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## **STRATEGIC PLAN INSPIRES SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES**

### **Students' Hope to Institutionalize Sustainability On Campus**

MARQUETTE, Mich. – Based on recent data collected by the U.S. Department of Education, sustainability is one of the fastest growing programs in universities across the nation (National Center for Education Statistics). So how does Northern Michigan University compare? Students Ella Skrocki and Rachel Headings have teamed up with Dr. Sarah Mittlefehldt in an effort to learn how to best encourage sustainability as a priority to the university's Administration. They recently distributed a survey to students, faculty, staff and administrators that assesses campus attitudes toward sustainability.

In many ways, President Fritz Erickson's strategic plan inspired this project. Headings explained: "We felt that sustainability was woven all throughout the language in the draft. It just seemed like the best place to start." The team is more specifically using the vision, strategic outcomes, and core values to support their initiatives.

For Skrocki, incorporating multiple aspects of the plan was very important: "Sustainability is more than just 'the environment.' It's not something that is just for tree-huggers. It's a concrete world view that is incorporated into every aspect of our everyday lives."

Skrocki and Headings have already taken steps toward achieving their goal of institutionalizing sustainability initiatives. Skrocki, in conjunction with Assistant Vice President of University Marketing and Communications Derek Hall, has developed an online platform for students to remain engaged with current projects and has launched a pilot campaign targeting all on-campus residents. Meanwhile, Headings has developed a survey that brings the question of sustainability to the heart of campus: the students, faculty, staff, and administrators. So far, more than 500 people have responded. Approved by the Institutional Review Board, the collected information will be used to further the students' research and will be discussed at open forum meetings soon to be scheduled. The survey is open until Sunday March 20 and can be found with the hyperlink [https://nmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?ID=SV\\_2n1YftfclC3p3uJ](https://nmu.qualtrics.com/SE/?ID=SV_2n1YftfclC3p3uJ). All members of the campus community are invited to apply, regardless of past experience or knowledge of sustainability.

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