

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)

# U. gets high marks for sustainable work

**By: Riley Blanton**

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Brown received a grade of A-minus and the title of Overall College Sustainability Leader on a report card released last week by the Sustainable Endowments Institute.

The grade was a marked improvement from last year's B and earned the University a spot among only 15 out of 300 schools reviewed to receive an A-minus, the highest mark awarded.

The SEI, based in Cambridge, Mass., reviewed the performance of American and Canadian universities with the largest endowments in nine categories. Brown was awarded a grade of A in food and recycling, green building, student involvement, transportation, investment priorities and shareholder engagement - a measure of how well the University advocates for sustainable policies in companies in which it invests.

The University received a grade of B in administration and climate change and energy, and a C in endowment transparency.

The report card, which may be viewed in full at [greenreportcard.org](http://greenreportcard.org), explained that the C for transparency was given because "information on endowment holdings is not made available" to the University community.

"It is one of the more difficult areas for schools to change," said Lisa Chase, a spokeswoman for SEI. "Most schools haven't had their endowment practices open to students and to the public historically."

Chase added that Brown had performed relatively well in that category despite the low grade, and that the University was "obviously taking steps" to improve transparency. She emphasized that positive change in endowment transparency was possible, despite apparent difficulties. The University of New Hampshire, which received a D last year, improved and earned an A this year, she said.

The report card's comments were otherwise complimentary of Brown, citing in particular the University's commitment of more than \$20 million, "for energy efficiency upgrades to campus systems and facilities over the next several years." The report card also praised the Community Harvest program - which allows Brown Dining Services to purchase food products from 20 local farms - use of hybrid, biodiesel and natural gas vehicles on campus and the number and influence of student groups aimed at improving the University's sustainability.

Julia Beamesderfer '09, a leader of emPOWER, said she's excited about the advances that have been made.

"It's great that Brown's sustainability efforts have been recognized," she said.

Beamesderfer said emPOWER's proposals to Brown's Energy and Environmental Advisory Committee, which includes faculty members, administrators and students, were the impetus for several initiatives that have quickly become fixtures on campus - notably Community Carbon Use Reduction at Brown.

The group "was instrumental in challenging EEAC to think big, not only to make reductions goals, but to make them significant," Beamesderfer said.

The pilot program for CCURB, called Project 20/20, employs Brown students who canvass homes in Providence's low-income communities replacing incandescent light bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs, which are donated by Wal-Mart.

"Not only does it make (city residents) aware of sustainability issues, but it reduces their energy bills," Beamesderfer said.

Last year, emPOWER received a \$350,000 grant from President Ruth Simmons and the Sidney Frank Foundation. The organization hopes that the money will provide for its ongoing campaign to turn students' proposals into successful programs like Project 20/20, Beamesderfer said.

Ginger Gritz, energy and environmental programs coordinator at the Department of Facilities Management, agreed that student involvement played a large role in improving Brown's grade. The University's "commitment to green building," was another significant factor in the SEI's rating, Gritz said. Facilities is seeking LEED certification for five construction projects under the organization's Green Building Rating System.

Brown has implemented an overall plan to reduce its carbon footprint by 42 percent between 2007 and 2020, said Chris Powell, director of sustainable energy and environmental initiatives. In the first year of the program, from 2007 to 2008, the reduction was 7.7 percent - almost twice the 4 percent annual reduction required to meet the goal. He said he was confident that the program will meet, if not exceed, expectations.

"Hopefully one of these days they'll be handing out some A's," he said.

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