

# University of Santo Tomas (UST) Sustainability Report

The University of Santo Tomas (UST) demonstrates a strong and unwavering commitment to sustainability through the alignment of its institutional goals with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. These efforts are deeply embedded across academic programs, operational practices, community outreach, and environmental advocacy. Guided by the principles of **Catholic Social Teaching** and **integral ecology**, UST fosters an environment where sustainability is both a **shared value** and a **daily practice**.

## University Commitment to Sustainability

UST actively contributes to achieving the SDGs by implementing policies, programs, and activities that promote **environmental stewardship, social responsibility** and **educational innovation**. These initiatives encompass both curricular and extracurricular activities, fostering a culture of sustainability within the university community.<sup>1</sup>

In support of this vision, the **Office of the Vice-Rector for Religious Affairs** convened the **Integral Ecology Meeting** on **December 9, 2024**, bringing together administrators, academic officials, and student leaders. This initiative revisited the 2016 **Ambag Kalikasan** programs and renewed ecological awareness rooted in the **Thomsonian identity**. The meeting also laid the foundation for the **development of UST's Integral Ecology Policy**, ensuring that ecological concerns remain central to the university's mission.

Following the meeting, on **December 10, 2024**, the Office of the Vice-Rector for Religious Affairs initiated concrete steps to **operationalize and implement the resolutions**, ensuring actionable outcomes and continuous collaboration among stakeholders.<sup>2,3</sup>

## Key Sustainability Focus Areas and Initiatives

### Energy Management and Renewable Initiatives

In line with SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), UST has undertaken comprehensive energy management initiatives. The university hosts forums and programs such as POWERWISE and Luntiang Tomasino to promote energy efficiency. Notably, the GRT-76 project focuses on solar energy, with ongoing installations of solar panels across campus facilities. These efforts aim to reduce the university's carbon footprint and achieve operational cost savings.<sup>4</sup>

### Water Conservation and Sanitation

Addressing SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), UST has established a comprehensive water management policy covering collection, distribution, storage, and conservation. Initiatives include rainwater harvesting for irrigation and the installation of water-efficient fixtures. The university also conducts awareness campaigns to promote water conservation among students, faculty, and staff.<sup>5</sup>

Waste Reduction and Sustainable Consumption

Demonstrating a commitment to SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), UST has established proactive measures to embed sustainability into its campus culture. One of its significant contributions to SDG 12 is the reduction of single-use plastic waste. Since 2019, all incoming Thomasian students have been provided with reusable metal straws and utensils. This initiative aims not only to reduce plastic waste but also to inculcate a sense of environmental responsibility among students from the outset of their university life.

Several academic units have taken this initiative further. The **College of Science** and the **Junior High School Department**, for instance, have banned the use of plastic straws and utensils entirely within their premises. In these areas, only reusable metal options are encouraged. These department-level efforts reflect a unified institutional culture that prioritizes responsible consumption and helps foster lasting behavioral change among students and faculty alike. <sup>6</sup>

Educational Integration of Sustainability

UST emphasizes the importance of integrating sustainability into its educational framework. In January 2025, the university conducted a multi-part institutional academic staff training focusing on sustainability and the Catholic call for caring for the common home. Over 1,500 academic staff participated, engaging with topics related to the SDGs and their incorporation into course plans and outcomes. <sup>7</sup>

Community Engagement and Ecological Advocacy

Through the Simbahayan Community Development Office, UST actively engages in community development projects that align with sustainability goals. Initiatives include tree-planting activities in various regions, such as Tanay, Rizal, and Siniloan, Laguna, promoting environmental stewardship and community involvement. <sup>8</sup>

Major Activities and Events (A.Y. 2024–2025)

Event Title	Date	Venue	Participants	Organizers/Collaborators
Araw ng Katutubo 2024: Sari-Saring Tradisyon, Sari-Saring Saya	October 22, 2024	BGPOP Building	246 pax	Lead: CTHM Students Tourism SocietyPartners: UST SIMBAHAYAN, HRM Society
Together We Dream, Hope, and Act: Educating Towards Dialogue with Creation and Peacebuilding	September 20, 2024	BGPOP Building	200 pax	Institute of Religion, SIMBAHAYAN, CTRSE, UniHarmony, Silsilah, REAP

Event Title	Date	Venue	Participants	Organizers/Collaborators
<b>Fostering Localized DRR: Strengthening Academic-Community Partnerships</b>	December 11, 2024	BGPOP, Zoom, FB Live	180 pax	Philippine Academic Society for Climate and Disaster Resilience, SIMBAHAYAN
<b>Green Quest: The Eco-Tour in the Heart of UST Campus</b> (Upcoming)	April 23, 2025	Tan Yan Kee AVR + UST Campus	Target: 50 pax	SIMBAHAYAN ALERTOMAS Cluster

### Planned Activities for A.Y. 2025-2026

Event/Activity	Description	Goal	Target Number of Participants
<b>AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION</b>	Meetings, Policy Formulation, Activities for the promotion of justice, peace, and integrity of creation in the University  August 2025 – July 2026	Thomasians responsive to the call to care for our common home	100 pax
<b>AMBAG KALIKASAN CONFERENCE</b>	Interdisciplinary conference on integral ecology awareness and care for our common home in the spirit of Pope Francis' Laudato Si (2015) and Laudate Deum (2023) and in continuation of the initiatives formed during the Ambag Kalikasan 2016.  Target: October 15, 2025	Thomasians aware of the pressing ecological challenges through the perspectives of different disciplines and respond to the call to caring for our common home.	200 pax
<b>WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE CARE OF CREATION</b>	Mass/event for the Promotion of justice, peace, and integrity of creation  Target: September 1, 2025	Thomasians passionate and actively involve in caring for our common home	300 pax
<b>University-Wide RETREAT</b>	University-wide retreat for the whole Thomasian community: Regents and Dominican Fathers, administrative and , academic officials, academic	Thomasian renewed values of competence, commitment, and compassion, and renewed Thomasian identity where justice, peace, and	3000 pax

	staff, support staff, students, alumni, partner communities, maintenance and security personnel.  Target: March 4-6, 2026	integrity of creation is part and parcel.	
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These activities foster greater **awareness, community participation, and dialogue between disciplines and local sectors**, addressing environmental challenges from a grassroots and academic perspective.

# Research and Innovation for Sustainability

The **University of Santo Tomas (UST)** consistently champions research excellence as a core strategy for advancing sustainability, particularly through its pioneering work in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and the circular economy. UST’s collaboration with the **Climate Change Commission (CCC)** exemplifies this dedication, fostering climate-related research, policy development, and community resilience initiatives. Through this partnership, UST actively engages in biodiversity conservation, aquaculture innovations, and renewable energy development—aligning with both **SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy)** and **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)**. Among its many contributions, the university’s **GRT-76 solar panel initiative**, real-time **Energy Dashboard**, and energy auditing practices exemplify its science-driven approach to operational sustainability. These initiatives not only reduce campus emissions and energy costs but also serve as platforms for student and faculty research on energy efficiency and clean technologies.

Beyond energy systems, UST has also made groundbreaking advancements in **sustainable production and the circular economy**. Notable research includes **Prof. Michael Francis D. Benjamin’s** work on **integrated biorefineries**, converting agricultural waste into biofuels and other green chemicals, and **Prof. Maria Natalia Roxas-Dimaano’s** studies on **biochar and thermal energy storage**, both of which have earned international recognition. Additionally, the university is advancing **plant-based food innovation** through projects like the **soysage**—a vegan sausage made from okara, the byproduct of soy milk production—led by **Assoc. Prof. Elizabeth Arenas**. In agriculture, the **AGROTIS Navigation System**, developed by **Assoc. Prof. Anthony James Bautista**, automates tractors via GPS to improve efficiency and reduce fuel consumption. These innovations, along with community initiatives like the **Sustainable Organic Agriculture Project (SOAP)** and the **One Values Project in Samar**, demonstrate UST’s comprehensive commitment to using research and technology to solve environmental challenges, improve lives, and build a more sustainable future.<sup>2</sup>

UST’s sustainability efforts in A.Y. 2024–2025 showcase a dynamic and integrative approach that combines **institutional planning, academic engagement, student participation, and community collaboration**. With its strong Catholic foundation and clear alignment with global sustainability frameworks, the University of Santo Tomas continues to serve as a model for ethical leadership and ecological stewardship in higher education.