

**Neumann University (Aston, PA, USA)**  
***Laudato Si* Reflection**  
**July 2022**

Consistent with our identity as a Catholic institution in the Franciscan tradition, Neumann University embraces the Core values of Reverence, Integrity, Service, Excellence, and Stewardship. In our University vision statement, we affirm that “Neumann RISES on the core values of Reverence, Integrity, Service, Excellence, and Stewardship and lives the actions which these values inspire.” (Neumann University Vision Statement)

The value of Reverence invites us to “celebrate our relationship as sisters and brothers with one another and all creation.” The value of Stewardship challenges us to “care for creation as a sacred Gift from God.” Furthermore, we affirm that “our resources are actually on loan to us to be cared for, to be used in service for all, and to be preserved for future use. Therefore, we consider the impact of our decisions on one another and on the common good.” (Neumann University Core Values Statement)

Therefore, Neumann University accepts Pope Francis’ invitation to commit ourselves to develop and implement a *Laudato Si*’ Action plan. By committing ourselves to this seven-year journey, we also align ourselves with the values and commitment of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, our founders and sponsors.

**Structures in support of Care for Creation**

For more than 30 years, Neumann University has supported structures that promote our commitment care for creation. In the 1990s faculty in the Education and Arts and Science departments, developed the Franciscan Center for Earth Education which engaged students in creating ecology labs and teaching environmental issues in local elementary schools and the Neumann University Child Development Center. Students also participated in removal of invasive species on university and convent property, researched biodiversity, and assisted with a variety of tasks at Red Hill Farm.

A collaborative workshop with the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in 2002-2003 regarding use of existing lands, initiatives, buildings, and programs led Neumann College to identify a number of initiatives that demonstrate a commitment to integrate care for creation into every aspect of campus life; including academics, student life, and administration.

In 2003, the first formal Care for Creation committee was established. Since 2003, the University has continuously supported committees that engage faculty, staff, administrators, and students in efforts to care for creation. The evolution of the various committees follows:

2003-2004: Earth Education Committee, reporting to the President

2006-2007: Care for Creation Committee re-structured, reporting to Director of Neumann Institute for Franciscan Studies (NIFS)

2015-2016: Care of Creation Committee re-structured as sub-committee of NIFS

2016-2017: Care of Creation activities integrated into NIFS Committee

2019-2020: Care for Creation Advisory Council formed, reporting to VP of Finance & Administration

2020: Care for Creation Advisory Council name changed to Sustainability Advisory Council

## Programs in support of Care for Creation

The various Care for Creation/Sustainability committees and councils have organized book studies, lectures, and interfaith prayer experiences. They have also organized activities to celebrate the Season of Creation and Earth Day/Month. Since 2009, the NIFS has organized a series of Lenten programs focused on Care for Creation.

### Programs and Activities with Specific Focus on *Laudato Si*

Programs and activities, presented by University faculty and staff members, with an explicit focus on *Laudato Si* have included:

2015-2016

- Reflections on *Laudato Si* by Neumann employees posted to website
- Half-days and mini-sessions of reflection on *Franciscan Moral Vision with application to Laudato Si*
- Lenten Dinner and Evening of Reflection on *Healing the Earth as a Lenten Practice: Exploring Laudato Si*
- Lenten series included *Laudato Si: Care of our Common Home*
- Resource packet with readings, videos, and short reflections for Neumann community

2016-2017

Lenten series included an introduction to an online self-paced program with a daily reflection on *Laudato Si* prepared by a faculty member (Source: *Walking in Praise with Pope Francis*, Twenty-Third Publications, 2015)

2017-2018

Season of Creation included weekly reflections on *Water, Recycling, Consumer Consciousness, Caring for the Earth, and Celebrating Creation* highlighting *Laudato Si*, prepared by staff members

2018-2019

Yearly theme on Stewardship with frequent exploration of *Laudato Si*

2019-2020

Campus-wide focus on Environmental Reverence and Stewardship with special celebrations during Season of Creation and Lent

2020-2021

Multiple sessions connecting *Laudato Si* and Environmental Racism

2021-2022

- Plant sale conducted on October 4 as a fundraising for the Knights' Pantry, which supports students with food and economic insecurity
- Plastic Mat Weaving Workshop by Angels in Motion for homeless people
- In collaboration with the Knights' Pantry, Sustainability Council hosted *Using Surplus as a Solution to Scarcity*, by Evan Ehlers, Executive Director of Sharing Excess
- Presentations hosted by NIFS Office and Sustainability Council included:
  - *Dr. Seuss, Pope Francis, and U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres: Different Voices, One Message*

- *Sustainability across Curriculum Presentation*
- *Living Mindfully*
- *The Canticle of the Creatures: Inspiration and Challenge*
- *Laudato Si Action Platform: What it is and why we should care*
- *Socially Responsible Investing: Neumann's Response*

### **Partial Listing of Major Accomplishments of Care for Creation Committees**

2006-2007: Initiated Environmental Studies Minor

2007-2008:

- \$500 grant from the Philadelphia Area Independent School Business Officers association used to purchase and install monitoring system to record reduction in food and paper consumption resulting from “tray-less” lunches in cafeteria.
- Participation in discussions for environmentally conscious construction of new building, resulting in LEEDS certification for Mirenda Center
- Participation in a nation-wide program to raise awareness of the impact of climate change and global warming. The Care of Creation Council distributed resources and shared ideas for integration into every academic discipline. At least 40 faculty members integrated specific activities connecting their discipline with environmental issues during the week of January 28 to February 1, 2008.
- Tray-less Earth Day in cafeteria on April 22, 2008

2008-2009:

- Tray-less everyday initiated in cafeteria by Sodexo
- Public signing of the *St. Francis Pledge to Care for Creation and the Poor*.

2010-2011:

- Sale of reusable water bottles during Earth Week 2011 by bookstore
- Initiated discussions proposing smoke-free campus; influenced limitations on smoking

2011-2012

- Stoppage of sale of bottled water by Sodexo Services during Earth Week

2012-2013

- Encouragement to stop using plastic water bottles.
- Collaborated with Facilities Department to design new trash and recycling receptacles

2013-2015

- Hosted programs to promote recycling and use of new receptacles
- Supported student efforts to achieve Fair Trade status through dissemination of educational materials and provision of Fair Trade coffee and tea
- Hosted Electronics Recycling event

2019-2020

- Waste Management Audit by Waste Matters (Amy McDowell)
- The elimination of non-biodegradable container in campus café/dining areas
- The elimination of plastic straws
- Composting food waste through Kitchen Harvest with Linville Orchards

2021- Neumann University joined the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education

2022

- Awarded a \$500 grant from Catholic Climate Covenant Victory Noll Small Grants Program to host *Using Surplus as a Solution to Scarcity*, by Evan Ehlers, Executive Director of Sharing Excess in collaboration with the Knights' Pantry
- Neumann University hired waste management company J.P. Mascara and Sons whose technologies, practices, and facilities better align with Neumann's focused efforts on sustainability
- Neumann University participated in the international – *Worldwide Teach-In for Climate and Justice*
- Ranked 24<sup>th</sup> out of 118 colleges and universities in *Campus Waste to Zero Waste* competition