

SU launches Web site to address sustainability

By: Megan Hess

Posted: 2/19/08

Syracuse University is continuing to push environmental activism on campus with the release of a new Web site.

Monday marked the official launch of SU's Green Universe City Web site, said Rick Martin, a member of the Syracuse University Sustainability Action Coalition. The site boasts a desire to spark interest about various green efforts around campus.

Initiated by SU's sustainability division, part of the Office of Energy and BFAS Computing Management, the site promotes an effective and efficient plan to ensure a healthy and sustainable lifestyle.

The site suggests simple ways to live greener, such as by washing hands with cold water and buying locally grown food.

The site also highlights the Presidents Climate Commitment, an effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions and stabilize the Earth's climate. When Chancellor Nancy Cantor signed the commitment last February, she announced that SU would set the goal of zero net greenhouse gas emissions.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) has also become a source of pride.

According to the U.S. Green Building Council, LEED is the "nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings." The site includes additional sections on recycling, transportation, calendar of events and student outreach.

SU recognized the need for developing an energy conservation program in 1972, and has since increased the efficiency of energy conservation. In the early 1980s, additional radiation was installed in under-heated areas of Carnegie Hall. Discarded heat from the air conditioning system in the Skytop Office Building was used to warm up the water in nearby homes, according to the Green Universe City Web site.

In recent years, efforts have expanded by an even greater margin.

Bird Library, the largest academic building on campus, now uses hot water heat instead of costly electric heat. Utility company rebates helped eliminate inefficient lighting systems, according to the Green Universe City Web site.

But for the most part, Martin said SU's efforts remain unrecognized.

"The university has been doing a great job with sustainability, but we haven't been telling people about it," said Rick Martin.

Martin is leading SU's effort to conduct a greenhouse gas inventory covering all university emissions.

The Green Universe City site will update students, faculty and staff, as well as the Central New York community at large, about Syracuse's commitment to the environment. While adopting new standards for the campus, SU is also trying to change the behavior of surrounding communities.

"Increasing numbers of [prospective] students are asking colleges about their green campuses," said Melissa Cadwell, the assistant manager of energy conservation.

"Our Web site will answer their questions about SU's sustainability," Cadwell said.

Along with Steve Lloyd, Cadwell is one of the founders of the Green Universe City.

Other campus programs are targeting students as well. The USAC (University Sustainability Action Coalition) and EnSPIRE (Environment and Society: Partnerships in Interdisciplinary Research and Education) are committed to improving campus culture.

As climate and energy issues continue to receive more mainstream attention, a sense of friendly competition has started to emerge.

Last week, Popular Science ranked the top 50 greenest cities in America, with Syracuse placing No. 17. The magazine used raw data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Geographic Society's Green Guide.

Mariah Dillon, a senior project analyst with the Office of Energy and BFAS Computing Management, is already planning to add more interactive content to the site.

"[The current material] is just the tip of the iceberg," Dillion said. "We will be updating continuously."

mehess@syr.edu