Bowdoin College Campus Sustainability Tour

Welcome to Bowdoin College! This self-guided tour will help you get acquainted with our beautiful campus and the exciting sustainability initiatives that Bowdoin has implemented. For more information about sustainability at Bowdoin, visit http://www.bowdoin.edu/sustainability/

1. START, Burton-Little (Admissions) – Welcome to Bowdoin! You are standing in front of Burton Little House. In 2007 Bowdoin became a signatory to the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, an agreement that commits the college to becoming carbon neutral by our target date of 2020.

2. Zipcar and EV Charging Stations – As you walk along College St., look to your right and you will notice the Zipcars parked in the lot behind the John Brown Russwurm House. Zipcar is a nation-wide car sharing program that provides students, college employees, and community members access to shared cars (and a truck!). The Zipcars on campus have made it possible to significantly reduce the number of cars on campus and also promote ride sharing. On the east side of this parking lot are two, publicly available level two charging stations that can be monitored using the Greenlots app. Charging is $1 per hour.

3. Coleman Hall – As you cross over College St. and through the archway, you will pass Coleman Hall. This dorm is one of the six first year dorms that were all renovated between 2006-2008 and is a great example of Bowdoin’s green renovation standards. The dorms were all renovated with efficiency and conservation as a priority and have many green features including lights that are controlled by both occupancy controls as well as daylight harvesting sensors located on H&L library, low-flow toilets and bathroom fixtures, super-efficient double-pane windows, and a new hot water heating system. The upgrades resulted in significant decreases in electricity and a 30% reduction in heating fuel use.

4. Hubbard Hall/Arctic Museum – As you turn left onto the quadrangle, you will see Hubbard Hall, home of the Peary-MacMillan Arctic Museum. Bowdoin has had a strong connection with the Arctic since Robert Peary (Class of 1877) and Donald MacMillan (Class of 1898) began exploring the frozen north in the early 20th century. Our mascot, the polar bear, signifies this connection and was chosen when Peary donated a taxidermy mounted polar bear to the school after one of his voyages. The Arctic Museum features fascinating exhibits about the famous explorers and the land they explored. The college’s connection to the polar bear and the arctic has helped inspire our efforts to reduce our impacts on global climate.

5. Bowdoin College Museum of Art – One of the college’s most treasured structures, the Museum of Art was renovated between 2005 and 2007. The Museum, which has long housed one of the most encyclopedic collegiate collections in the country, was renovated in accordance with the college’s green building guidelines and is now a sign not only of Bowdoin’s commitment to the arts, but also of its commitment to sustainability. Among the many sustainability features are: energy management controls that include CO2 monitoring to minimize energy loss due to over ventilation, heat recovery units were installed to utilize recycled exhaust heat which will keep attic spaces warm and reduces the risk of condensation. Sunshades were installed to new and existing clerestory windows on south and west facades to help control glare and solar heat gain in the museum.

6. Middle of the Quad – Next, head out to the middle of the quad in front of the museum steps and stop right there. You will find yourself at the heart of Bowdoin’s campus. Appropriately enough, the ground that you stand on provides a great example of the college’s sustainability efforts. Bowdoin started incorporating organic treatment of our grounds in 2002 at Bowdoin’s Whittier Field. Utilizing an organic program of aeration, compost tea, and hand weeding, over time the college has developed Whittier into a superb playing field that is completely organic. Bowdoin has expanded the organic treatment across 60 percent of the central campus, including the Cleaveland Quad, Main Quad, Coe Quad and the President’s residence and guest house. The treatments utilize ingredients such as corn gluten, seaweed, bone meal and manure, and pest deterrents such as red pepper and garlic oils.

7. Adams Hall – Adams Hall, another recently renovated campus building, is the home of Bowdoin’s Environmental Studies program. Environmental Studies (ES) is one of the most popular majors among Bowdoin students and the college’s location on the coast of Maine makes it a wonderful place to study the environment. In recent years, Bowdoin’s ES department has begun to focus increasingly on sustainability and climate change. Some recent courses include: Global Change Ecology, Food and Agriculture, Building Healthy Communities, Marine Conservation Ecology, Earth Climate History, Sustainable Architecture, Coral Reef Biology, Sustaining Maine’s Northern Forests, and Telling Environmental Stories.
8. Central Heating Plant – Our next stop may seem a little unusual, but Bowdoin’s Central Heating Plant is a prime example of Bowdoin’s innovative approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The college now uses cleaner burning natural gas for most of its heating needs. In 2011 Bowdoin installed a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) system at the heating plant which has reduced annual electricity usage by 8% through the operation of a 630 KW efficient backpressure steam turbine. The building also boasts the college’s first green roof that consists of chives and several types of sedum.

9. Buck Center for Health and Fitness – Directly behind the steam plant, you will see one of the college’s newest buildings, the Buck Center for Health and Fitness which opened in September 2009 and earned LEED silver certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The Buck Center is a state of the art facility for fitness, health and wellness, but it is also another great example of Bowdoin’s commitment to green building. The building’s mechanical systems use less energy to provide a comfortable environment through building components such as low-e glass, a white roof, heat recovery systems in the locker rooms, and an automated lighting system that adjusts light levels based on natural daylight.

10. Studzinski Recital Hall – The college’s newest and most beautiful performance space was designed to be acoustically adjustable so the building can host any type of musical performance. It is also an example of the college’s green renovation standards and was built in what used to be the college’s pool, re-using an old building to avoid using new materials. A geothermal system provides a renewable source of heating and cooling and eliminates the need for a noisy chiller and cooling tower. Interior storm windows with high performance insulating glass enhance the thermal performance of the existing exterior shell. An abundant natural light is provided into all major spaces, including the Recital Hall. Special detailing (3/4” thick laminated glass installed on an angle) is employed to allow this natural light while preserving the acoustical isolation of the Hall.

11. Smith Union – The Smith Student Union is the hub of student life on campus. As you walk through the Union look out for the numerous Zero Sort recycling bins. Zero Sort simplifies recycling, allowing all recyclable materials to go in the same receptacle and making it easier for Bowdoin students to reduce landfill waste. Near the Mail Center is an interactive kiosk that displays real-time energy data from the campus, including information on the solar hot water production at Thorne Hall. The Union is also home to the Bowdoin Bookstore which is dedicated to providing supplies and merchandise made from recycled materials.

12. Solar compactors – As you head out the back side of the Union, check out one of Bowdoin’s solar-powered waste compactors.

13. Bowdoin Pines – As you walk down the path, look up at the pines. These beautiful trees are a symbol of the college and once served as the college’s mascot.

14. Schwartz Outdoor Leadership Center – The Schwartz Outdoor Leadership Center (SOLC), is the heart of the Bowdoin Outing Club, Bowdoin’s largest student organization. On top of the SOLC, you can see Bowdoin’s first solar thermal hot water installment, donated by the Class of 2008.

15. 52 Harpswell - In 2014, this property formerly known as the Stevens Home, underwent renovations to accommodate up to 35 students in 20 sleeping rooms. Instead of demolishing the former Stevens Home, Bowdoin contractors reused the entire framework of the building, saving a significant amount of embodied energy and radically reducing the carbon footprint of the construction process. Renovation improvements included added insulation throughout the building, new double-pane windows to minimize draft, and two added energy recovery ventilators that pre-heat incoming outside air. The mechanical systems were also upgraded for efficiency – including the replacement of an oil fired hot water boiler with a High Efficiency NG boiler and the delivery system was switched from steam to fin tube hot water delivery. The building roof is covered with a 12kw solar PV system, which is part of Bowdoin’s larger solar Power Purchase Agreement with SolarCity Corp. In April 2015 the building was awarded LEED gold certification by the U.S. Green Building Council.

16. Bowdoin Organic Garden – Behind 52 Harpswell is the newest home of Bowdoin’s Organic Garden (BOG). The BOG provides the college with delicious organic produce that is served during summer and fall in the dining halls. The BOG relies on and welcomes campus volunteers from any background with any amount of gardening experience.

A*. Bowdoin’s 1.2 MW Solar Complex - If you have extra time, walk down Coffin Street to Ryan Field, just behind Farley Field House. There you will see part of Bowdoin’s 2014 solar installation that includes 4,476 panels, just over half of which are on the roofs of Farley Field House, Greason Pool and Watson Arena (see photo at right). The remaining panels are part of a ground-mount installation on three acres of land owned by the college at Brunswick’s former Navy base. While you are down there step inside Watson Arena, the first collegiate ice arena in the United States to earn LEED certification. It’s a beautiful space, so go in and have a look around!

17. Osher and West Halls – Osher and West Halls are Bowdoin’s two newest first-year dorms. They are certified LEED silver and feature geothermal heating & cooling, as well as a rain water trapping system that collects water from the roofs and pumps it to the toilets, eliminating the use of potable water for flushing.

18. Thorne Dining Hall – Our last stop on the tour is Thorne Dining Hall. Bowdoin dining is consistently ranked 1st or 2nd in college dining in the country and is dedicated to serving delicious, healthy, and sustainable food. The menus often feature local fruits, meats and vegetables, and of course produce from Bowdoin’s own organic garden. The dining hall is a beacon of efficiency with 48 flat plate solar collectors on the roof producing solar hot water for the kitchen and dish room, energy efficient LED lights throughout the dining hall and kitchen, and a composting program that handles pre and post-consumer food waste.

19. END, Burton Little House – And we’re back where we started! Thank you for visiting Bowdoin College.