RIT | Sustainability

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RIT Sustainability

rit.edu/sustainablecampus

April Newsletter

Earth Day 50th Anniversary!

EARTH MONTH ECOCHALLENGE

RIT Sustainability invites you to join us to celebrate Earth Month and the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day! Although we are moving to a digital platform, the goal of Earth Day remains unchanged: to unite people globally to drive positive change for people and the planet.

Earth Day EcoChallenge is a 30-day environmental and social engagement program. From April 1 - April 30, participants select actions that align with their values and make a 30-day commitment to complete those actions, all the while practicing and reinforcing good habits. For every completed action, you earn points and create a positive impact. Join us, and let your actions speak.

STATS WE ARE PROUD OF

74
Meatless or Vegan Meals Consumed

4,875
Minutes spent outside

38
Miles traveled by foot instead of car

352
Gallons of water have been saved

1,112
Minutes spent learning

541
Conversations to connect with people

GET INVOLVED!
RESOURCES AND EVENTS

EARTH DAY 2020

The world is commemorating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day on April 22, 2020. You can be part of this celebration! Explore our website for a list of opportunities, including:

- Seneca Park Zoo virtual Earth Day celebration - live animal experiences, live discussions with local experts, and more!
- Foodprints for the Future, a collaboration across diverse sectors to address one of the largest contributors to climate change facing us today: our food system
- Artists for the Earth, a global campaign bringing artists from around the world in every discipline, using the power of their art to express our common humanity.
- EARTHRISE, an intergenerational global movement for climate action that will mobilize millions around the world on April 22, 2020.

FAIR TRADE FRIDAY

Join us on Friday, May 1st between 9:30 - 10:30 am for a virtual coffee hour. There is no formal program and everyone is welcome! Click here for more information.

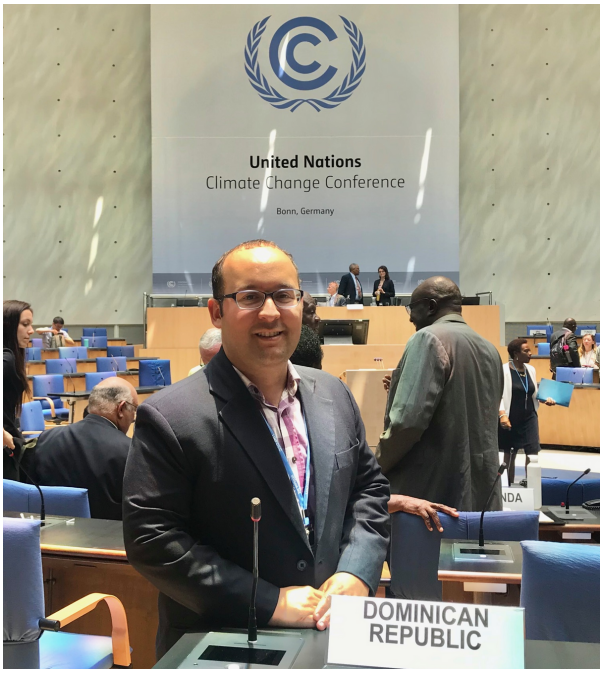
SUSTAINABLE LIVING TIPS FOR THIS SEASON:

- Start a garden from produce table scraps that would have been passed to the landfill otherwise. Check out the RIT Sustainability instagram for tips!
- Read a book related to sustainability. The Monroe County Public Library Earth Day Reading List is a great place to start.
- Save money and reduce your impact on the environment by ditching disposable keurig cups.
- Get rid of energy vampires that may be lurking around your home and office! Electronic devices continue to use power when turned off but still plugged in.

SUSTAINABLE OFFICE CERTIFICATION

Looking for ways to incorporate sustainability into your workspace? The Sustainable Office Program is a point-based, voluntary assessment tool that offices can use to examine their current practices, identify opportunities to improve sustainability performance, and get recognized for your efforts. Get certified today!

Sustainability student spotlight: Omar Aponte



Hometown: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Degree program: Ph.D. in Engineering

Omar grew up appreciating nature from a young age, living his life on a Caribbean island. This also frequently exposed him to man-made and natural occurring disasters such as deforestation, hurricanes, drought and flood seasons. These experiences started to inspire Omar to live in a more environmentally responsible way and to work within organizations committed to take on climate action.

Omar is currently part of the Ph.D. in Engineering program at the Kate Gleason College of Engineering (KGCOE). Along with his advisor, Prof. Katie McConky, Ph.D., he focuses his research in the development of machine learning algorithms used to predict when a peak electric load day will occur, and how renewable generation affects these predictions. These predictions can allow electricity consumers such as RIT to respond to peak load days in ways that generate significant financial and environmental benefits. The team is currently implementing a model at RIT's Henrietta campus with funding from the $1 million awarded to RIT by NYSERDA's Energy To Lead Competition in 2018.

One of his many accomplishments includes being a member of the Dominican Republic's official delegation to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn, Germany during summer 2019. Dominican Republic was actively involved in conversations covering the scientific, technological, and implementation aspects of topics such as climate empowerment, reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation, and clean development mechanisms.

In addition to the work within his program, Omar makes sustainability an everyday mission as he takes advantage of every opportunity at RIT and is a familiar face to many. He is a graduate of *momentum II*, a leadership program which introduces students to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. He actively participates within the RIT community through his work with RIT Sustainability and Habitat for Humanity.

Sustainability Research Spotlight: Pollinator Partnerships

The warm spring weather brings more than rain and flowers – it sparks the arrival of pollinators such as birds, bees, and butterflies to Western New York. Understanding and supporting these animals is critical to services that our community relies on, such as pollinating food crops and maintaining healthy ecosystems.

An interdisciplinary team of RIT faculty are working on multi-year research projects on in partnership with with Seneca Park Zoo Society (SPZS). This strategic partnership between RIT and SPZS was established in 2017 to provide experiential learning opportunities for students while helping solve real-world problems through projects such as 3D imaging of specimens, creating enrichment for tigers, improving animal care and more. One of the research priorities is understanding and improving pollinator habitat. Students help with identifying vacant spaces in urban settings that can be turned into pollinator gardens, testing seed mix varieties, and determining the merits of local vs. non-local milkweed plants which is necessary for the survival of monarch butterflies.

The Butterfly Beltway pollinator plot sign on Lowenthal Road on RIT campus

One research group led by Dr. Kaitlin Stack Whitney, Assistant Professor at RIT, is working on understanding the vegetation composition of grassy patches along highways. In addition to beautification, there are environmental benefits of well-designed roadside plantings – specifically, natural flood control measures as well as providing important pollinator habitats. Dr. Stack Whitney's team includes students in majors ranging from Biology to Electrical engineering, and they rely on several research methods to achieve their goals, including field sampling, lab analyses, spatial analyses, and cost-benefit analyses.

Additionally, seniors in the Environmental Science program participate in a multi-year iterative project to identify effective ways to create pollinator-friendly habitats. Previous teams conducted germination studies, developed GIS maps, and studied the impact of urban environments on pollinator plants using a seed mix from the Seneca Park Zoo Society. This year's team is collaborating with RIT Sustainability to determine the role pollinator friendly plots can play in furthering RIT's goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.

Looking for ways to support pollinators? Consider participating in the Butterfly Beltway project!

SUSTAINABILITY BINGO

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Walked instead of drove	Sent a letter to an elected official	Used a second-hand item	Went to a farmers market	Brought your own bag for shopping
Picked up trash outside	Used a reusable bottle	Unplugged a power cord when not in use	Harvested produce grown at home	Had a vegan or vegetarian meal
Declined single use plastics	Consciously reduced water usage	Free Space	Returned bottles and cans	Turned off lights when not using rooms
Reused something	Car-pooled while travelling	Learned more about eco-friendly pratices	Used solar energy	Drove an electric or hybrid car
Used US EPA Safer Choice products	Used wind energy	Shopped local	Recycled electronic devices	Composted food waste

TAG YOUR FRIENDS!