

**Rutland Herald**

This is a printer friendly version of an article from [www.rutlandherald.com](http://www.rutlandherald.com)  
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

---

Article published Oct 14, 2011

## **Bennington College pledges carbon neutrality by 2030**

By Patrick McArdle

STAFF WRITER

BENNINGTON — Bennington College pledged to become a carbon-neutral institution by 2030 and reduce its carbon emissions by 15 percent by 2015 on Tuesday, when college president Elizabeth Coleman signed the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment.

Valerie Imbruce, environmental studies director at the college, described the commitment as colleges "taking the lead in doing something about climate change and changing their institutional practices to embrace the idea of climate neutrality, of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions to zero."

Coleman said the progress the college had made was "stunning" in order to be able to commit to the goal set on Tuesday.

"Indeed, Bennington had to leap from being way behind in this ... to becoming one of the leaders, which indeed we are," she said.

The commitment, which about 670 colleges and universities have joined, was signed at the Centers for the Advancement of Public Action, the home of a new curriculum led by Coleman, which encourages students to become better citizens.

At Bennington, a sustainability committee with about 20 members, including representatives of the faculty, staff and students, has been looking at ways to reduce energy use or offset carbon waste.

Richard Smith, assistant director of facilities, said the college is working with Efficiency Vermont to reduce electrical consumption by 7.5 percent in two years. According to Imbruce, students had done an inventory of the forests on the campus' grounds and started a tree nursery in an effort to offset emissions that can't be completely cut, such as travel.

Ben Szalewicz, associate vice president for facilities management and planning, who is co-chairman, along with Imbruce of the sustainability committee, said Efficiency Vermont would help Bennington College do an energy audit of the whole campus, which would be used to "give us the tools to find out what's the next step."

Imbruce said the commitment was also something in which students took pride.

"With the new environmental studies program, we're getting students coming in with an interest in, 'How can we really change the world?' They want to jump right from 'this is what's wrong' to 'what are we doing.' ... To have the institution making this commitment and have this sustainability committee in place gives them not just a chance to participate in the institutional decision making but to see the institution as a model for environmentally-responsible behavior," she said.

While the college still has a lot of work to do to meet the commitment, Imbruce said she believed they had made a strong start.

"We've already made significant strides in this area. We're well positioned. We've done our homework. We've done the studies. We have a plan in place," she said.

@Tagline:patrick.mcardle

@rutlandherald.com

---