

Last year, USU students voted to increase their fees by up to \$3 per semester to establish a Student Sustainability Coordinator and provide funding for student projects to help USU become more sustainable. This year, we are providing an opportunity for faculty and staff to contribute to USU's Carbon Off-set Program, a new fund that's being established to enhance our ongoing commitment to reduce USU's carbon footprint.

A large proportion of our carbon emissions is due to air and automobile travel by staff and faculty on University business trips. For example, last USU travelers logged over 17 million miles in air travel and over 7 million miles by car. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of USU's carbon emissions are due to faculty, staff and students travelling on University business. Beginning next week, travelers will have the opportunity to make voluntary contributions to a fund that will be used to off-set carbon emissions on campus. When completing their travel reimbursement forms, travelers will be able to check a box indicating their intent to deduct \$10 from their reimbursement check as a tax-exempt donation to a fund in the Advancement Office that will be used for on-campus projects to reduce USU's carbon output. The check-off is entirely voluntary and is optional each time an individual submits a form for travel reimbursement.

We all owe a great deal of thanks to Sharyn Bradfield (Manager of Finance Systems) and Megan Maples, (Travel Lead), in the USU Controllers' Office, and Ryan Merrill (Database Administrator) in USU's Information Technology Office. They're the ones who figured out how to make the program operational on the Travel forms.

This year, funds will be used to lower carbon emissions from our grounds-keeping operations. We currently are exploring two options. One is replacing smaller gasoline-powered lawnmowers with rechargeable electric mowers. Newer models have exchangeable batteries that extend the time the mower can be used. Several batteries can be charged and switched out during the day. Electric mowers not only reduce carbon emissions; they also require much less maintenance than gasoline-powered mowers. Another option is to replace large gasoline-powered riding mowers with propane-powered models. Propane models emit less carbon and also have lower operating costs.

Later this Spring, USU's Sustainability Council will solicit additional ideas from faculty and staff on how to use future funds generated by the Carbon Off-set Program to lower our carbon footprint. Once proposals have been assessed for their feasibility and costs, we also will ask for help in prioritizing them so that we can identify the next project that will be supported with the Carbon Off-set Program funds.

Several universities are achieving net carbon reductions by purchasing carbon off-sets from other organizations that implement carbon sequestration programs. For example, one college in Maine claims that they have achieved zero net carbon emissions by purchasing carbon off-sets in Oregon. USU's Sustainability Council decided early on that we would work to reduce carbon emissions locally rather than purchase 'carbon credits' from some distant location. Given the air quality problems we sometimes see in Cache Valley, we'd like to help lower emissions right here at home.

Over the past few years, faculty and staff have asked us how they can help with USUs' efforts to lower our carbon footprint and implement sustainable practices on campus. The Carbon Off-Set Program provides an easy means for folks who want to make a voluntary tax-exempt contribution to do just that.