

Energy Design Charrette with PSI

By Ann Erhardt, Student Writer



Educators and business leaders learn about cost-effective energy efficiency systems.

On May 17, Aquinas President Ed Balog signed the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). This document puts Aquinas on a path toward carbon neutrality, energy

efficiency and community leadership. The pledge means that Aquinas is committed to creating a viable and long-term energy strategy.

One of the valuable steps toward meeting the goals of the climate commitment involves energy-efficiency—better matching energy use with energy needs. Through the leadership and support of the Wege Foundation and Second Nature, universities and colleges were invited to submit letters of inquiry for a limited number of grants for campus-based pilot programs intended to increase energy efficiency. The purpose of these projects is to reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions in a manner consistent with the ACUPCC. Aquinas College was awarded one of the grants and, in December, began work on gathering baseline data for the intensive strategy process.

Second Nature and the Wege Foundation have collaborated with energy experts Professional Supply, Inc. (PSI) to develop a consistent methodology for identifying and evaluating campus-based sustainable energy solutions, which are now being translated into a new curriculum at Arizona State University under the leadership of Tom Kiser. This process includes an on-campus design charrette, an energy baseline study, creation of a sustainable energy strategy and identification of cost-effective energy efficiency projects.

In January, members of the AQ community engaged in a two-day energy design charrette with PSI, working to identify and develop a “teachable point of view” about sustainable energy systems as it applies to the needs of Aquinas. The group also worked to identify energy efficiency opportunities as they developed the initial strategy.

Balog said he believes PSI’s expertise will help the College focus its efforts as it strives to become a more sustainable campus.

“We are poised to become the model for small colleges that are moving through energy efficiency toward carbon neutrality,” he stated. “Our relationship with PSI will provide us with the tactical focus and the practical methods to achieve energy efficiency. Their analysis and design will allow us to concentrate our energies on a more rapid and effective implementation

RecycleMania 2009

By Jessica Eimer '05, Program Director,
Center for Sustainability at Aquinas College



The national RecycleMania competition swept through Aquinas’ campus during the first half of the spring semester. The friendly 10-week competition between nearly 400 colleges and universities

began in 2001 to raise awareness of waste minimization strategies and recycling. Aquinas chose to “throw its hat in the ring”—so to speak—in this year’s competition, largely to promote participation in the comprehensive recycling program implemented on campus in January 2008.

Numerous marketing and education activities, such as the February 7 kick-off celebration in the Moose Café featuring Aquinas’ own Backstrokes, contributed to the impressive 70,541 pounds of recyclables collected from January 18 through March 28. That total placed Aquinas second only to Kalamazoo College in the Grand Champion category among schools in the state and 19th nationwide.

“It is encouraging to see everything that is happening on campus—with the RecycleMania competition,” said Kalee Mockridge '09, who assisted in the tracking of waste generation on campus. “I have felt an increase of interest within the student body, and that is exciting.”

RecycleMania represents just one tangible action resulting from Aquinas’ deep commitment to sustainability at all levels of the College. The competition undoubtedly increased the College’s recycling rate and diverted trash from the city’s incinerator over a 10-week period, but lasting effects from RecycleMania are expected. Organizers hope that the important lessons learned by students, staff and faculty, including what can and cannot be recycled and tips to reduce the sum of waste generated, will improve Aquinas’ performance in RecycleMania 2010 and the College’s environmental footprint in the future.

than would otherwise have been possible.”

Aquinas is now awaiting the results of the energy baseline study, which required weeks of data collection and physical assessment of energy usage on campus. Once this study is completed, Aquinas will be able to plan and implement new energy-saving projects, which will move the College one step closer to a sustainable future.



Jay Richardson of Ohio-based Professional Supply Inc., spoke at the Design Charrette session.