

Certified Green Chapter Program Ambassador Guide

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Introduction

Thank you for taking the first steps to become a Certified Green Chapter. This program is coordinated by the Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment (iSEE). Your participation in this program is a demonstration of your chapter's commitment to sustainability.

This document details the required and elective actions to gain Green Chapter Certification. There are two main categories of actions, **required** and **elective**. Required actions are actions you must take in order to be Green Certified. Elective actions are additional sustainability actions you can take to increase your certification level. Elective actions are divided into 3 subcategories; **Conservation**, elective actions aimed at reducing resource consumption and responsible purchasing. **Community**, elective actions focused on utilizing and preserving the community benefits of living in Champaign-Urbana. **Commitment**, elective actions that demonstrate a dedication to sustainability.

This guide provides an explanation of the 4 required actions, and the 31 elective actions for Green Chapter Certification levels.

- Completion of 5-10 elective actions will earn Caterpillar level Certification
- Completion of 11-15 elective actions will earn Chrysalis level Certification
- Completion of 16+ elective actions will earn Monarch level Certification

Why become a Certified Green Chapter?

Why should your chapter work towards Green Certification? Having recycling bins and turning off the lights should be enough for sustainability, right? While any effort that you or your chapter members make towards reducing waste and reducing resource consumption is a great step towards a more sustainable world. You can increase your impact through a collective commitment to sustainability. There is an important part of sustainability which is lost when we only act on individual basis: accountability.

Becoming a Certified Green Chapter tells your community that your organization is dedicated to growing a sustainable culture on campus and bringing green thinking into your future endeavors. For some actions, you may have to work as a chapter to advocate for improvements and changes. This can provide great experience in enacting change within your community.

While becoming a Certified Green Chapter won't change the world overnight, the impact of your chapter dedicating to changing their behaviors and habits is an example to your campus community of sustainability stewardship. The hope of the Certified Green Chapter Program is to foster sustainable behavioral changes within our campus community. Through this program, you will hold yourself and others accountable by committing to turning off the lights or wasting less. You will also encourage others to participate in sustainability and be a part of the cultural change to create a healthier environment.

The opportunity to be a Certified Green Chapter is also available to organizations on campus that do not have a chapter house. If this is the case for your chapter, please see the FAQ question on page 11 for how to get certified.

Recertification

Recertification for a Green Chapter occurs once a year. To maintain your certification status, you must recertify. Recertifying your chapter allows you to update your sustainable actions and your certification status. The Greener Campus Staff will send check in emails 6 months prior, and 1 month prior to your recertification period.

Your recertification due date is determined by your initial certification date. For instance:

If you achieve certification during the dates of Jan 1- Jun 30, your recertification period will be the second week of the Spring Semester.

If you achieve certification during the dates of July 1 – Dec 31, your recertification period will be the second week of the Fall semester.

Duties of the Ambassador

As part of this program, your chapter will identify and elect a sustainability ambassador during your regular elections. The individual in this role is responsible for coordination of the Certified Green Chapter Program for your chapter. The key duties of this role should include all of the following:

- The Ambassador serves as the coordinator for the CGCP and will submit all certification and recertification materials.
- The Ambassador is the main point of contact for all CGCP communications. Any changes to the Ambassadors contact information or status should be submitted to the CGCP team.
- The Ambassador should maintain, and compile documentation of the actions taken in the CGCP. Documentation is necessary for some actions to ensure that points can be awarded. This also provides a record of information for future chapter members who may be elected to the role.
- The Ambassador should initiate conversation, coordinate, and work in the chapter/house to make sustainability improvements and work with the necessary parties to enact changes.
- The Ambassador serves as an educator for fellow members and should work with onboarding new members in sustainability topics. The subjects should include:
 - CGCP function and certification status
 - Energy Conservation
 - Waste Reduction
 - Which items are recyclable?
 - How to avoid recycling contamination
 - Active transportation methods
 - Inform members of nearby bus stops
 - For questions on how to educate members in sustainability topics please reach out to greenercampus@illinois.edu

Certification Steps

1. Make the informed decision as a chapter to become Green Certified.

A Certified Green Chapter requires all members of the chapter to be engaged with the sustainable actions defined in the program. A chapter should include all members who live within and/or are active within the chapter.

2. Read through program documents.

- CGCP Action Guide
- CGCP Ambassador Guide

3. Identify a Sustainability Ambassador.

The duties of the Sustainability Ambassador are defined on page 3. Ensure that the identified individual is capable of taking on the responsibilities of managing Green Chapter Certification.

4. Submit your [interest form](#) online.

A CGCP Team member will reach out to kickstart the certification process.

5. Complete the CGCP [Checklist form](#) and compile documentation of actions.

Some actions may require documentation to verify participation.

For chapters without a house, please use this [checklist form](#).

6. Perform a consult meeting with the CGCP Team.

A CGCP Team member will schedule a meeting with your chapter. In this meeting, the team member and the Ambassador will go through the checklist form. Please be prepared to elaborate on the status of actions, and details on how your chapter is participating in each action.

7. Receive your certification status and recertification date.

You will receive an email announcement with your certification level, a digital certificate, and links to order CGCP decals and stickers.

8. Recertify and continue to improve.

During your initial certification year, compile documentation of any additional actions you take in the year. If you host a Green Event or make efforts to achieve an action during the year, maintain that documentation for your recertification to gain more points and achieve a higher level of certification.

Required Actions

In order to become a Certified Green Chapter, you must commit to the 4 required actions in this section. These actions are focused on CGCP participation, responsible purchasing, and keeping our campus clean.

1. Elect a Sustainability Ambassador each year as part of your regular elections.

As stated previously, identify/elect a sustainability ambassador who can take on the responsibilities laid out on page 3. Elect a sustainability ambassador each year and make the role a part of your regular chapter elections. Your chapter does not need to call this role “Sustainability Ambassador”. But this should be a new role/position focused on sustainability. Your chapter can add responsibilities based on your chapters needs and sustainability goals.

2. Use a minimum of 30% recycled paper within the chapter house

Only purchase and utilize paper with 30% or higher recycled content within the chapter. Reducing the amount of new materials purchased reduces waste.

You will be awarded 1 additional elective point if your chapter uses 50% recycled content paper, and 2 elective points for 100%.

(If your chapter does not live within a central house, or your chapter is unable to alter purchasing policies. Please inform the Greener Campus team.)

3. Ensure that your house participates in a recycling program and has labeled recycling bins

The Champaign-Urbana area offers multiple recycling services. Ensure that your house is enrolled in a program. [Champaign](#) and [Urbana](#) city websites both provide lists of recycling services. After you select a recycling service, review the items that are acceptable for recycling at the service. [Label](#) and separate according to your recycling services guidelines house recycling and trash bins to avoid contamination.

4. After events, commit to clean up within 24 hours

Events and gatherings are fun! But whether they are indoor or outdoor, they can produce litter from cups, napkins, or decorations. This litter goes into storm drains, lawns, and animal habitats. Commit to clean up at least 24 hours after events to reduce the chances of waste becoming litter. Keep campus and our community clean!

Elective Actions

This section describes the 31 elective actions within this program. Work as a chapter to determine which actions you already comply with and could in the future.

Conservation Actions

Utilities

1. Turn off lights when you leave the room or when other light sources are sufficient

A simple action we can take multiple times a day to reduce energy consumption. Commit to turn lights off when not in use as a chapter.

2. Place reminder signs on or next to light switches

A small sticker, a labeled switch plate, or a sign next to light switches or by doorways can be a great way to encourage and remind house members to turn off lights and equipment. Create your own signs, use a template from the internet, or from iSEE.

3. Have a volunteer team turn off lights every night

Have a sign-up program for house members to turn off lights in common areas each night. This type of system can be entirely unique to your house.

4. Have a volunteer team “power down” the house before holidays

Have members sign up to power down the house before leaving for holiday breaks and summer. Have house members unplug appliances, turn off lights, and make sure that doors and windows are closed and sealed.

5. Use LED lighting and replace incandescent bulbs wherever possible

LED light bulbs use significantly less energy than incandescent bulbs. Replace bulbs in your house with LEDs to lower energy consumption and reduce energy costs.

6. Reduce strain on your HVAC

HVACs are often the biggest energy consumer in a household. Reducing strain on your HVAC system will save energy and money. To comply with this action, commit to all of the following:

- Do not open windows while HVAC is on
- Close shades during hot days
- Open shades during cold days
- Do not use space heaters

7. Replace shower heads with water efficient options

Look for shower heads with a [WaterSense label](#), and replace old shower heads within the house. Changing to WaterSense shower heads can save 2,700 gallons per year.

8. Replace sink faucet aerators with water efficient options

[Faucet aerators](#) can be purchased cheaply and control the flow of water, reducing the amount of gallons used when washing your hands or cleaning dishes. Reduce your water consumption and bill by switching to more water efficient aerators or fixtures.

9. Provide a water refill station

Providing a filtered pitcher or dispenser or having an inwall unit can reduce the amount of plastic bottles purchased. Encouraging the use of reusable bottles instead. Water filters often only need changed a few times a year, which is significantly less waste per year compared to plastic bottles.

Waste

10. Have a shared set of reusable bags available for use

Have members donate reusable bags to keep in one location at the house, ideally by an exit. Encourage members to bring bags with them when going to the grocery store or when shopping.

11. Provide reusable dishes for meals

Provide dishware sets that members can use for meals. Reusable dishes not only create less waste, but also reduce costs from purchasing disposable dishware. Dishes are often cheap items are thrift and secondhand stores. Consider hosting a chapter contest to find interesting dishes and keep them in the house afterwards.

12. Eliminate the purchase of single use tableware for house use

Establish a chapter policy to not purchase single use plates, cutlery, or other tableware for house use. This saves your house money and reduces waste.

13. Provide a shared use system for other items

We can share dishware, why not other items? Set up a clothing swap or donating program, members can place clothes in a labeled bin where others can take or swap. And leftover clothes can be donated. Consider other items or resources that can be shared and set up a system to utilize and distribute.

14. Utilize a compost system for food waste

There will always be an amount of food waste we cannot mitigate. But we can return the food waste to the soil rather than throwing it in a landfill. Composting doesn't have to be an intimidating outdoor activity. Small scale composting programs can mitigate small amounts of food waste and create rich soil!.

To learn more about composting consult the [Illinois Extension Composting](#) website.

Purchasing

15. Eliminate the purchase of plastic water bottles

If you are already using a water filter pitcher or have a station for bottle refilling. Members can use their own bottles or community cups for water. Establish a policy to no longer purchase plastic water bottles.

16. Only purchase recyclable plastic items

Establish a policy to only purchase plastic items which are recyclable with your recycling service. Common items like red solo cups are made of polystyrene or similar materials and are not commonly recycled.

17. Purchase spirit wear from vendors that utilize sustainable materials and practices

Commit to purchasing more sustainable spirit wear. Mass manufactured clothing is often of low quality which means it will deteriorate and potentially less comfortable. Often containing cheaper dyes and materials that may cause environmental harm.

See below an example list of companies with sustainable printing services:

- [Greg Barber Company](#) Eco-Friendly Printing; organic and recycled t-shirts (also prints tote bags and greeting cards)
- [Print Natural Screenprinting](#); eco-inks and organic apparel
- [Ink Forest](#); water-based inks, sustainable practices, options for organic, fair trade, and fair labor shirts (also based in Oak Forest, Illinois — a shorter shipping distance than the other companies!)

Always check that your vendor is licensed to use your chapters branding.

Consider reusing or upcycling spirit wear, not everyone will wear the same t-shirt forever. Quilts, blankets, and other items can be created from t-shirts and become longer lasting keepsakes.

18. Purchase at least one food item a week from a local business

Commit to purchase at least one food item for your house per week that is from a local business, farm, or restaurant. Supporting local businesses keeps money in our community and helps build new food infrastructure here in Champaign-Urbana.

Community Actions

Transportation

19. Provide a sign by your main exit with bus stop information or a bus map

Use the MTD site to create a sign/map of bus stops within walking distance to your house. List common destinations so members can make the choice to use public transportation rather than calling an uber or using a single passenger vehicle.

20. Provide bike storage at your house

Our campus is full of bike paths and lanes, and biking is a healthy activity for recreation and transportation. Ensure that members can safely secure bicycles, scooters, skateboards, and other micromobility utilities at the house.

21. Set up a carpooling program

Establish a program for carpooling to events or to common destinations like the grocery store. This program can be entirely tailored to your chapters needs but should allow those who own a car to be paid for mileage by participants.

22. Implement a bike sharing program

Purchase a communal bike(s) that can be signed out by members and utilized for transportation. Ensure that you also have a helmet which can be signed out as well. This program can be a great opportunity to increase bicycle usage on campus by allowing those who do not already own a bike to try out cycling as a mode of transportation.

Events

23. Host a Green Certified Event

For any event your chapter holds, consider Green Event Certification! Similar to this program, the Certified Green Event Program certifies individual events as green. Reach out to greenercampus@illinois.edu for Green Event questions.

(You will receive 1 point per Green Event Certification in a year)

24. Host a sustainability event

Host a food drive, trash cleanup, sustainability speaker, an “It’s Your MTD Too”, or another sustainability related to helping the environment.

(You will receive 1 point per sustainable event you host in a year)

25. Host a tour of a sustainable site

The University of Illinois, and the surrounding community is home to many sustainable sites. Host a walking or biking chapter tour of a location or building that exemplifies sustainability. Consider visiting the [Waste Transfer Station](#), the Universities waste management center. Or have an outdoor retreat and walkthrough of the [Red Oak Rain Garden](#), the [Boneyard Creek](#), the [Japan House gardens](#), or the [Arboretum](#). Engage in the Universities research initiatives at [Solar Farm 2.0](#) or the [Energy Farm](#). These [tours](#) could be a great opportunity for new members to learn more about the University, but also the surrounding community and the many parks and amenities located here.

(You will receive 1 point for each sustainable site tour/visit you host in year)

Commitment Actions

26. Inform all new members on Green Certification status and actions

As part of the Ambassador’s duties, have an informational session for new members to go over Certified Green Chapter Program actions. You should discuss the importance of sustainability and how your chapter can impact the campus.

27. Recruit another chapter to join the program

Part of this program is to encourage environmental accountability. Talk with your fellow chapters about becoming Green Certified. You have the opportunity to take part in sustainability messaging by encouraging others to become green.

(You will receive 1 point for each chapter who gains certification following your chapter’s reference within a year)

28. Participate in Sustainability programs and volunteer opportunities

Encourage members to participate in sustainability volunteering opportunities. iSEE’s most regular volunteer program is [Illini Lights Out](#), designed to demonstrate the immense energy-saving impact of turning off the lights. Once or twice a month on Friday nights, volunteers gather to tour campus buildings to record how many lights were left on and turn them off. Each event takes roughly an hour and a half, and there are always snacks!

Volunteer at a [tailgate or a basketball game](#) to divert waste and collect recyclables.

Check the [iSEE Sustainability Calendar](#) for events and volunteer opportunities.

(You will receive 1 point for every 5 members who participate in a sustainable volunteer opportunity in a year)

29. Offer food options in your house that cater to vegan and or vegetarian diets

With the growing movement of plant-based diets, more and more people choose to participate in meatless Mondays or eliminate meat and animal products from their diets for environmental reasons. Ensure that members of your household are able to participate in these dietary changes by providing entrees and other options that are vegan or vegetarian. These options are often also kosher or halal and may serve other members of the house with dairy or egg allergies.

30. Plant a garden or a green space

Planting a garden can provide food to your chapter and reduce the need to purchase food from other sources. A garden could be a raised bed, or herbs in the windowsill. Green spaces improve air quality, a communal garden also provides regular activity for members to care for and maintain the space.

31. Innovate your chapters sustainability efforts and tell us about it

Every chapter is different! If you have implemented a sustainable change or program, please let us know. We can award points based on environmental impact.

FAQ

Q: My chapter does not own/live in a chapter house; how can we participate?

A: While most actions within this program target house improvements and activities to reduce waste and resource consumption. We will offer a base level of certification to chapters which can meet the required actions #1 and #4, and at least 5 elective actions. If this is your chapters situation, please visit utilize this [form to submit your CGCP checklist](#).

Q: What does caterpillar, chrysalis, and monarch level mean?

A: In the place of bronze, silver, and gold the Greener Campus program has changed the naming conventions for the three levels of certification. Caterpillar level being bronze, Chrysalis level being silver, and Monarch level being gold.

Conclusion

Thank you again for considering becoming a Certified Green Chapter! Your commitment to this program demonstrates a commitment to sustainability. By being a Certified Green Chapter, you contribute to our growing culture of sustainable habits, research, and action.

While we have a master plan for making campus more sustainable (see information about the Illinois Climate Action Plan [here](#)), this plan cannot account for the impact of entities outside the university's direct jurisdiction. By having chosen to participate in the CGCP, you are complementing and even further advancing the iCAP's objectives and mission by:

- [Increasing Energy Efficiency](#) through upgrading systems and saving energy through turning off lights and equipment
- [Reducing Water Consumption](#) through upgrading fixtures
- [Reducing Landfilled Waste](#) by bringing in less waste and prioritizing reuseable items
- [Encouraging Active Transportation](#) through promoting the use of MTD and cycling as modes of transit
- [Building a Culture of Sustainability](#) by encouraging behavioral changes and community action

The iCAP allows the campus to work towards each of these general goals on a large scale, but there's absolutely more work to be done, which is why it is so important to engage as many groups as possible. With each office that joins the program, the larger our campus culture of sustainability grows.

As a reminder, CGCP certification is not permanent! Each certification is a year-long designation, so getting certified this year does not mean you will continue to be certified in coming years. This is because sustainability is a continuous process, and we always have more work to do.

We would also love to have a photo gallery of our Certified Green Chapter! Please send us photos of your chapter, green events, or sustainability improvements around your house.

If you have questions please do not hesitate to reach out to the CGCP Team at greenercampus@Illinois.edu .

Lastly, don't forget that the CGCP is just the beginning - there's endless ways to keep making your own life more sustainable, and we encourage you to continue living by the principles and actions of the program. Please consider doing everything you can to extend the mission of sustainability into your long-term habits and promote them to your friends and family!