START



F&M's Great Bike Rollout, April 2008

BIKE U

COLLEGES AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE GREENING THEIR CAMPUSES BY GETTING MORE STUDENTS ON BICYCLES. BY LAUREN SANDERS

DAVID JOYCE, THE PRESIDENT OF WISCONSIN'S RIPON COLLEGE, JOKES that he builds bikes in his basement because it keeps him out of bars. Not surprisingly, Joyce's progressive approach to his school's lack of parking spaces is also a result of his passion for cycling. Joyce is a founder of the Ripon College Velorution, a program that will kick off this fall: Incoming freshmen who sign a pledge promising not to bring a car to campus will be rewarded with a helmet, a bike lock, lights and a Trek 820 mountain bike—all of which will be theirs to keep.

"This year, for the first time, we ran out of student parking," Joyce says. Ripon looked to other schools that were facing the same problem, but found that their solutions were all punitive in nature—prohibiting freshmen from bringing cars to school, for example. That didn't work for Joyce. "We wanted to encourage rather than discourage," he says. "We thought, wouldn't it be cool just to give each student a bike?" Joyce raised enough money to purchase all 167 of Trek's remaining 2007 820s, at a significant discount, from local bike shop Fond du Lac/Oshkosh Cyclery; Planet Bike, in Madison, donated Beamer 1 light sets.

In addition to keeping cars off campus, Velorution has been a catalyst for other initiatives with a goal of "keeping the core of campus green and beautiful," Joyce says. Parking lots are being relocated to the outskirts of the school property and

COURTESY

portions of two roads that cut through the center of campus will be closed and replaced with a pedestrian plaza. Of course, Joyce knows the project's success isn't a given: "There are about 40,000 reasons it shouldn't work," he says.

Short history lesson: Colleges and cities have tried for years to promote biking instead of driving, most notably by implementing lending programs, which allow riders to borrow bikes, by picking them up and dropping them off at various racks. But the bikes often end up stolen or abused, and the programs fizzle. Ripon also faces the challenge of Wisconsin weather—the average high temperature in January is about 24 degrees.

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Ripon cycling coach Ric Damm, the project's coordinator, says the school is dedicated to giving Velorution a chance, by evaluating bike-storage options, for example, and making certain the grounds crew understands the importance of clearing snow from bike paths. The owners of Fond du Lac/Oshkosh Cyclery have agreed to come to campus regularly to offer maintenance workshops. "If we make it easy for students to ride," Damm says, "I believe they will do it."

Nine hundred miles away in Atlanta, Emory University is expanding its fledgling project, Bike Emory, which was introduced in August 2007. The endeavor's slogan: "Why not?"—as in, why not bike? Emory has partnered with Fuji Bicycles as the pilot program for the company's Fuji University, which is aimed at providing assistance to colleges and universities that wish to encourage and promote sustainability. Through bike.emory.edu, registered students, faculty and staff can purchase Fuji bikes—including the Palisade 1.0, available only through Bike Emory—at a discount; they also receive a free helmet, lock and taillight. Emory has also equipped buildings with showers, added bike racks to its free campus shuttle buses and offers cycling safety classes.

Breeding desire from ownership seems to be the goal of the Ripon and Emory programs. If students grow attached to their own bikes, as opposed to loaners they have to return, they will become more comfortable at the bike's helm, more interested in riding and more dedicated to the bike's upkeep. Instead of forcing students to change their approaches toward biking and sustainability, the schools are giving students the means to choose two wheels over four.

Sometimes, the opportunity to ride comes not from administrators, but from alumni. Michael Zane, founder and former president of Kryptonite Locks, donated 96 commuter bicycles to his alma mater, Franklin & Marshall College, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, last spring. "The college was good to me," Zane says, adding that it gave him financial aid and a scholarship. "I always thought that if I were successful, I wanted to give something back." For Zane and

his wife, who own 30 bikes between them, to give back with bicycles was the obvious choice. The Collegiate Bicycle Company designed the bikes with F&M's colors and logo—other CBC designs include Colorado State, University of Connecticut and Virginia Tech, as well as a host of Greek-themed bicycles representing various fraternities and sororities.

Franklin & Marshall students, faculty and staff received the bicycles at the campus' Great Bike Rollout, held in April during the school's sustainability week. Twenty of the blue-and-white bikes were given to the athletics and recreation department; according to associate vice president Larry Harder, the rest of the bikes can be signed out by students, faculty and staff for a semester or a year. The bikes will also be offered to schools in the surrounding community for day trips. "I didn't really get to see much of Lancaster County when I went to school there," Zane says. "But today, the idea that someone could get on a bicycle and explore the place where they've gone to school for four years—that's a fantastic opportunity."

Zane says that the key to keeping that opportunity alive is improving infrastructure: "Implementing bike parking, storage facilities, that sort of thing." He plans to donate tools and workstands, and hopes that alumni can pool their resources to create stipends for students who want to help maintain the bikes. He also would like to see the school partner with the city to help make Lancaster more bicycle friendly. "Lancaster County is a great place to ride a bicycle if you can deal with the smell of manure," he says. In fact, the region's distinct odor may be a harbinger of cycling paradise: "These are real, working farms," he says. "These people aren't selling their land."

THINK YOUR RIDE'S GREAT?

THE CHUBB CLUB

ST. LOUIS

AT THE CHUBB CLUB MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDE, ORGANIZED BY THE GATEWAY OFF-Road Cyclists and sponsored by the Trek Bicycle Store, newer riders work on obstacles that make them uncomfortable. We may spend 30 minutes to an hour on one 50-foot section of trail before moving on. Instead of demonstrating a single correct way to ride a trail feature, we take turns with each skill—picking a line uphill, hopping a log, cleaning a switchback without dabbing—so others can see how we do things. The goal is to be able to apply these techniques to any trails that we ride. Cheering and golf claps are encouraged: Most riders will fall, and it's not as humiliating if your buddies are laughing with you.—*Matt Gerling*

Tell us what's cool about your group's ride: BICYCLING@rodale.com

Info

CHUBB TRAIL, West Tyson lower parking lot, Sun., 9 a.m.; trekstl.blogspot.com