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Articles

Sustainable development : greener campus for UTC

Whether it be in its training module contents, in student initiatives, in governance or management of its buildings, UTC has been committed ever since its creation to encourage and enhance environmental and societal innovation. With the Government's decision to implement a 'green plan' for Higher Education establishments and institutions following the conclusions of the so-called Grenelle Environment conference [2007], the pace has been accelerating.

23 Aug 2018

Sustainable development : greener campus for UTC

 Since its creation in 1972, UTC has been building up its attractiveness through an innovation-intensive approach in phase with today's societal challenges. Sustainable development is deemed paramount both or the economy and for humanity at large and is now integrated in the minds of students, lecturers, research scientists and indeed all the UTC staff and personnel. In its ranking, the magazine *L'Etudiant* placed UTC, as early as 2013, among those establishments most engaged in sustainable policies in training, in research activities and life on the Compiegne campus.

Today our campus is an active partner for the "3rd industrial revolution" advocated and supported by the Hauts-de-France Region and can be seen as a societal laboratory for the future, both in the way it operates and is managed, in the contents of its teaching curricula and in the research activities of the university. Two excellent examples of a technological show-case can be seen: 1° in The Daniel Thomas Innovation Centre which has notably low needs in heating, close to the values one would expect from a "passive building"; 2° the electric vehicle charging platform Stella, managed by a 'smart' network designed and implemented by UTC's Avenue Laboratory.

In terms of research, 'green' chemistry domains are to be found at the PIVERT platform and likewise experiments conducted by UTC-Heudiasyc Lab on autonomous vehicles are significant policy thrusts in a sustainable direction and demonstrate the university's 'green' commitments. Numerous aspects of sustainable development are addressed in the training curricula proposed to the undergraduates. Certain courses are directly aimed at these issues – *e.g.,* urban engineering (UTC-GSU), or strongly connected to energy issues and transportation or again humanities and technology (UTC-HUTECH) which give perspective to technology-intensive innovation faced with major economic and societal changes, based on humanities and philosophy.

Future-oriented dynamics and strategy

The dynamic character of UTC student associations lies at the heart of UTC's exemplarity in terms of the quest for sustainable development. "It can be recalled that in UTC culture, a citizen dimension is to be

fostered, that students should be involved inasmuch as they will become the managers of tomorrow", underlines Prof. Philippe Courtier, President and Vice-Chancellor of UTC. Open-minded and dynamic, the 1210, student associations regularly initiate action in favour of environmental protection, societal issues and ongoing economic change (*cf. intra* this dossier specifically on the student associations, p5-12). There are some highly emblematic actions, such as *CAC' Carottes* (distributing local vegetables and fruit, or the eco-'responsibilitisation' embodied in the *Imaginarium Festival* – dry toilets, goblets with an add-on redeem charge, recharging mobile phones using solar panels … are now well-established events and are thriving.

Some others will soon be launched such as the curation of a Green Lab, A Fab'Lab specially devoted to sustainable development with not only workshops to help design and assemble objects, but also making available certain set-ups so that participants can initiative further actin s in green chemistry. Partnerships with various structure outside UTC are under way currently. The recent creation by UTC alumni of a place designed to encourage and enhance innovation in an alternative location, called the *Hermitage*, which will be able to offer new opportunities to transcend classic innovative models.

In a more global vision, UTC's President and Academic Board integrate sustainable development in all their decisions, whether they relate to day-to-day management questions or to longer term strategic policy framing. Some very concrete examples are to be seen in promotion of selective sorting of waste, the fight against energy waste, a more ecological maintenance policy for gardens, lawns*, etc.,* or again the inclusion of "social" provisions in public contracts. In the area of transportation, battery recharging posts for all-electric vehicles have been installed.

The 'constructive' partnership agreement with the authorities of the City of Compiegne have enabled better public transport offer and the creation of a specific bike lane running along the banks of the River Oise, interconnecting the various university campus buildings. In order to ensure a precise monitoring of the above actions, a sustainable development and societal responsibility watchdog and benchmarking structure, set up in 2011, has enabled a policy of continuous improvement. Five policy priorities, ranging from governance to training course and research contents, with their environment -friendly and social policy provisions being assessed once a year. We are building a future for UTC every single day …

Ecological management of UTC's 'green areas' for the purpose of preserving local biodiversity

UTC continuously improves its maintenance policy for the campus' green areas in order to make them more ecology-friendly. This year, for example, the techniques of lawn-cutting, trimming and scything have been modified to preserve biodiversity on our lawns and flower-beds. The UTC logistics and safety regulations service has been committed for several years now in promotion of sustainable development approaches to maintaining the university's "green areas", a decision set in motion by the President, calling for new steps. New actions will be undertaken in the framework of a Green Plan launched by the minister on charge of Higher Education. Guillaume Hervet, Head of the UTC Logistics Service and Safety Regulations Service, in charge of the local Green Plan dossier, explains *"Over the past three years, we have considerably reduced use of pesticides and now that has been stopped completely. We use only manual weeding and spread layers of wood chips round our shrubs and over flower-beds to halt weed growth".* To favour local animal and plant life, the campus lawns are cut less and less.

The mowers are only brought out occasionally, once every three weeks and used only on the portions near buildings and access paths. The fine cut grass is left (mulching). The more central areas are cut at the end of summer-time when the insets and plans have fin shed their normal life cycle*.* An experiment in eco-grazing is underway with a small flock of sheep on the Pierre Guillaumat site. *"We chose this location 'outside' the city bounds because these sheep, a breed from [the Breton Atlantic island of] Ouessant, like calm conditions",* adds Guillaume Hervet. An association, the Arche (which employs persons suffering from various handicaps) helped implement the project.

Each week a shepherd monitors the animals, which are autonomous in terms of feeding/grazing. Three grazing plots are used in turn to reinforce site biodiversity. Eco-grazing is a sustainable management alternative for green areas and at the same time enhances and encourage biodiversity, not forgetting the improved social links that arise through people exchanging about the life of these animals on UTC's lawns.
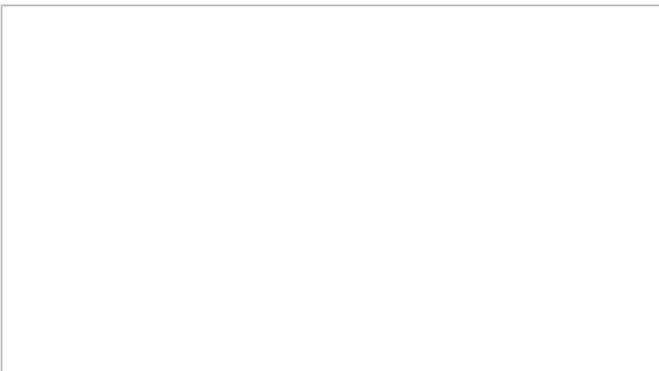
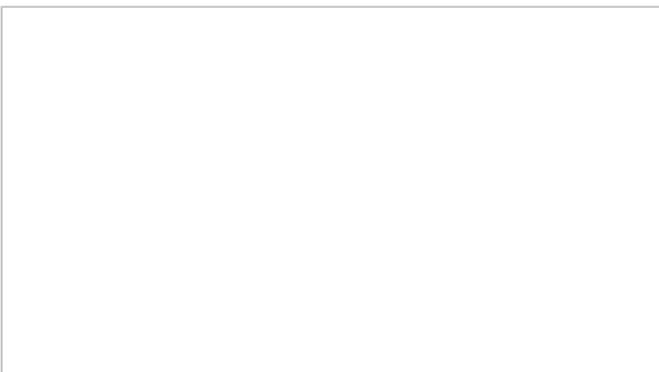# Read also on the same subject

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