



SUSTAINABILITY DESIGN CASE STUDY

# Leveraging Design for Meaningful Clients

The designers at smashLAB give credit to their client for the opportunity to make an impact online and reduce the need for printing with The College Sustainability Report Card website.

## Design Challenge

The **Sustainable Endowments Institute (SEI)** came to **smashLAB** with a printed method of rating the sustainability of different colleges. They had seen smashLAB's *Design Can Change* [www.designcanchange.org](http://www.designcanchange.org) website and wanted to work with a like-minded group. They had been collecting data on hundreds of campuses for years and wanted to show the information, and its value, in a more readily accessible way. SEI asked **Eric Karjaluo** and the team at smashLAB to develop an online tool that would increase their reach, while simplifying their methods for collecting data and distributing findings.

## Strategy

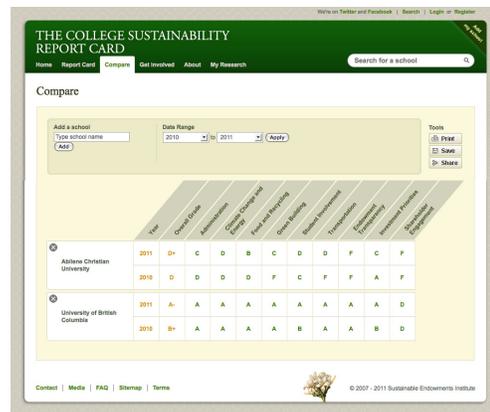
smashLAB worked to create a site that allows interested parties access to easily digestible Report Cards that grade the sustainability performance of hundreds of different institutions. This was paired with a set of tools, enabling users to filter, compare, and contrast varying institutions against one another. In addition, the site describes the methods and rationale behind its metrics and research findings.

## Implementation

smashLAB created a custom web application, and tapped their own content management system to help SEI manage their dataset and the changing site content. They also developed an online tool allowing for online data-collection and administration through this web-based system. As a result, the tool facilitates easier collection of detailed, quantitative data from researchers in the field.

## Results

The end result is a user-friendly database-driven resource that effectively transitioned SEI's printed resources to the web: *The College Sustainability Report Card* [greenreportcard.org](http://greenreportcard.org). The tool smashLAB helped create is functional on the client-side, making it easy to manage internally; meanwhile, it provides a clear and intuitive user experience, and features a visually inviting design. It also encourages zero-waste by reducing the need for a paper, and the content management and backend systems allow users to make updates easily.



**Eric**, the lead designer, is reluctant to take any credit for the sustainability successes that result from the project. He says, “it’s just terrific when you get to work with a client like the Sustainable Endowments Institute, because you can help them leverage the power of design to do their work better.”

This is what smashLAB really helped with: acting on the organization’s objectives, crafting a clear plan for how to make it come together on a condensed timeline, and building a tool that’s functional, usable, and visually compelling.

**“All of us at smashLAB are excited when we’re able work with groups like Mark’s. The passion and commitment of people like these, creates real opportunity to impact positive change.”**

## Credits

Design & Development: smashLAB  
[www.smashlab.com](http://www.smashlab.com)

Client: Mark Orłowski and his colleagues at  
The Sustainable Endowments Institute (SEI)  
[www.endowmentinstitute.org](http://www.endowmentinstitute.org)

This case study was created by the GDC National Sustainability Committee. Feel free to share! More online at [www.gdc.net](http://www.gdc.net)