

BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS BRIEF

GetGreen

What students taught us about changing behavior to be more sustainable in their personal choices

Sources

BUS 4500 — Business Ethics & Sustainability (Undergraduate)

MBA 6012 — Sustainable Business Strategy

Spring 2026



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

HAWORTH

College of Business



Sustainability is not an awareness problem. It's a *systems design* problem.

People do not consistently choose what they value. They choose what systems make easiest.

Validated across undergraduate and MBA reflections.

Listening to the people closest to the behavior change challenge

WHO

Two student cohorts

Undergraduates in Business Ethics & Sustainability (BUS 4500) and MBA students in Sustainable Business courses, Spring 2026.

WHAT

Lived experience with GetGreen

Each student tracked sustainability behaviors using the GetGreen platform, then reflected on what changed, what didn't, and why.

SO WHAT

From classroom to enterprise

Reflections doubled as field data — surfacing the gap between intention and action, and the design conditions that close it.

Students are the bridge between personal behavior and enterprise-scale adoption.

Six findings — validated across both cohorts

01

The intention–action gap

Caring about sustainability does not translate into consistent action — even when motivation is high.

02

Convenience drives behavior

When the sustainable option requires extra effort, convenience wins most of the time.

03

Systems enable or block change

Behavior follows structure, not intention. Support, incentives, and routine matter more than willpower.

04

Small actions scale into impact

Repeatable micro-behaviors accumulate into meaningful, measurable outcomes.

05

Personal → enterprise reality

If behavior change is hard for one person, organizations need stronger systems by orders of magnitude.

06

Sustainability is ongoing practice

Students moved from chasing perfection to building deliberate, consistent progress.

THEME 01

The intention–action gap

WHAT IT MEANS

There is a consistent disconnect between values and behavior — even when students entered the experience motivated and informed.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATION

***Awareness alone does not change behavior.
The gap is the central design challenge —
and the central opportunity.***

FROM STUDENTS

"I care about sustainability, but that doesn't automatically translate into consistent action."

— Undergraduate student, BUS 4500

"The gap between the person I believed myself to be and the person I actually was..."

— MBA student, MBA 6012

"The gap between caring about something and actually changing behavior is exactly where the most interesting business opportunities live."

— MBA student, MBA 6012

THEME 02

Convenience drives behavior

WHAT IT MEANS

When sustainable choices require extra effort — even small extra effort — they are quietly abandoned in the flow of daily life.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATION

If it isn't easy, it won't scale.

FROM STUDENTS

"The sustainable option is often not the convenient one, and convenience wins most of the time."

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

"The pressure of a busy schedule often makes the least sustainable choice the most tempting."

— MBA student, MBA 6012

"Convenience-driven decisions slowly add up to a larger environmental footprint."

— MBA student, MBA 6012

THEME 03

Systems enable — or block — change

WHAT IT MEANS

Behavior follows the structure that surrounds it. Tracking, prompts, and routines did more to drive consistency than willpower or values.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATION

***Design the system, and the behavior follows.
Rely on motivation, and it won't.***

FROM STUDENTS

"Behavior change requires more than just intention — it needs support, convenience, and incentives."

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

"Tracking systems work best when they fit naturally into existing routines."

— MBA student

"The goal isn't just tracking — it's building behaviors that stick."

— MBA student

THEME 04

Small actions scale into impact

WHAT IT MEANS

Students initially dismissed micro-behaviors as too small to matter. Tracking proved otherwise — repeated small choices accumulate into measurable outcomes.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATION

Scalable change begins with repeatable micro-actions that the system makes easy to repeat.

FROM STUDENTS

"Small habits can still contribute to a larger impact."

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

"Even small actions add up."

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

"It turned a daunting problem into measurable wins."

— MBA student

THEME 05

Personal experience translates to enterprise reality

WHAT IT MEANS

Students consistently drew the line from their own behavior change challenges to the harder, larger version organizations face every day.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATION

Personal habits are micro-versions of corporate strategies. The bridge to enterprise adoption is already there.

FROM STUDENTS

"If it is difficult for one person, how much harder must it be for organizations?"

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

"Personal habits are micro-versions of corporate strategies."

— MBA student

"The difference is scale and systematization."

— MBA student

Sustainability is an ongoing practice

WHAT IT MEANS

Students moved away from a perfection mindset toward a posture of deliberate, repeated practice — closer to fitness or learning than to a one-time decision.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATION

Design for consistent progress, not perfect performance.

FROM STUDENTS

"Sustainability doesn't mean being perfect — it means continuing to try."

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

"The cumulative result of actions repeated every day."

— MBA student

"I didn't become a different person — I became more deliberate."

— MBA student

Where MBA reflections sharpen the product story

Undergraduate reflections validated the human truths. MBA reflections extended them into how GetGreen earns its place as enterprise infrastructure.

07	Behavior must be designed, not assumed	<i>"Providing instant gratification for long-term goals."</i>	Behavioral design platform — not just a tracking tool.
08	Measurement makes behavior stick	<i>"Seeing progress made impact feel quantifiable."</i>	Measured behavior is repeatable — and scalable.
09	Behavior must become social to scale	<i>"What I learned showed up in someone else's behavior."</i>	Scaling requires norms, not just individuals.
10	Psychological barriers matter	<i>"It required an emotional shift in how I thought."</i>	Behavior change addresses mindset, identity, trust.
11	Sustainability is a leadership behavior	<i>"Being responsible for my actions created a sense of leadership."</i>	GetGreen develops leaders, not just participants.

Why GetGreen works — in students' words

PROOF OF VALUE

It makes sustainability feel manageable

"It made sustainability feel more accessible and less overwhelming."

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

HABIT FORMATION

Behaviors become automatic

"Some habits became consistent because they were easy to fit into my routine."

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Progress feels good

"There was a real sense of progress and pride."

— MBA student

ENTERPRISE RELEVANCE

From individual to organization

"If individuals struggle, organizations need even stronger systems."

— Undergraduate, BUS 4500

GetGreen turns sustainability from an aspiration into a routine — visible, manageable, and repeatable.

GetGreen doesn't change what people *believe*.
It changes what they actually *do* — by making
sustainability *visible, manageable, and routine*.

Behavior follows structure, not awareness.

Convenience wins unless systems change.

Good intentions don't scale — systems do.