

MSU tracks its carbon FOOTPRINT

Greenhouse gas emissions from building operations at Minnesota State University are by far the largest makeup of the institution's carbon footprint, which it is working to reduce.

That's also the area the university will be looking at most as it develops a plan to lessen its impact on the environment.

MSU President Richard Davenport and various university representatives met Tuesday to discuss a report and presentation by Katie Anthony, a sustainability specialist for Sebesta Blomberg in St. Paul, hired to conduct an analysis of the university's carbon dioxide-equivalent emissions.

"We're emitting way too much carbon, it looks like," Davenport said.

According to the report of the 2012-13 fiscal year — which establishes a baseline for future

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**RICK STRAKA**

**Vice President of Finance and Administration**

comparison — building operations made up 87 percent of emissions. Of that, Xcel Energy electricity made up 57.4 percent, and combustion of natural gas for heat and hot water made up 23.9 percent.

Emissions from commuters to campus made up 11.9 percent. And the remaining emissions were from fleet, air travel, solid waste management, wastewater processing, and transmission and distribution line losses.

The report also compared MSU to Bemidji State, St. Cloud State and Winona State by emissions per

student and emissions per 1,000 square feet. Without factoring in commuting and air travel (which are more difficult to quantify), MSU had the highest emissions with regard to square footage.

MSU had about 13 metric tons of emissions per 1,000 square feet, compared to about 8 metric tons for Bemidji; about 8.5 metric tons for St. Cloud; and about 11 metric tons for Winona.

Anthony said MSU being "much higher than its peer institutions" goes back to the fact that the majority of its footprint is driven by building emissions. She said, moving forward, the important data will be measuring MSU's progress "against itself."

"Compared to St. Cloud State, we're almost 50 percent more (per 1,000 square feet), so we've got to dig into why that is," said Rick Straka, vice president of finance and administration.

Ron Fields, assistant vice president for facilities management, said a more detailed look at what building types are being compared would be helpful. If MSU has more lab facilities, for example, those result in more emissions. Dorms are another example, with energy being used 24 hours per day.

He and Davenport also suggested comparing MSU to an institution similar in size, such as the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, for more "apples to apples" measurements.

When looking at the per-student comparison, MSU had the second-highest carbon footprint with about 3 metric tons of emissions per student. Winona had the highest with about 3.5 metric tons per student.

The study only looked at full-time students in that analysis, which Davenport questioned. He asked that future data include the part-time population to give a more complete picture.

When looking at the survey results for commuting data, more students reported walking to campus than driving alone in automobiles. Whereas the majority of faculty and staff drove alone to work (didn't carpool), resulting in more emissions.

Recycling was another area Anthony saw room for improvement. She said the university only recycled about 19 percent of its solid waste during the 2012-13 fiscal year.

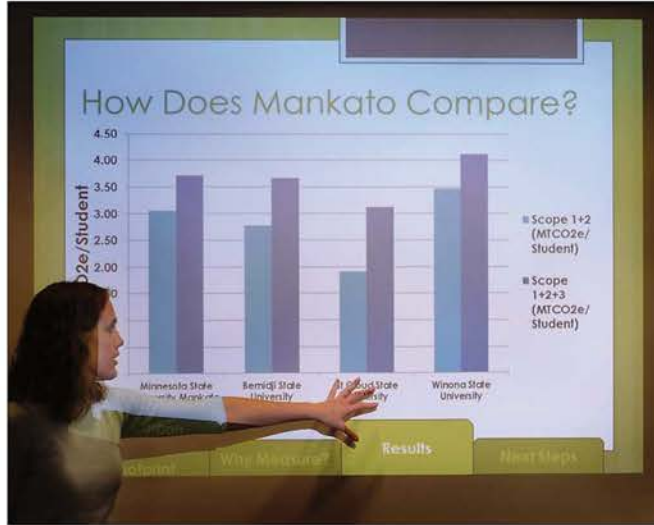
Overall, she said the report simply establishes a baseline and should be used to spark conversation about the best ways to make energy-use reductions.

Straka said the next steps will be to look at the mechanical building functions, as well as the "culture of how we use energy."

Anthony said opportunities for reductions could lie in energy-efficient building projects and renovations; energy management; improvements to bicycle amenities; and parking considerations, such as preferred parking stalls for carpoolers.

Davenport said the university has made a commitment to be as environmentally friendly as possible. The goal of "supporting energy efficiency, resource conservation and sustainability" was made part of the university's Strategic Plan for 2010-2015.

"Overall, I think the performance of the school is (good), and it's a good baseline for getting started in the future," Anthony said.



Report: MSU's emissions more than its peers