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OCTOBER 2025
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Bringing New Ideas to Campus at Mount Marty University

Canadian native Brandon Taylor, Ph.D., has accomplished a great deal in one short year at Mount Marty University. Along with securing a book deal and placing several articles in highly regarded public platforms, he's developing a TEI-based digital edition of the Letters of John Chamberlain. To his colleagues, Taylor is considered both a serious team player and a creative force.



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In higher education, where learning environments, research labs, and student housing must remain operational, facility managers across campuses are constantly evaluating infrastructure readiness. Yet one frequently overlooked failure point can cause major disruption: the roof perimeter.

Editor's Letter

OCTOBER 2025

If you've been on a campus recently, you've probably noticed a few things: students still find the one patch of grass you'd rather they avoid, someone's always skateboarding to class like it's the X Games, and sustainability has officially gone from "trend" to "must-have." This October, in honor of National Campus Sustainability Month, our magazine is rolling out a special section devoted to all things green (and no, not the mysterious cafeteria casserole).

Sustainability is more than just good PR—it's the blueprint for smarter, healthier, and more efficient campuses. From cutting energy costs to creating spaces that don't just welcome students but inspire them, these initiatives are shaping the way private universities look, feel, and function. When a campus embraces sustainability, it's not just lowering its carbon footprint; it's sending a message to students, faculty, and visitors that "we're serious about the future" (and not just the next football season).

One big piece of that puzzle is LEED certification. You've probably heard about it, maybe even chased it, or better yet—achieved it. LEED isn't just a fancy plaque for the wall; it's the gold star (sometimes literally) for building performance, efficiency, and sustainability. Campuses that earn it aren't just checking boxes; they're investing in spaces that improve indoor air quality, reduce operating costs, and attract eco-conscious students and staff. After all, nothing says "cutting-edge higher ed" like a residence hall that saves water, conserves energy, and still manages to keep the Wi-Fi humming.

And let's be honest—sustainability is a lot easier to brag about on a tour than your parking situation. (We're rooting for you on that front too, by the way.)

We're proud to share stories and insights from campuses across the country that are leading the charge, showing that going green doesn't mean sacrificing function or beauty—it means enhancing both.

Thank you, as always, for letting Private University Products and News be a part of your campus life. We love telling your stories, highlighting your projects, and celebrating your dedication to building smarter, stronger, and more sustainable institutions. The best part? We're just getting started. Great things are coming, and we can't wait to share them with you.

Until then, here's to greener pastures—and fewer students trampling that one patch of grass.

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Bringing New Ideas to Campus at Mount Marty University

BY CYNTHIA MWENJA, PhD

Dr. Brandon Taylor, assistant professor of English at Mount Marty University, has accomplished a great deal in one short year on campus. He has secured a book deal, placed several articles in highly regarded public platforms, and taken a lead role in campus assessment. He is also preparing to train students to work on a website he hosts so that they can gain valuable digital humanities skills, and he is serving on two campus ad hoc committees which are developing exciting new academic programs to benefit the whole campus.

Examining the Rhetoric of Corporations and Empire

Nicholas Shudak, dean of Undergraduate Studies and professor of Teacher Education at Mount Marty, reports that Taylor is a “prolific writer,” as demonstrated by Taylor’s publications in just one year. Taylor is currently finalizing his first book, *Empire of the Unincorporated: Rhetoric and the Corporate Imaginary in Seventeenth-Century England*, to be released August 2026 from McGill-Queen’s University Press as part of its History of Ideas series. As a rhetorician, Taylor draws on texts from many genres in this work, including business charters, travelogues, communiques, and polemics; source texts span disciplines from theology to philosophy, literature to rhetorical argument. He places these texts in conversation with one another as he traces the “rhetorical influences of the corporate imaginary” at the time that corporations were first being established. Taylor says that William Sheppard published the first tract about corporations in 1659; Sheppard saw a corporation as a higher calling that was “immortal.” Taylor

points out that people joining a company in these early years would have thought of it similarly to joining a church congregation, but the idea that a small group of people could create a new being, one that could sue and be sued, was entirely new—and revolutionary. Taylor’s book examines the ways that the establishment of corporations “unfolded empire.”

Taylor calls the moment of incorporation “emergent,” and his book teases out answers to the question of what was happening at the time to give rise to these new ideas. He explores how incorporation—creating a new body—worked rhetorically, as well as how people negotiated that change. He also makes connections to the present day without passing judgement on the current status quo by exploring answers to questions such as these: If creating a corporation was a “higher calling,” as Sheppard proposed, do we still consider that to be the case? Do we hold corporations to moral account, given their privileges? Do they have an obligation to behave well for people? Taylor says that

the founders of the Virginia Company—the first corporation to establish a permanent English settlement at Jamestown in 1607—were genuinely concerned about Indigenous people and wanted to make sure they were not harmed. Within a few decades, however, the Royal African Company, chartered in 1672, was enslaving and selling Indigenous people for profit. Taylor explores how this shift happened and how it may relate to corporate behavior today.

As Taylor has been developing his book project, he has placed several related pieces in different outlets. One such piece is “Everything Has a Price: The Commercial Gaze and the Origins of Corporate Empire,” which appeared in July of this year on the Journal of the History of Ideas blog (<https://www.jhiblog.org/2025/07/14/everything-has-a-price-the-commercial-gaze-and-the-origins-of-corporate-empire/>). This piece, centered on the East India Company, traces changing perceptions that travel writers of the time had about the people and places they encountered. The earliest adventurers

who wrote about their experiences, Taylor notes, tended to conceive of foreign peoples and cultures as “strange.” As merchant-adventurers became more common in the seventeenth century, though, their writings shifted toward travel recommendations for the areas they had encountered. The biggest shift, however, happened when the merchants developed what scholars in this area term the “commercial gaze.” As an example, he states that these travelers might have begun to understand a forest not as wilderness, nor the setting for a recommended rest stop, but as ship masts. Instead of “seeing the world with wonder” as earlier travelers did, the merchant adventurers began to think of the world as a “shopping mall.” Taylor argues that these characterizations of the natural world as a series of commodities demonstrate that the idea of commerciality actually emerged in an earlier era than is commonly conceived. All companies that were chartered during the Age of Exploration, Taylor says, were interested in seeing the world as merchandise, and his “Everything Has a Price” article maps this idea.

In August of this year, Taylor published a different book-related piece in *The Sundial*, an online publication of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. In “The Color of Commerce: Racial Identity and Corporate Logic in Behn’s *Oroonoko*” (<https://medium.com/the-sundial-acmrs/the-color-of-commerce-racial-identity-and-corporate-logic-in-behns-oroonoko-9c4b93980d94>), Taylor examines what he labels a “weird paradox” in the book’s racial coding. Oroonoko had been an African king before his enslavement in an English-run Surinamese colony, and the narrator presents him as having facial features that meet European beauty standards. While Oroonoko is admired for his noble bearing and rationality, these features elevate him in the narrator’s estimation but do not allow him to escape his status as a Black person. By contrast, an English fisherman in the narrative has developed a deep tan from his long tenure in the area; the narrator refers to him as “a perfect Indian in colour.” Taylor explores the implications of thinking that English people could

continued...

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become Indigenous, but Black people cannot change their racial status—and how these ideas work in conversation with the East India Company and conceptions of commerciality.

Taylor also devoted time to developing a piece unrelated to his book project. Published on September 8 of this year in the Catholic magazine *Commonweal*, “A Rule for the Rest of Us: Benedictine Friendship in an Age of Isolation,” explores how—as the article states—the “Rule of St. Benedict, in particular, offers a way of living that can sustain commitment, humility, and presence in community.” This article stemmed from Taylor’s interest in the Benedictine values that undergird Mount Marty. The university is connected to the Sisters of Sacred Heart Monastery, and one of the nuns lent Taylor some books about St. Benedict so he could learn more about Benedictine thought. As Taylor “sorted through his own ideas” in relation to his readings, he found himself

developing the article. Jason Heron, associate professor of Theology at Mount Marty, says that the piece is “beautifully written” and that it shows Taylor’s “intuitive grasp of how Benedictines think about community.” For his part, Taylor says that “when you’re talking about values and taking them seriously, they should infuse all”; he wanted to make sure that he fully grasped and could enact the campus’ values in every aspect of his work at Mount Marty.

Building New Programs

Taylor is involved in initiatives to develop both Honors and Pre-Law programs based in Mount Marty’s Benedictine values. Shudak notes that Mount Marty wants to create these curricula in order to attract a wider array of students. The goal for the pre-law program, Shudak says, is to ground it in the humanities; the project is currently in the exploratory stages. If they are able to implement the program, Shudak states,

they envision “three streams converging” for its students: an analytical approach to problem-solving, the study of rhetoric, and an “understanding of the complexities of human drama.” Shudak points to this initiative as an example of Mount Marty doing exciting and interesting things; he affirms that Taylor has been “instrumental” within the group as its members explore possibilities. Heron, who also serves on both committees, says that Taylor has been “essential” to their work by consistently contributing innovative ideas and foreseeing potential challenges to be addressed. Because Taylor approaches these tasks by thinking structurally, Heron remarks, his approach has helped both committees engage in “fruitful work.”

Digital Humanities Work

Taylor plans to offer Mount Marty students opportunities to develop skills for working with projects in the digital humanities. He had developed these skills in the Humanities Computing and Media Centre (HCMC) at



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the University of Victoria during his time as a master's student. His role at the HCMS was to work with a map of early modern London (<https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/index.htm>) that had been drafted by John Stow. Stow had developed the map by walking on each London road and painstakingly recording everything he saw, down to each name in each cemetery. Taylor's task was to find biographic information about any person that Stow mentioned and link the information in the online map.

Taylor has applied the skills he gained at HCMC in developing his website, The Chamberlain Letters Project (<https://early-modernletters.org/>). This repository houses letters written by John Chamberlain during the late 1590s to the early 1610s. Chamberlain was a prolific correspondent, and the two volumes of his collected letters serve as a rich resource of information and gossip about prominent people and political wrangling

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of the time. Taylor obtained open-source permission from the American Philosophical Society to establish the online repository. There, he is able to digitally edit and annotate the work so that researchers can more effectively interact with the contents. For example, site visitors will be able to search digitally for every single mention of someone like John

Smith. Biographical information will be provided for each individual who is mentioned, as well.

Taylor's goal is to teach students how to continue developing the repository's usability. He envisions offering regular two-week

workshops to teach students how to appropriately code the material. Participants will need to learn basic coding, Extensible Markup Language (XML), and the standards of Text Encoding Initiative (TEI). With these tools under their belts, students will be able to code and fact check short letters during the workshop—so they will finish the workshop not only with useful tools for engaging in digital humanities work, but they will also have a published piece to their credit.

Inspiration for Other New Faculty Members

Shudak says that Taylor exemplifies the Mount Marty faculty members who have joined the campus in recent years; Shudak appreciates that the group has “an energy and desire to do amazing things for Mount Marty.” Shudak points to Taylor particularly as a “consummate professional” who has talents in many areas, including writing, assessment, and technology. Heron says that Taylor is a “creative force” and a “serious team player” who will continue to make Mount Marty a better place because he has been given room and tools to do his work. Heron recommends that administrators at other institutions trust the strengths of people like Taylor, who can bring fresh insights to campus. Through his impressive publishing record, exciting collaborative work with colleagues, and innovative digital humanities program that will benefit student participants, Taylor offers both inspiration and model for other new faculty members on campuses across the nation.

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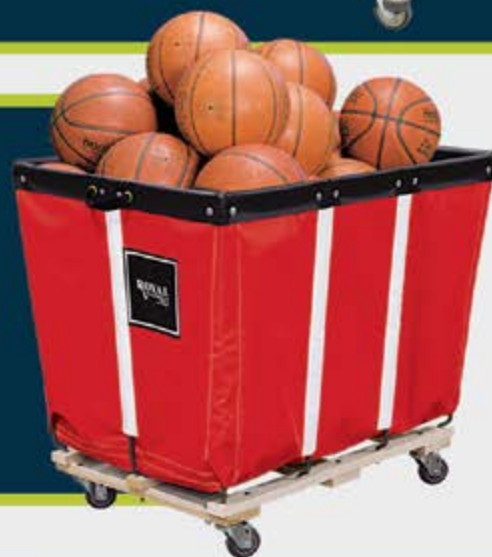
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FACILITIES & MAINTENANCE

Protect Campus Infrastructure with Tested Edge Metal

BY JONNIE HASAN, PE, BECP, CXA+BE

In higher education, where learning environments, research labs, and student housing must remain operational, facility managers across campuses are constantly evaluating infrastructure readiness—not just for daily wear and tear, but for increasingly severe weather threats. Yet one frequently overlooked failure point can cause major disruption: the roof perimeter.

Why is the roof edge the weakest link? It represents the most vulnerable point of any low-slope roofing system. Unlike the protected field of the roof, perimeter elements such as coping, fascia, and gravel stops are directly exposed to uplift forces, wind-driven rain, and pressure differentials. When those forces meet weak or poorly installed edge systems, failure is almost inevitable.

Independent studies by organizations such as FM Global, RICOWI, and FEMA consistently show that between 59 to more than 60 percent of all low-slope roof failures begin at the edge. Once flashing or coping is displaced, the roof membrane can billow and peel back in a matter of minutes, leading to progressive blow-off across large sections of roof.

The risk is amplified during hurricanes and derecho- or severe-convective storms—events that in recent years have been occurring more frequently and with greater intensity across the United States. In post-storm investigations

following Hurricanes Charley, Katrina, Ike, and Ian, perimeter failures were repeatedly cited as the root cause of catastrophic roof loss. Even moderate wind events, with gusts in the 40 to 50 mph range, have been shown to dislodge inadequately secured fascia and flashings.

For schools and universities, the consequences of edge failure go far beyond property damage. Roof leaks and blow-offs disrupt classroom schedules, expose valuable research and technology, and trigger costly emergency repairs. Investing in tested, ES-1 certified edge systems dramatically reduces that risk, ensuring that the roof's first line of defense can withstand future forces it may face.

Storm Trends & School Infrastructure Risk

Extreme weather disasters have been increasing dramatically. Between 2020 and 2024, the U.S. averaged \$23 billion in weather disasters per year, up from just nine billion per year in

the 1980s. These events, which include severe storms, hurricanes, and high-wind outbreaks, now cause nearly \$150 billion annually in damages.

Severe straight-line windstorms—such as derecho- and convective-wind events—are typically nearly a half-billion-dollar disasters. The U.S. experienced more than five times as many billion-dollar severe storm events during 2005 through 2024 compared to the period from 1985 to 2004, with total average costs rising from \$3.8 billion to \$21.8 billion per year.

Future projections show even greater risk. Climate research indicates the frequency and intensity of derecho- and severe-convective windstorms could double or triple in the Midwest, Great Plains, and Ohio Valley by the end of the century, heightening risks to schools and universities in those regions.

The Critical Role of Modern Envelope Integration

Modern building design prioritizes continuous performance from roof edge to walls. Custom edge metal systems that integrate directly with wall cladding and flashings create a seamless, watertight envelope—minimizing failure points and simplifying maintenance.

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- Drainage and weather barriers function universally across roof and wall transitions.
- Aesthetics remain unified across building façades.
- Maintenance responsibilities are

centralized—avoiding ambiguity in repair workflows.

- Systems that are prefabricated ES-1 tested systems rather than contractor-made.

Contractor-fabricated edge components formed in the field vary widely in thickness, bends, and anchorage methods, and they often lack formal wind-uplift testing. Depending

on field skill, there may also be higher installation risks, and the warranty/accountability may be fragmented and involve dealing with multiple parties. Prefabricated ES-1 systems, by comparison, offer engineered quality, documented compliance, stringent QC and consistent specs, lower installation risk, and accountability—all critical for minimizing risk on campus.

The Campus Lesson: Fortify the Perimeter First

For higher education facility managers, investing in tested, integrated edge systems is not just about weatherproofing—it's about institutional resilience. Edge metal may account for a relatively small portion of a roofing budget, but it addresses the largest point of failure in wind events and delivers unmatched protection against campus disruption. Proactive infrastructure stewardship begins at the edge—where small investments yield lasting resilience.

Jonnie Hasan serves as vice president of business and product development for Innovative Metals Company, Inc. (IMETCO).

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jonnie Hasan, P.E., BECxP, CxA+BE, is Vice President of IMETCO with 25+ years in construction, design-build, and cladding. A licensed engineer and inventor, he specializes in building envelopes, air barrier design, and moisture mitigation, delivering cost-effective, high-performance solutions that ensure durability in demanding environments.

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According to Sean Farrell, senior project manager at Layton Construction, establishing collaborative relationships is key to successful construction projects. One of the best examples of this maxim is a multi-phase university project for which Layton Construction is serving as construction manager. Layton, part of the STO Building Group, is a nationally-ranked commercial contractor with ten offices around the United States. The firm specializes in healthcare, industrial, warehousing, and higher education projects. As construction manager, Layton hires the sub-contractors and manages and oversees the project as part of a team.



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— Sean Farrell, Sr Project Manager
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Hope's Brian Whalen, Vice President of Sales, acknowledges that the project was a real test of Hope's capabilities. He is especially proud that they Hope's was able to expedite the schedule even in the face of design changes and in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. The shop drawing approval process – including preparation of blueprints of windows and doors with all setting conditions, sizes, customized designs, and required testing – took longer than normal. Changes were made along the way that might have pushed back the delivery schedules for some, but Hope's made adjustments during the production process to deliver all materials on time. Whalen gave a nod to Joey Riggan and the team at Alexander Metals, the frame and glass installer team, saying the overall project went extremely smoothly once the frames were on site.

Says Whalen, “It was a fantastic collaboration among all the parties. Hope's worked closely as the manufacturer to fulfill the architect's design vision, and then the installer worked closely with us to make sure everything was installed executed properly.”



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Snowed Under?

THE BEST TOOLS FOR CAMPUSES TO STAY AHEAD OF WINTER STORMS

BY BOBCAT COMPANY

Winter brings demanding conditions that can quickly slow down operations on many college campuses, or in some cases bring things to a screeching halt. Worse, it can cause hazardous conditions for campus residents and commuters. Now is the time to get ahead of the snow by evaluating your campus equipment, investing in the tools you need, and planning ahead to avoid problems before freezing temperatures arrive.

Compact track loaders and skid-steer loaders are especially valuable during snow season, thanks to their versatility and ability to pair with specialized attachments. Outfitting your machine with the proper tools not only ensures efficient snow clearing but also helps protect your bottom line by reducing downtime and maximizing job site efficiency.

Attachments that Make the Difference

Your choice of attachment is key to optimizing your fleet for winter conditions. Whether you're

blowing snow, pushing it aside, or clearing ice, here's a closer look at three essential attachments that can turn your compact loader into a winter workhorse.

Snowblower

A snowblower attachment transforms your loader into a powerful snow-clearing machine ideal for parking lots, driveways and sidewalks. Adjustable chutes direct snow exactly where you need it, reducing cleanup time while hydraulic controls allow for precise

operation. From light powder to packed drifts, a snowblower ensures quick and thorough results.

Snow Blade

The snow blade is a flexible solution for sidewalks, driveways, and parking lots. Operators can push snow straight ahead or angle the blade to clear more efficiently, depending on the site. Built with durable materials and strong cutting edges, snow blades stand up to heavy winter use. Fingertip controls allow for easy adjustments, giving operators precise handling in changing conditions.

Snow Pusher

For large, open areas, a snow pusher is one of the most efficient attachments available. Its

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wide design moves heavy, wet snow quickly without clogging, making it ideal for clearing parking lots and expansive paved spaces. Some models may include rubber cutting edges to protect surfaces and reduce wear, while the ability to move significant volumes of snow in fewer passes saves both time and fuel.

Six Steps to Stay Ahead of Snow Removal and Avoid Downtime

Attachments play a big role in productivity, but preparation is just as important. Following these steps before the first snowstorm hits ensures your machines and crew are ready to perform all winter long:

1. **Inspect equipment early.** Conduct a full inspection of machines and attachments in the fall to identify any maintenance needs before the season begins. Addressing small repairs ahead of time prevents costly downtime during peak snow events.
2. **Plan for parts.** Stock essential parts such as filters, fluids and wear items before winter. Relying on aftermarket parts can risk poor fit or performance, so having the right components on hand ensures smooth, uninterrupted operation.
3. **Choose the right machine.** Speed and efficiency matter in snow removal. Machines equipped with 2-Speed travel options, for example, reduce travel time between job sites and allow operators to complete more work in less time.
4. **Use a variety of attachments.** Different conditions call for different solutions. Pairing a snow blade with a snow bucket, or switching to a snow pusher during heavier storms, can make clearing faster and more effective. The ability to change attachments quickly is key to adapting as conditions shift.
5. **Consider transportation needs.** Compact loaders are easy to transport and maneuver in tighter areas such as sidewalks and narrow streets while still delivering the performance needed for larger jobs. Planning your hauling strategy can minimize trips and maximize efficiency.
6. **Prioritize operator comfort.** Winter work often means long hours in the cab. Features such as heated cabs, quieter interiors, and attachment systems that reduce the need to exit the machine can keep operators comfortable and productive through extended shifts.

Be Ready When the Snow Falls

Snow removal success depends on preparation as much as equipment. Equipping your compact loader with the right attachments and preparing in advance ensures fewer delays and helps you stay ready for whatever winter brings. Investing in the right tools, parts, and practices keeps your operations efficient, your team productive, and your customers satisfied all season long.

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pickup truck, Toolcat utility work machines are built to tackle everything from spring cleanup and summer landscaping to fall prep and winter snow removal.

One of the most significant advantages of the Toolcat utility work machines for campus environments is its superior maneuverability and minimal ground disturbance. The all-wheel steer feature allows for a remarkably tight turning radius, which is essential for navigating narrow pathways, between buildings and around intricate landscaping without damaging delicate turf. Coupled with hydraulic power steering, this provides grounds crews with nearly effortless control, allowing them to complete tasks efficiently while preserving the aesthetic appeal of the campus.

Beyond its core capabilities, the Toolcat's true power lies in its compatibility with over 45 attachments. This extensive range allows a single machine to perform a vast array of jobs year-round. For winter weather, you can use the snowblower to clear driveways and sidewalks, the spreader to minimize slippery surfaces with sand and salt, and the snow blade to plow through deep drifts. For other tasks, the angle broom can clear debris from paths, and the pallet fork can quickly move and place bulky materials. The Power Bob-Tach system makes swapping attachments quick and easy.

The design of the Toolcat also prioritizes the operator. The comfortable cab features improved ergonomics, a redesigned dash and an updated HVAC system that ensures operators can stay productive through both hot and cold weather. With a focus on visibility, the machine includes all-around sightlines and embedded lighting in the fenders for operating attachments in low-light conditions. The optional rearview camera further enhances rear visibility, helping operators maneuver in tight spaces and around people.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Bobcat Company is a member of the Doosan Group. Doosan is a global leader in construction, grounds maintenance and material handling equipment, power and water solutions, and engineering that has proudly served customers and communities for more than a century.



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In this special section, we're shining a spotlight on an area that often gets overlooked when we talk about sustainability on campus: the furniture we invest in for our residence halls, common areas, and throughout campus.

Quality, value and aesthetics are, of course, paramount—but what about the often-unseen factors when it comes to furniture? The sustainability of the materials used, durability of the pieces chosen, the supplier's sourcing and manufacturing practices, and even the distance furniture travels after you order it all matter when it comes to furniture that supports your sustainability goals.

Even if students, parents, visitors and other stakeholders don't notice on their own the efforts you've taken to buy green when it comes to furniture, colleges and universities can share these details as selling points and to reinforce their commitment to a healthier environment.

Private institutions are uniquely positioned to lead the way. With a focus on holistic campus experiences, they are setting examples of how modern facilities can be beautiful, functional, and sustainable all at once—down to the desks, chairs, sofas, and beds they invest in. Keep reading to learn what to look for when it comes to identifying furniture that aligns with your sustainability goals.

What are the Choices for “Sustainable” Furniture in Higher Education Residence Halls and Common Areas?

For me, “green” has been a word thrown around since I first started my career in furniture manufacturing nearly 20 years ago. Even at that point in the mid-2000's, it wasn't a new concept. The first Earth Day was held in 1970, and since that time, concern and awareness of and for our planet has certainly grown and become more of a mainstream focus. And for good reason - smart utilization of our finite resources and stewardship of our environment is important since we only have one planet.

So, when it comes to furniture for large housing projects (college and university housing, specifically), how can we make *continued...*

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sure we are making the best choices for the sustainability of our planet? As with anything, there are a lot of moving parts, many factors to consider, and choices to make, but the good news is that there ARE choices. Awareness and concern are a great first step in choosing green, but understanding the key aspects of how your furniture is manufactured in an environmentally conscious manner is a critical next step in making the best of those choices for your next big project.

Material Selection

The two main choices for the components of furniture are wood and metal. When comparing the two, wood is considered the more environmentally friendly option. Metal furniture is often made from finite resources and requires more extensive processing, which can have a higher environmental impact – especially metal coming from other countries that might not have the same environmental regulations and concerns. Metal furniture is recyclable, but that process is often not taken advantage of and is energy intensive as well.

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Wood, however, is a renewable resource, and its production has a lower carbon footprint compared to metal. The type of wood product is also critical in furniture selection – and there are several to choose from. In simple terms there are particleboard (usually faced with laminate), plywood, and solid wood. Each may have their advantages and disadvantages depending on how the furniture is intended to be used, but from a purely “green” standpoint, plywood is often the best choice.

Particleboard is an engineered wood product that is manufactured from wood chips and a synthetic resin or glue. This can come in many “grades” and forms, but regardless of the grade, it is generally more energy intensive to make and can have further negative impacts depending on the resins used.

Plywood is defined as an engineered wood product made from thin layers of wood veneer, known as plies, that are glued together. The grain of the layers is typically arranged at

right angles to each other for added strength. The use of veneer core plywood in place of solid wood and particleboard minimizes the effect on the environment by providing a more complete use of the harvested tree. Trees used for veneer application extends the utilization by as much as 16 times more than solid applications.

Solid wood construction, as the name implies, is made from solid lumber—a natural resource that is cut down into manageable pieces and often glued back together for long-term durability, improvement of appearance, and long-term environmental stability. As stated above in contrast to plywood, it’s not as efficient from the use of the entire tree but is a very durable option that can be re-finished many times, so has some environmental benefits from that standpoint.

Regardless of the type of wood product used, it’s important to use wood suppliers who select lumber that implements environmentally supported harvesting controls.

There are industry certifications such as SFI (Sustainable Forestry Initiative) and FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), that are in place to ensure these practices – and it is key to purchase furniture from companies that source from certified suppliers. For plywood and particleboard, it’s key to use materials that contain no added formaldehyde.

Finishing

Once the product is constructed, the finishing of the product is equally important in regard to the environment. For wood or metal product, selecting finishes that reduce the overall off-gassing and catalyzing in the application of the finish material are key.

In the metal furniture world, the most common finish and best choice from an environmental aspect would be to choose a powder coated finish. The powder coating process involves applying a dry powder to a surface, which is then cured under heat to create a durable and attractive finish. It is considered environmentally friendly due to

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An advertisement for Uline's Locker Room Essentials. The background shows a locker room with grey lockers. In the foreground, a wooden bench holds a stack of white towels, a box of Gatorade, and a red Uline Igloo cooler. To the right, a red laundry cart with white towels is on wheels. A red rug is on the floor. A black box with the Uline logo and text is on the left. A red box with shipping information is at the bottom left. Contact information is at the bottom right.

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several factors: no VOC emissions, minimal waste, and less energy use than other metal coating options.

For commercial wood finishes, the optimal choice for the environment is an ultraviolet (UV) finishing system. As the name implies, UV finishing cures the finish materials with ultraviolet light as opposed to a chemical catalyst (where you get the finish “smell”). The UV system provides a material transfer rate from application to finished product in excess of 99%. Not only does this process not produce any substantial VOCs, but it is also extremely durable and long-lasting.

Transportation

How the furniture gets to its final location is another major consideration in the sustainability story – both before and after its construction.

Prior to the being built, getting materials from local sources requires less energy and environmental resources than obtaining

similar or alternative materials from halfway around the globe.

Likewise, shipping the finished goods from a manufacturer that is close to the final project location is a more sustainable option than coming over long distances. In the instance that furniture does have to come from a longer distance (we live in a big country), utilizing a transportation method that has a lower environmental impact such as rail is a better option. Just keep in mind during the planning process that many times rail transportation can increase the time that it takes to get to the final location. This is an easy obstacle to overcome if considered during the planning process.

Waste

It would be neglectful to talk about sustainability in furniture manufacturing without talking about waste. There are many important areas to address the waste issue in manufacturing environments, some of which have

been slightly discussed regarding materials and finishing, but going further than this, we can look at a few key areas.

Waste streams such as used oils, cleaning fluids and some finishing materials can and should be recycled to minimize waste. Fuel oil processing and heating systems within the manufacturing location itself should utilize efficient systems, reducing oil consumption and the release of airborne contaminants.

Another aspect of waste is the material that is wasted in the manufacturing of the product itself. Key areas here would be to recycle unused product and offcuts whether in other products/components, such as corner blocks in upholstered furniture or recycled in the form of wood mulch or utilized in heating systems (pelletized fuel) or bedding for local farmers and their animals.

Minimizing packaging materials is a key component of waste as well. Each year, millions of trees are harvested to provide packaging for shipments. Partnering with

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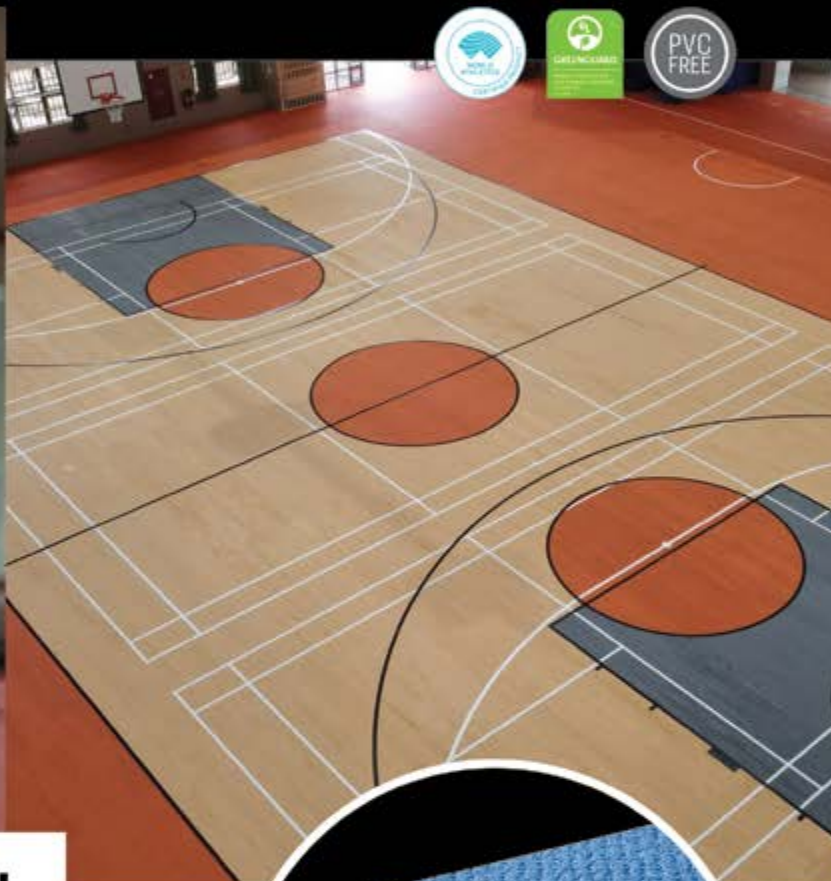


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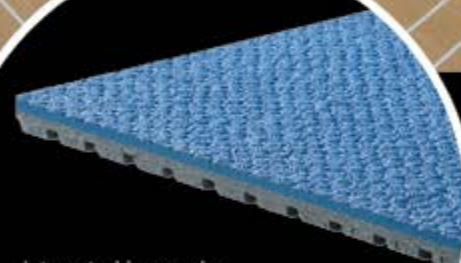


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Longevity/Lifecycle

An often-overlooked aspect of sustainability in furniture is the overall design of the product regarding longevity. The mindset in our society can often be to “throw it away and get something new”. While not only an expensive long-term option, it’s also not environmentally friendly. The same is very true for institutional furniture.

Purchasing a building full of furniture that will have to be replaced in five to 10 years has literally twice the negative environmental impact (or more) than furniture that will last 15 to 20 years. Thus, selecting furniture that has an expected life cycle of 20 years or more is a very smart environmental (as well as fiscal) choice.

Furniture design can also play a major part in this as well. Selecting pieces that are not only designed to hold up well (with a clean, timeless look), but have components that are easily replaceable without the need to swap an entire piece (or building) of furniture goes a long way. Think drawer fronts that are easily swapped if damaged, arms and seats of upholstered furniture that can be re-upholstered instead of replacing the entire unit. All are smart choices.

It goes without saying that the world of “green” and “sustainability” is deeper and more nuanced than we can get into in one article, but choosing to partner with a furniture supplier that cares about these factors is a step in the right direction for creating a sustainable future.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Lucas Fanning has over 12 years of experience in contract furniture manufacturing as well as over 6 years of experience in higher education. He is currently the Sales & Marketing Manager at Savoy Contract Furniture, where he has worked for over 5 years.

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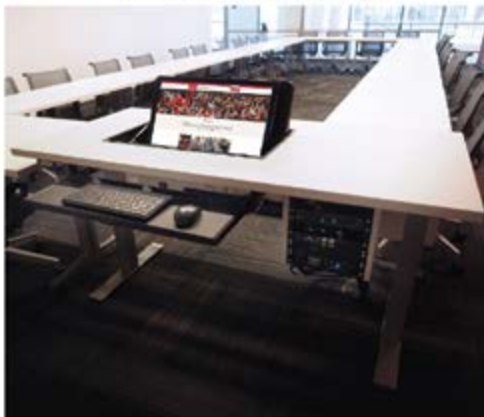
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