THE SCORES ARE IN: UH LEADS TEXAS UNIVERSITIES IN SUSTAINABILITY

Houston, October 28, 2010 – UH ties for first among Texas schools on the sustainability report card scoring a B+ along with Rice University, Southwestern University and the University of Texas at Austin. UH has shown significant advancements over the years, moving from a disappointing D in 2008, C- in 2009 and B- last year.

"I was impressed to see UH's Sustainability grade improved again this year," said Barry Lefer, Associate Professor of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences. "UH received the same grade as Rice University and UT-Austin schools that have been working on campus sustainability for many years. Here at UH we have made very significant improvements in making our campus more sustainable in only a few years."

Scores were released on Wednesday, October 28, 2010 by the Sustainable Endowments Institute. The College Sustainability Report Card is the only independent evaluation of sustainability programs on 322 campuses in the United States and Canada. The aim of the annual scores is "to provide accessible information for schools to learn from one another's experiences, enabling them to establish more effective sustainability policies," according to their website.

Data is collected for the scores through surveys and research gathered through publicly available sources to determine sustainability efforts in nine categories: Administration, Climate Change and Energy, Food and Recycling, Green Building, Student Involvement, Transportation, Endowment Transparency, Investment Priorities and Shareholder Engagement. A total of 52 indicators, such as green building initiatives or the presence of a recycling program, are used to determine each school's performance for the categories.

UH improved on last year's scores in five out of the nine categories, including Administration, Transportation, and Climate Change and Energy. This past year, UH Parking and Transportation improved on their scores by offering discounts on public transportation, a free campus shuttle, car-sharing programs and bike rentals. Also, 15 percent of UH's vehicle fleet are electric.

UH has also focused on reducing our carbon footprint, providing roadmaps for departments and a departmental certification program that can be used as their own roadmap for sustainability, according to Emily Messa, Assistant VP for University Services.
“The university’s ranking is reflective of the commitment that we have made to sustainability; however, there is much work to be done,” Messa said. “We have bold goals and must be entrepreneurial as we seek to accomplish our biggest goal - an 80 percent reduction in our carbon footprint by 2030. Becoming more sustainable will not be a decision of one person or one department, but the actions of many. Universities have a promise to the world to teach future generations how to live in a more sustainable way. At the University of Houston, this promise is reflected in the hard work of many departments, staff, faculty and students who have and will continue to rise to the challenge of making the world a better place.”

New projects are already in the works for next year including a student-run sustainability organization as well as a new solar panel project in the Earth and Atmospheric Sciences department.

“UH has a great opportunity to become a leader in clean Energy Research in the heart one of nation's energy capital,” Lefer said.

UH professor Patrick Peters, a LEED AP Architect and member of UH Sustainability Task Force said this year’s score was good news and hopes it sets a tone for 2012.

"It demonstrates that our collective hard work and lofty aspirations have had concrete impact and that aspiring to earn all ‘A’s’ on our College Sustainability Report card next year is not only a worthwhile goal, it is certainly realistic for us to achieve,” Peters said.

The University of Houston is proud to be recognized as a leader in campus sustainability. To view UH’s sustainability report and for other universities, visit www.greenreportcard.org.

About the University of Houston

The University of Houston is a comprehensive national research institution serving the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. UH serves more than 38,500 students in the nation’s fourth-largest city, located in the most ethnically and culturally diverse region of the country.