

University Efforts Emphasize Innovation

By Candace Gwaltney

Franklin College Students Transform Grease to Green Fuel

It all started with an idea from two Franklin College freshmen. Inspired by a presentation in their “Going Green Matters” winter term class, Jimmy Qualters and Drew Royalty wanted to see if the school could use old cooking oil from the dining hall to fuel tractors.

The concept became a reality when chemistry students, a professor and dining services staff joined the effort. Several weeks later a campus tractor took a victory lap on the Franklin College Dame Mall.

That’s a prime example of how students, faculty and staff work together toward Franklin College’s sustainability goals, asserts Tom Patz, project manager for organizational development and safety. It was his presentation that inspired the freshmen to explore biodiesel conversion. Now the university is looking to efficiently continue the program.

“Being a small college, we don’t have a full-time sustainability person like (some) larger colleges do, but what we’ve found a way to do is engage our campus community in sustainability from a multi-disciplinary perspective,” Patz shares.

While chemistry students converted grease to fuel, mathematics students crunched numbers to study energy usage. Journalism majors helped craft the sustainability message that is conveyed on campus as well as the college’s Climate Action Plan that was submitted to the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment.

Data gathered by math students led others to take part in a campus lighting survey to determine efficiency. That resulted in Franklin College updating its Spurlock Gymnasium. The \$10,000 upgrade produced energy savings that paid for the investment in less than one year, Patz notes.

“It’s exciting to see our students really get involved in tangible projects that are connected to their area of interest,” he relates.

Student-found data also led the campus to eliminate trays in the dining hall. Statistical analysis found the student center (home to the only campus cafeteria) was using an unexpectedly high amount of natural gas. Students connected that figure to the large volume of hot water used by dishwashers.

Eliminating trays made an impact beyond the decrease in natural gas usage; other benefits include fewer chemicals used to soften the water and less detergent to wash the trays. But it’s the water usage that really wowed green proponents.

“It looks like over a one-year period we will conserve over a million gallons of water just by going tray-less,” Patz proclaims. “It’s one of those things we didn’t anticipate. We knew there would be a savings, but it looks like the savings is very significant.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Tom Patz, Franklin College, at www.franklincollege.edu

DePauw Becomes a Star for Sustainability

The mission, should you choose to accept it, is to reach carbon neutrality.

That is the hefty challenge DePauw University is committed to achieving in its ongoing quest for sustainability. This winter the Greencastle institution registered to participate in the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment and Rating System (STARS) to



Students at Franklin College converted used cooking oil from the dining hall to biodiesel. The fuel powered a tractor on campus.

help guide its efforts.

STARS is a program supported by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). DePauw is one of several Indiana higher education institutions participating in AASHE programs.

“It (STARS) is their assessment tool to help all of us who have signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment to be able to create a ... very detailed baseline in regard to our sustainability program,” explains Carol Steele, associate dean of academic affairs and DePauw’s sustainability coordinator.

The university is collecting data to enter into the STARS assessment tool and developing a climate action plan. That plan will examine what DePauw is doing with its facilities and operations, curriculums and its place in the community as it prepares global citizens, she adds.

“It’s a big deal to be involved in this movement that really has been embraced by the academy across the country. We are very pleased and proud to be a part of that and with it certainly come very big requirements,” she surmises.

Steele expects the program to be a long-term commitment, estimating it will take 20 to 30 years for the university to reach carbon neutrality and sustain those efforts.

Students set the stage for the university’s sustainability initiatives and will continue to lead the way. “One of the things about our program is ... it is very much a bottom up, student-centered, student-driven program.”

What has surprised Steele the most is how much students revere the university’s commitment.

Last fall during sessions that new students could attend to learn more about environmental efforts and campus groups, many said they chose DePauw in part because of what it was doing with sustainability.

“There clearly is a whole group of students coming out of high school who are making that part of their choice about where it is that they are going to be going to college; and we are excited they are choosing us for those reasons,” Steele states.

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Carol Steele, DePauw University, at www.depauw.edu

Hoosier Grad Student Attends United Nations Session

Rubbing elbows with international leaders at the United Nations is how one Northwest Indiana graduate student started her summer. Lauren Riga attended the 18th session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development in May at the U.N. headquarters in New York City.

Riga is pursuing a Master of Public Affairs degree at Indiana University Northwest while also completing her Master of Science in International Commerce and Policy at Valparaiso University. Her research in environmental dispute resolution techniques helped her land a spot as a student delegate for the advocacy organization SustainUS: U.S. Youth for Sustainable Development.

With 53 member countries represented at the session, Riga worked closely with ministries from different parts of the world as she furthered her research. She has been focusing on “interdisciplinary



Among its many efforts, DePauw University is planting more trees on campus to help reduce its impact as it moves toward carbon neutrality.

Lauren Riga, a graduate student at Indiana University Northwest and at Valparaiso University, attended the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development session in May.

collaboration to shape informed policy making,” she says.

“I was collecting information, and I’m developing a model for consensus building and collaborative policymaking using (what’s) called environmental dispute resolution – or agreement focused facilitation – to build interagency consensus,” she asserts.

The successful method combines “environmental policy analysis with facilitation and mediation skills to help government agencies, communities, business and citizens’ organizations engage in collaborative problem solving and produce robust solutions to complex environmental and public policy decisions,” she explains.

Riga had the opportunity to introduce a policy/planning model at the conference to international governments and stakeholders. She used the U.N. 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Production and Consumption as a case study.

“It was rewarding to see that my research and approach to a strategic process design for complex systems was received so positively, and the international leaders asked me to submit my finalized model to the United Nations Partnerships for Sustainable Development Program,” she shares.

During the session, Riga also learned about how countries around the world are approaching sustainability efforts. The sessions alternate annually between review and policy building. This year the delegation focused on reviewing efforts and identifying obstacles and strengths.

Among topics that stood out to Riga were efforts in Europe advocating for informed consumerism through labels that tell buyers where a product came from, how much energy it took to produce it and what chemicals are in it. The U.S. representatives focused on energy efficiency programs, financial incentives to adopt cleaner technology and ways to engage young leaders so the next generation of policymakers incorporates efficiency in their work, Riga recalls.

“One of the main messages I really took away ... is being able to harmonize economic growth and development with environmental concerns and social issues,” she notes.

Riga will complete her degree from Valparaiso in December. While finishing her IU degree, she says, “I would like to continue working with local government and stakeholders on issues in the Chicagoland area.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Lauren Riga, Indiana University Northwest and Valparaiso University, at www.iun.edu and www.valpo.edu

SustainUS at www.sustainus.org

Natural light pours into East Hall at the University of Indianapolis, which features energy efficient construction materials.

University of Indianapolis Builds Green Residence Hall



One of the most popular dormitories at the University of Indianapolis also is among the campus’ most environmentally friendly. While students are drawn to East Hall’s private rooms and lodge-like setting, the university lauds efficient construction that will allow its students to call it home for many years to come.

East Hall, which opened for the 2009-2010 school year, was built with panels of Autoclave Aerated Concrete (AAC).

“Made from recycled material, AAC is fire resistant and energy efficient, eliminating the need for wall insulation,” notes university spokesman Scott Hall. “It also dampens sound, making it ideal for a residential building.”

The university first used the material in construction of its Central Hall – one of the first academic buildings in the nation to use it when it opened in 2001. Last year the university garnered national attention in construction circles with its use of AAC in East Hall. The project was featured on the cover of *Construction Digest* magazine, Hall relates.

Both East and Central halls feature energy-efficient electrical and mechanical systems. “We build our residence halls to a 100-year standard, so we make decisions with long-term safety and efficiency in mind,” Hall asserts. “Sustainability concerns also are reflected in our

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choices of carpeting and other materials.”

While the university did not apply for LEED certification for either project “partly because of the additional expense involved, we feel confident that these buildings would qualify,” he states.

Whenever it’s feasible the university will continue to make the most environmentally friendly choices – and building facilities that are well constructed and efficient is not a difficult decision to make, he notes.

“As a university we feel that we’re held to a higher standard by our students and their parents and our faculty, staff and trustees. We’re an institution that people expect to do the right thing,” Hall notes.

Beyond construction, the university is committed to recycling efforts and the elimination of toxic cleaning materials.

“A comprehensive campus-wide program ... eliminates more than 14,000 pounds of material from our waste stream each month, including paper, cans, cardboard boxes and plastics 1-7,” Hall shares. Students have led efforts to eliminate waste by organizing recycling contests and helping to plan and execute various campus initiatives.

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Scott Hall, University of Indianapolis, at www.uindy.edu