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Purdue University has been making great strides in our sustainability and climate efforts, and we appreciate the continued opportunities to engage in dialogues on these topics. Through initiatives like our 2020 Physical Facilities Sustainability Master Plan, our staff are actively working to curb energy consumption and reduce our campus carbon emissions.

This spring we announced a partnership with Duke Energy that could make a drastic difference to carbon emissions. Through this partnership, we are exploring the feasibility of using small modular nuclear reactors to meet the West Lafayette campus’ long term energy needs. Nuclear energy has the potential to provide reliable electrical power with zero carbon emission. While that study is underway, we have created a platform for continued engagement and conversation on nuclear energy through the Understanding Tomorrow’s Nuclear Energy lecture series. The inaugural event, presented by Dr. Arden Bement, occurred in August, and we have two additional distinguished lecturers who will be joining us in October. We encourage everyone to join these events as they are able, either in person or through the online livestream.

With all the exciting land development to Purdue’s west, and thinking about how Lafayette is greatly developing east along 52, how much thought has Purdue and the two city governments put into the fact we are planting the seeds of a heat island? Green buildings themselves don’t compensate for the asphalt, concrete, and reflective roof tops that cover former wooded and agricultural space. Small trees in parking lots don’t suffice. What major efforts are we putting into avoiding the heat island effect?

As the University and our partners in the Purdue Research Foundation and the city governments make significant strides toward new research possibilities and developments adjacent to campus, we are not doing so without a strategic framework.

Purdue is continuously working with a number of campus and external stakeholders to create master plans. These documents describe long-term visions for the physical environment needed to support a particular college/unit or the campus as a whole. In the 2018 Giant Leaps Master Plan—a 50-year vision for the future of the West Lafayette campus—we established a goal to enhance open spaces on campus to create more connected, collaborative green spaces like those already established at Memorial Mall, Purdue Mall, Founders Park, and more. The plan also recognizes the importance of maintaining Horticulture Park, for its many environmental benefits and learning opportunities. Additionally, another critically important goal in the master plan is to prioritize strategic renovations where possible. Before we look to constructing new campus facilities, we first consider a renovation that optimizes space use and modernizes interior spaces.

Also, in order to make measurable strides toward a more sustainable campus, the 2020 Physical Facilities Sustainability Master Plan was developed. Through that plan, Purdue is committed to the addition of nearly 4,000 trees to campus in the near future and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The University has many examples that directly or indirectly reduce the heat island effect produced by our growing campus. As we continue forward, we welcome additional insights into new and innovative ways to further combat the heat island effect.

Hiring-Related Questions

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Provost Jay Akridge responded to these questions during the University Senate meeting. A precis of his response can be found in the meeting minutes.

What were the criteria used to evaluate the various candidates for replacing President Daniels? If they are secret, why are they secret?

On the day of the announcement that Dr. Mung Chiang would succeed Mitch Daniels as Purdue's President, the Board of Trustees specified a number of factors for their decision, including having observed Dr. Chiang's proven success at Purdue, his scholarship, his highly successful leadership of the College of Engineering, and his service to the U.S. State Department. The [full announcement](#) is available online.

Insurance and Benefits Question

What evaluation is the University conducting of the impact of its high-deductible health insurance plans on the health and well-being of its lowest paid employees who are least able to afford the deductibles?

The university continually reviews its health insurance options and evaluates the impact of the plans on all employees. Here are some facts:

- Preventive care is always covered at 100% with no cost to employees.
- The University charges substantially less in premiums for lower-wage employees (e.g., those in the limited plan pay on average 5% of the total premium and in the premier plan on average 12%).
- The University's HSA contribution reduces deductibles by over 30%.
- An analysis performed prior to the pandemic concluded utilization of care for those on consumer-driven health plans was not different compared to PPO plans. We plan to perform another analysis in 2023.
- The percent of employees (across all income levels) completing annual physicals and age-based screenings has risen with the transition to consumer-driven health plans.
- An analysis of 2021 data showed that the percentage of lower wage employees (under \$44K) hitting the out-of-pocket maximum was comparable to those with higher salaries.

For more information, please see [Candace Shaffer's presentation](#) from the September University Senate meeting.

COVID-Related Question

What is the current estimate of campus positivity of COVID based on wastewater levels? Where are these data publicly available? (If they are not publicly available, why not?) Are ODOS confirmed cases being monitored to evaluate the need for potential shifts in operations?

President Daniels responded to this question during the 12 September University Senate meeting. A precis of his response can be found in the meeting minutes.