underutilized assets into passive sources of income. Cars sit idle for about 95 percent of their lives, all the while costing their owners money on insurance, maintenance, fuel, parking, licensing, etc. In 2017, more than 2.9 million people used peer-to-peer car sharing apps to meet their mobility needs in North America. [Read more.](#)
- **Regenerative farming techniques** prove to be an attractive alternative, economically and environmentally, to what were once considered "best practices." Cutting the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and eliminating tilling and other conventional techniques have increased one farmer's yields by 20 percent, while sequestering more than three times the carbon of his neighbors and facilitating water infiltration at high rates. [Read more.](#)



WORDS

Sustain • ability

The fullest, but also most vague, definition of **sustainability** is one coined during the 1987 Brundtland Commission:

"meeting the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

For more practical application, this definition is often applied in three different realms—**environmental sustainability**, **economic sustainability**, and **social sustainability**—with an understanding that all three must garner equal weight in decision-making in order for a policy, product, service or system to be fully "sustainable."

SPOTLIGHT

The Facilities Department is working with ComEd and Nicor to identify and realize cost and energy saving measures, including

- Tuning and scheduling of various mechanical equipment
- LED installations in the Christopher Art Gallery hallway
- LED installations in parking lots A, C, D, and at the Matteson Area Center

Between the first half of 2017 and the first half of 2018*, these and other measures have helped Facilities save the college approximately 325,000 kWh of electricity, or the annual equivalent of powering about 30 average American homes.

*January through July



LED fixtures in the gallery hallway



LED street lights in parking lot C



Got Ideas?

If you have ideas for helping our campus run more efficiently, produce less waste, offer sustainability-related courses or programs, or generally be more sustainable, contact PSC's Sustainability Coordinator Joel Nightingale at extension 3727 or jnightingale@prairiestate.edu.

FORWARD THINKING: Why recycling doesn't excite me

When I tell people that I work in sustainability, many—almost reflexively—tell me about how much they recycle. And usually when they tell me that, I nod and give them space to tell me more, but inside I'm cringing a little bit; the way a school psychologist might cringe when a teacher tells them about a "bad kid" in their class. To be fair, recycling is an important part of sustainability, and will be essential to ours becoming a fully [circular economy](#). My issue with recycling is that it is often seen as the "best case scenario" when it is decidedly not.

I don't think this concept is hard to grasp once it is laid out, but at some point in a push towards more sustainable lifestyles we made the mistake of believing that the "three R's" (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) are made equal. They're always said in that order; and Recycle is last for a reason: because it should be our last-resort option.



The best thing we can do as consumers to lessen the ecological footprint of our consumption is to **stop consuming**, or to reduce. Do I really need to print 30 copies of this document for everyone at the meeting, or can I project the gist of the information and send a PDF to the group for more details?

The next best thing we can do—if it turns out we *do need* something—is to reuse it. Resources were extracted and energy was used to create that something; the least we can do is make sure that those resources go as far as possible before we take that something out of use! Do I really need to buy fancy, glittery wrapping paper for the holidays or can I give this old newspaper an extended life and wrap with it? Do I really need three winter coats, or can I make do with the two I already have? That's reducing and reusing!

The last option, and the target of this issue's rant, is recycling. So, we need things. Nobody says that we don't need things. Let's do our best to ensure that the product we buy has a viable path to material recovery (fewer intermingled materials, [simple deconstruction](#), [widely accepted materials](#) by municipal waste collectors, etc.). But we need to understand that this comes *after* the previous two options. Recycling only makes a meaningful difference if we have already ruled out reducing and reusing. The reality is that things don't last forever, and even if we do choose to bring our lunch to work in a reusable container, one day that container will wear out. **That is the true reason for recycling.** Not to justify our excessive use of paper or our habit to buy more coats than we need, but to give our products a new life after their (hopefully, long and happy) useful life has ended.

This is all to say that in opting to recycle a one-time-use takeout container or water bottle we are making a decision to be 'less bad,' but we need to set our sights higher than that. If your aim is to excite me—which it almost certainly is not—recycling alone won't do it.