Our Campus, Our Planet

First-year students participate in a day of environmental learning.

Excited members of the Class of 2014 moved into their new dorm rooms during the last weekend in August. The following Monday, many of them took part in Our Campus, Our Planet, a day of outdoor activities, lectures, discussions, and films focusing on the environment.
“Our Campus, Our Planet was an opportunity for brand-new students to be thoughtful about the place to which they had just come, where they were about to live and study, and to see the global implications of their future actions in their new surroundings,” explains Joseph Voelker, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Voelker convened the committee that organized the new program as part of Orientation.

First-year students—many of them wearing Our Campus, Our Planet T-shirts designed by Hartford Art School student Ethan Bodnar ’12—could be seen all over campus, heading to screenings of environmentally themed films, testing the Hog River’s water quality, learning about distinctive trees on campus, and making “river art” from items found in nature. Lecture and discussion topics included e-cycling of electronics, green architecture, and environmental health.

First-year student Shaun Carland, who took part in the River Art session led by Sherry Buckberrough, associate professor of art history, said that Our Campus, Our Planet was a great introduction to the University of Hartford.

“It got me to explore the campus and meet people I never would have met otherwise,” Carland said.

Moriah Vermette and Mariangela Chiaravalloti, who attended a session called “Our Campus, Our Footprint, Our Actions,” said that the program got them thinking about ways that they could be more environmentally responsible.

University President Walter Harrison described Our Campus, Our Planet as part of “a long-term effort to become a far more sustainable campus, and to raise not only our students’ understanding of the importance of sustaining the natural and built environment of our campus but also our own.”

Students learned about environmental issues on campus, steps the University is taking to reduce its carbon footprint and energy consumption, and ways in which students can help make a difference.

For more about sustainability efforts on campus, visit www.new.hartford.edu/sustainability and www.sustainableuha.blogspot.com.
The University of Hartford, the President’s College, and the Joseloff Gallery have joined with eight other local organizations to form Park Water Arts, a yearlong eco-arts festival. Sherry Buckberrough, associate professor of art history in the College of Arts and Sciences, is one of the developers of the festival.

Park Water Arts coordinates art actions and events to draw attention to the history, present condition, and future of the Park River Watershed.

Early Dutch settlers used the Park River for transportation, as a power source for mills, and to dispose of waste. By the late 1800s the river was so dirty and filled with waste from nearby factories and tenements that it became a serious health risk. It was during this time that people began to refer to it derisively as the “Hog River.”

The Park River, still called the Hog River as it flows across our campus, eventually runs into the Connecticut River via underground tunnels that were built beneath Hartford’s Bushnell Park in the 1940s to prevent flooding in downtown Hartford.

Today, portions of the Park River and its tributaries are beautiful, but other areas have been neglected and polluted by millions of gallons of storm runoff, dumped industrial chemicals, and sewage each year. It’s not easy being a river in an urban environment.

The kickoff event for the yearlong festival of eco-arts was Our Campus, Our Planet, a day devoted to sustainability, part of the University’s Orientation programming for incoming first-year students (see pp. 24–25). It was followed by river cleanups, including one conducted by students in Assistant Professor Wick Griswold’s class focusing on the campus section of the river.

From Oct. 21 to Nov. 19, the Chen Gallery at Central Connecticut State University had an exhibition on frogs, watersheds, and sustainability. Until Feb. 20, 2011, Real Art Ways gallery in Hartford has an exhibition by Olu Logub on New England stone walls, accompanied by nature and bird walks and related lectures. Planned events throughout the year include exhibitions, lectures, films, and concerts, as well as river events. The festival continues through August 2011.


Go to www.parkwaterarts.org for more information and updates on events throughout the year.

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A section of the Hog/Park River that flows through campus.

Yearlong Eco-Arts Festival on Park River Watershed

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