At UCSC, we value practical education for building a thriving, sustainable, world. We see our campus as a living lab where problem-based teaching, research and applied work combine to develop actionable solutions that improve the sustainability of our campus and the greater community. From vibrant student-run gardens to innovative green buildings, this map highlights many of the spaces for experiential sustainability education on our campus.
The Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS) operates the 2-acre Alan Chadwick Garden and the 25-acre Farm at the base of campus. Both sites are managed using organic production methods and serve as research, teaching, and training facilities for students, staff, and faculty. From June through October the Farm sells their organic vegetables, fruit, herbs, and flowers twice a week at the main entrance to campus and offer the Community Supported Agriculture program where you receive a box of farm fresh produce weekly.

UCSC Arboretum

The Arboretum has a world-renown collection of plants, many that are rare, endangered and noteworthy, including Mediterranean region and California native plants and warm temperate conifers. The gardens offer students and research faculty opportunities to experiment with living plants, support conservation, and learn about botany and horticulture in a beautiful setting. Students can also get involved through volunteer work, internships and events.

Life Lab Garden Classroom

Life Lab is a national leader in farm- and garden-based education that promotes experiential learning for all ages through children’s camps, field trips, youth and internship programs, and teacher workshops. Drawing on over thirty years of working with students they have also created curricula and workshops for educators interested in bringing learning to life in gardens nationwide. UCSC students can apply for internships in their garden classroom adjacent to the farm.

The Program in Community and Agroecology

The PICA residential program offers students an alternative to standard dorm living on campus and demonstrates the link between healthy communities and healthy food systems. PICA houses the Sustainable Living Center where residents grow organic food together, direct a composting program, participate in weekly community meals, and organize campus wide sustainability events, workshops and classes.

Office of Physical Education, Recreation and Sports

The recreation department offers opportunities to gain skills, have fun, and make personal connections through outdoor recreational and hands-on learning experiences and trips. Programs utilize the outdoors as a classroom for gaining leadership and team building experience.

Bike Co-op

The Bike Co-op is a full service, cooperatively run bike shop. They offer all of the services that any bike shop does and give customers the ability to become part of the business through membership which includes discounts and access to shop tools.

Sustainable Energy

McHenry Library’s 180kW PV array, a renewable power system, provides 25% of the annual electrical energy needed for the building. The Co-generation plant provides reliable power for ~60% of campus’ load. This unit burns natural gas to generate electricity and the waste heat is captured and used to preheat campus water for hot water and space heating.

Instructional Greenhouses

Located on the roof of Thimm Lab, five greenhouses, two large outdoor classrooms and a lab hold a collection of diverse plants from around the world. The greenhouses provide students with access to living specimens, as well as hands-on horticulture experience in botany, evolution and ecology.

College 8

College 8 is UCSC’s only environmentally themed college offering a minor in sustainability, practicum courses, applied projects, and a collaborative network of faculty, students and practitioners focused on a sustainable future. The college is home to the Student Environmental Center, a student-run sustainability organization that works to promote student involvement through research, education, and implementation of environmentally sustainable practices on campus in collaboration with the university. The college also houses a student-run garden and a self sufficient greenhouse with an integrated aquaponics system powered from solar and rainwater.

Sustainability Office

The Sustainability Office provides information, resources, policy guidance and facilitation for sustainability plans and policies. The office employs between 30 and 40 student interns each year through student fee measure funds to work on sustainability projects that allow students to apply academic concepts in a professional environment. Students conduct waste and energy assessments of campus offices and laboratories and provide education and training on waste reduction and conservation across campus.

Environmental Studies

The Environmental Studies department offers a variety of opportunities to incorporate hands-on educational experience in sustainability into the undergraduate experience. The Environmental Studies Internship Office offers hundreds of internships each year to students interested in applying academic concepts and theories in a professional environment. The Museum of Natural History provides internships, research projects, and classroom laboratory exercises that utilize collections of everything from fungi to animal skeletons for research and teaching purposes.

Campus Natural Reserve

The UCSC Campus Natural Reserve covers 400 acres of protected natural lands on campus. The lands are used as an outdoor classroom and living laboratory for teaching, field research and natural history interpretation. Students can hike through redwood forests, view the Monterey Bay from the West Meadow or intern on a research or stewardship project.

UCSC Dining

Operates five dining hall and four retail locations, all of which are Green Business Certified by the City of Santa Cruz. Dining is working toward making forty percent of all food served “real food” by 2020 by sourcing from our own campus farm and other local partners. Drop by your local dining hall to get a taste of real food and learn about student food waste through dining’s educational materials, events, and programs.