

U.Va. Becomes First University in Virginia and Third in Nation to Win “Cleaning for Health” Certification

October 24, 2013 | [Sandra A. Smith](#)

Charlottesville, Virginia - The University of Virginia becomes the first higher education institution in Virginia, and the third in the nation, to receive the prestigious Green Seal GS-42 Certification for cleaning service programs. Green Seal is the leading independent provider of certification and science-based standards for commercial cleaning. Awarded officially on October 11, this certification affirms that *U.Va.’s Building Services’ cleaning program meets Green Seal’s rigorous standards for cleaning for health.

“The Building Services team has long supported the tenets of green cleaning,” said Building Services Associate Director, Vibha Buckingham. “But, in the past 12 months, we have taken that passion and turned it into formalized procedures and standards to ensure everything that we do supports the good health of our workers, our students, our staff, our faculty and the environment itself.”

Conforming to the standards developed by Green Seal takes a serious commitment on the part of any cleaning service. Last October, Training Manager Sandra Smith attended GS-42 training by the Building Wellness Institute in Maryland and from there mapped out a project plan to address Green Seal requirements.

“From the very beginning,” Smith said, “our goal was to use the pursuit of certification as an opportunity to develop our staff, create standards for cleaning quality and consistency, and overall strengthen the team to be as productive and motivated as possible.”

Over 50 procedures now document requirements on topics such as:

- Using only safe and effective approved products
- Consulting material manufacturers for recommended cleaning products and procedures
- Ensuring there’s sufficient matting at entryways to catch initial dust, dirt and contaminants
- Avoiding cross-contamination by separating restroom supplies from those used in non-restroom spaces
- Monitoring powered equipment to ensure it is capturing and not re-releasing dust into the environment

“Everything that we do is now wrapped in detailed procedures that enforce not only healthy cleaning standards but also higher cleaning quality and consistency,” Buckingham said. “In addition, a formal training program on all procedures helps develop our front-line team members into true professionals who understand the science behind our cleaning processes.”

Obtaining Green Seal’s certification gives organizations such as UVa the right to say that their systems, products, procedures and cleaning practices do the following:

- Improve the environment by reducing toxic pollution and waste
- Increase the health and well-being of building occupants and front-line team members
- Demonstrate that environmentally responsible products can meet performance expectations
- Decrease absenteeism due to health issues
- Improve learning abilities and resulting test scores

Achieving this certification also assures donors that buildings across Grounds are being maintained to the highest standards and parents can feel more comfortable knowing that the health, safety and welfare of our students are among our highest priorities.

“There are so many benefits that are springing from this great achievement,” Buckingham concluded. “But one of my top priorities is to use this experience to elevate the level of respect that is given to those who work so hard to keep our buildings across Grounds clean and our visitors and customers healthy.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA BUILDING SERVICES

Building Services is one of the largest divisions of Facilities Management and is dedicated to cleaning for health in most of the University’s academic and public buildings across Grounds. It also provides for healthy and clean environments in the Housing area for students. Its mission statement, “We provide services with your health, safety and the environment in mind.” expresses its core business objective.

The Facilities Management Department is responsible for the University’s buildings, grounds, and infrastructure including planning and construction, housekeeping services, energy and utilities, and maintenance and landscaping. Its statement of purpose is: “Creating and caring for the physical environment in which those who seek enlightenment, knowledge, health and productive lives can flourish.”

ABOUT GREEN SEAL INC.

Green Seal, a non-profit based in Washington D.C., has been identifying products and services that protect the environment and human health since 1989. The Green Seal mark appears on over 3600 environmentally responsible products and services, and Green Seal is accredited by the American National Standards Institute. The independent organization focuses on certification to its leadership standards, avoiding any conflict of interest that may arise from recommending products or consulting with applicants. For more information and a list of all Green Seal-certified products and services, visit www.GreenSeal.org.

ABOUT THE BUILDING WELLNESS INSTITUTE

The Building Wellness Institute helps facility managers, building owners, building service contractor, and environmental services staff protect the health and comfort of their building occupants through comprehensive training, consulting and assessment programs. Our training programs and services, delivered by seasoned professionals with cross-discipline expertise in occupational and environmental medicine, public health, industrial hygiene, toxicology, and chemical engineering, are designed to facilitate GS-42 certification, gain points toward LEED certification, and support a wide range of environmental wellness goals.

www.buildingwellness.com



*This cleaning service meets Green Seal™ Standard GS-42 based on waste minimization, building-specific operational procedures, effective custodial training, and use of products with limits on human & environmental toxicity.