Our commitment to sustainability is reflected in our land use, our curriculum, our facilities and operations, our student activities, and in our leadership.

We made history in June 2011 as the first college in the nation to produce enough energy to cover 100% of the cost of electricity used by our facilities.
From Vision to Reality

- From the purchase of the first 300 acres in 1968, to our current stewardship of 928 acres, Butte College has steadfastly focused on effective environmental management of the land and resources entrusted to its care.

- With that vision in mind, the college and surrounding land was designated a Wildlife Refuge by the Board of Trustees in December 1973.

- Nestled in the Sierra Nevada Foothills of Northern California, Butte College occupies the largest land mass of any Community College in California.

- The college functions as a small, self-contained city operating its own energy distribution center, sewage treatment plant, water system, transportation system, and police department.
Sustainable Land Use Management

- We deliver our own water via our wells and water tank located on campus, and we maintain our own sewage facilities.

- We feed our dining service waste to over 30,000 red wiggler worms, and then use the worm castings to fertilize our growing fields.

- Our Clear Creek Riparian Restoration Project utilizes goats rather than pesticides for riparian restoration. The goats consume over 90% of the non-native vegetation and weeds.
Land use continued

- Our Agriculture Department has obtained organic certification on 26 acres where fruit, lettuce, hay, and wine grapes are grown.

- Our Wildlife Refuge offers “live” classroom settings that further student learning.
Our Commitment and Leadership

- In 2010, Sustainability was included in our:
  - Core Values
  - Mission Statement
  - Strategic Plan
  - Board Policies

- Having met our goal to become 100% grid positive in 2011, we will endeavor to become carbon neutral by 2015.

- Our trustees, president, students, faculty, and staff continue to embrace the college’s focus on sustainability. President Diana Van Der Ploeg (above) was instrumental in furthering sustainability at the college during her 2003 – 2011 tenure.

- In August 2007, we hosted the first of our annual statewide Sustainability Conferences, and our conference committee was awarded the Entrepreneurial Leadership Award.

- Our Sustainability Steering Committee was established in 2006.

- We will continue to strive to be a national role model in our sustainability efforts and accomplishments.
Infusing sustainability courses into our curriculum, career & technical education programs, and workforce development activities has remained a high priority. Many of these courses satisfy general education requirements and are transferable to four-year institutions, and other programs train students for immediate integration into the workforce.

Our Wildlife Refuge is a living classroom offering hands-on learning in Agriculture, Biology, Natural Resource & Environmental Studies, and numerous other programs.

Our Biofiltration Wetland Education Learning Laboratory (BeWELL) Project offers students in Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) an opportunity to work as interns on a real-world project by monitoring campus storm water runoff, identifying the chemicals, and calculating the results necessary to biofilter the chemicals.
A grant from the Workforce Investment Board allowed development of training programs for displaced workers in areas of solar design and installation, green building, and energy fundamentals.

We are yearly participants in the National Teach-In on Global Warming Solutions, a national educational initiative where faculty and students at over 1,000 institutions of higher education participate in a one day symposia to discuss how to stabilize the climate in the 21st century.

Our Automotive Department partnered with PG&E to develop a statewide Electric Hybrid Vehicle Technology training program.

We utilized our heavy equipment class to build ponds located on campus.

We implemented a Green Building Certificate Program with funding from the National Science Foundation. The program offers green building courses and workshops using campus buildings and solar arrays as learning labs.

A grant from the Workforce Investment Board allowed development of training programs for displaced workers in areas of solar design and installation, green building, and energy fundamentals.
Student Involvement and Outreach

- We are proud of our enthusiastic student participation in our sustainability efforts. Student-led sustainability events and clubs include, Earth Day, Campus Sustainability Day, Energy Awareness Fair, Campus Clean-Up, Student Alliance for Sustainability, Friends of the Refuge, and more.

- The Associated Students Campus Sustainability Resource Center (below) opened in 2008 and functions as a source of information to learn about various topics related to sustainability.

- Our graduates are invited to don a green tassel and pledge to, “explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences for any job I consider and try to improve these aspects in any organization for which I work.”

- The American Democracy Project fosters partnerships between community colleges and universities, focusing on issues that create student involvement. Butte College and CSU, Chico formed a partnership and selected sustainability as their theme.
Solar, Solar, Solar

- In 2004 Lou Cecchi, a member of our Board of Trustees, suggested researching the use of solar to power the college. With enthusiastic support from President Diana Van Der Ploeg and our Board of Trustees, just seven years later (June 2011) Butte College made history as the first college in the nation to become 100% grid positive. We produce enough electricity to eliminate our electric bill and even sell some electricity back to the grid.

- In August 2005, the college completed construction of Solar Phase I (below), a four acre ground mounted solar project consisting of over 5,700 panels, supplying 25% of the campus’ electricity needs.

- At the completion of Phase II (left & below) in February and May 2009, the college unveiled four more solar array projects, including ground, roof, and covered parking, making it the largest solar campus in California with 45% of our energy generated from the panels.

Pictured left to right: Butte College Trustees Bill McGinnis and Fred Perez, Chico Electric CEO Norm Nielsen, PG&E representative Tino Nava, Butte College President Diana Van Der Ploeg, Trustees Lou Cecchi, Allan Forbes, Bill Brown, and Tom McLaughlin. Not pictured is Trustee Mike Boeger (2009).
Solar Phase III was our largest installation, and included numerous arrays of shaded, covered parking at the Chico Center and main campus, and several shaded walkways on the main campus.

Upon completion of Solar Phase III in June 2011 (ribbon cutting, left), Butte College became home to more than 25,000 solar panels. The savings generated by the elimination of an electric bill allowed the college to invest these substantial funds toward student learning and advancement.

Butte College generates energy equivalent to the removal of more than 600 automobiles from the roads, or enough electricity to power over 900 homes annually. Over the next thirty years, we will recognize savings of more than $150 million.

With the completion of each successive solar and building project, the college received rebate checks from PG&E in excess of $6 million.
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- The college operates an extensive program recycling paper, cans, bottles, scrap metal, and hazardous waste. We refurbish used computers for use by low income students, and we used recycled tires to resurface our running track.

- We were among the first colleges in California to meet the state standard to divert over 50% of our waste stream from the landfill. In 2011, we recycled approximately 90% of our waste.

- The worms added to our campus farm in 2009 assist with waste composting, which is then used to grow organic vegetables used by dining services and/or sold to individuals on campus.

- Dining Services, in cooperation with the Agriculture Department, composes approximately 1,500 pounds of pre-consumer food waste each month. In addition, the use of recycled and recyclable materials for napkins, plates, food containers, and many other items is utilized.
In 2003, the college set a standard to exceed California Title 24 energy efficiency requirements by at least 15%, and required each successive project to meet this standard.

The college was transformed in 2010 when we completed construction of several new energy efficient buildings, and remodeled several other facilities. As a result, Butte College became the recipient of numerous prestigious environmental awards.

Our Arts Building was the first educational building in Northern California awarded the Gold Certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) by the U.S. Green Building Council, and our Student and Administrative Services Building (SAS) is pending gold certification as of 2011.
Our new and remodeled facilities incorporate features that include energy efficient lighting with occupancy sensors, equipment made of recyclable materials, low emissivity windows, sustainable location/siting, energy efficient HVAC systems, sustainable carpet, water saving devices such as low flow toilets, automatic faucet shut-off sensors, and more.

Facilities continued

- Our Chico Center and Learning Resource Center (LRC) have also been recognized as meeting sustainable energy requirements.

- In 2010, we implemented a reduced work week aligned with student demand, allowing us to increase cost savings by reducing our facilities usage without negatively impacting our students.
Environmentally Friendly Transportation

- We operate the largest community college transportation system in California, helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by keeping over 1,500 cars off the road daily. A majority of our buses are biodiesel compatible and several operate using natural gas.

- In 2010, we began planning with the county to provide a bicycle path to the college.

- We offer carpool parking spaces, and spaces for alternative fuel, hybrid, and fuel efficient vehicles.

- We provide our students programs to assist them with the utilization of ridesharing opportunities.
Our Awards and Recognition

- 2004 – Butte College received the Environmental Awareness Award from Chico Rotary.

- 2005 – With the completion of our first solar array, we received a rebate check from PG&E in the amount of $3,707,585. With the completion of each successive solar array phase and energy efficient building, the college has received PG&E rebates totaling approximately $6 million.

- 2008 – Grand price recipient of the National Wildlife Federation’s Campus “Chill Out: Campus Solutions to Global Warming”. This award honors schools that are ahead of their time for sustainability efforts and raising awareness on global warming.

- 2009 – The Accreditation Commission commended the college for its “stewardship and leadership in environmental sustainability and integrating this important domain into student learning and campus planning”.

- 2009 – Butte College’s sustainability accomplishments are viewed as a model for California Community Colleges, and our president, members of our Sustainability Steering Committee, and other faculty and staff are continually invited to speak at numerous conferences and events.

- 2009 – Received the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Campus Leadership Award. A national award recognizing institutions that further Campus Sustainability Leadership and “outstanding overall commitment to sustainability in governance, academics, operations, and community outreach”.

2009 – We were the only educational institution to receive the National Green Power Leadership Award from the Environmental Protection Agency for our Sustainability efforts, specifically carbon reduction and on-site power generation.

2009 - Our Arts Building was awarded the Higher Education Energy Efficiency Partnership Best Practices Award in New Construction HVAC Design & Retrofit, as well as an Honorable Mention for Water Efficiency at the UC-CSU-CCC Sustainability Conference.

2010 – Recipient of the PG&E Integration Award recognizing institutions that combine successful energy conservation projects with the generation of projects that result in decreased consumption of electricity from the grid and positive green energy attributes.

2010 – The Arts Building was the first educational building in Northern California awarded the Gold Certification for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) by the U.S. Green Building Council.

2011 - Our Student and Administrative Services Building (SAS) LEED Gold Certification is pending.

The culmination of these accomplishments would not have been possible without the collaboration of numerous entities. Butte College would like to thank all of the individuals, businesses, and partnerships throughout the campus, community, state, and country for their assistance and cooperation as we realize our vision by becoming the “Best and most Sustainable Community College in California”.

Information and Data as of June 2011
A Letter from Dr. Diana Van Der Ploeg  
Butte College President, 2003 – 2011

Sustainability is a key focus for our college, and in fact, you could say we’re passionate about it! Although the college has a history of treasuring our land, its use, and our wildlife refuge, we became intentional about our overall sustainability efforts around 2005 based primarily on our exploration of installing a solar array and our venture into the American Democracy Project with the New York Times and Carnegie Institute. We started with the installment of our first solar array, followed with the development of a Sustainability Steering Committee to collect our ideas and put them into action. We dreamed of what could be, and we found champions from all areas of the college, including faculty, staff, students, facilities folks, and administrators. We experimented and we expanded.

In addition, we decided to institutionalize our efforts, so we included it in our Butte College Core Values, in our Mission Statement, in our Strategic Plan as one of our five initiatives, and we adopted a Board policy on energy and sustainability. We soon realized that we were leading the way nationally in sustainability in community colleges, and we started receiving awards for our accomplishments. In fact, we made history in 2011 as the first Community College in the country to become grid positive, producing more electricity than we use.

I’m proud we have become national leaders and role models. We’ve chosen to cherish and preserve our environment by being intentional about sustainability. We’ve been comprehensive in our approach by including anyone who wants to be involved, we’ve been aggressive in seeking funding to advance our vision, and we’ve made it a permanent part of our culture through policy, mission, staffing, funding, and inclusion.

There is so much controversy about global warming, but I chose to believe in global warming; because, what if we make the wrong choice? The consequences of doing nothing are unacceptable, and I believe we should all work together to leave our environment in a healthier state for others to enjoy. I can’t imagine any parent or grandparent suggesting that we not do all we can when it comes to the health and well being of future generations.

If each one of us did just a few things differently to protect our environment, we could not only make a difference here, but throughout the world as other countries look to us as role models. Wouldn’t it be fun to be the ones who influence our neighbors, friends, family, and others to also cherish our environment so we can ensure it is healthy and clean for our future family members we have yet to meet!