

Kresge Foundation Fellowship Program 2009

Strategic Outreach and Education for Advancing Green Building in Higher Education

**Report from NACUBO Conference June 27 – 30, 2009
Boston, Massachusetts:**

Learning Experiences:

Going green and sustainability are among the most popular buzz words circulating around the globe. These words were also the predominate topics of the NACUBO Conference – Taming the Green Monster. The pre-conference workshop I attended, hosted by Second Nature and Kresge Foundation, kicked off the NACUBO conference. The pre-conference workshop included a tour of the Campus Center at the University of Massachusetts-Boston and group session of fifteen participants. We quickly learned that many Universities across the country are already implementing various initiatives to become more energy efficient and to reduce their carbon footprint. More than 600 institutions have signed the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). As stated in ACUPCC's pamphlet, "the ACUPCC moves campuses toward sustainability by garnering institutional commitments to reduce and ultimately eliminate net greenhouse gas emissions on campus, while promoting the education and research needed to help the rest of society to the same." Many of the questions asked included the following:

- How do you fund this stuff?
- What are best practices?
- Who is responsible for these initiatives - academia, operations or both?

All of the sessions I attended during the NACUBO conference focused on sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint; therefore, responding to the questions asked.

Some programs being implemented include recycling incentive programs, LED lighting retrofits, green roofing products, and solar energy initiatives. To add, we learned that going green in academia means:

- Helping the environment through green projects implemented by Operations and Facilities
- Reducing operational expenses to maximize budgets and taxpayers' dollars by reducing energy consumption
- Creating educational curriculums and training classes to prepare future graduates for the wave of green jobs promised by the current White House administration
- Restructuring curriculum to include interdisciplinary studies that may lead to certification in sustainability, or creation of non-credit programs
- Establishing a Climate Action Plan or guiding principles
- Seeking grants for research and development of future green products, innovations, and technologies
- Reducing maintenance costs by implementing a climate action plan, i.e. LED lighting systems--LEDs last almost 50,000 hours

- Attracting and pleasing donors by being a higher education market leader and maximizing those donations through operational efficiency
- Preparing for sweeping legislation from President Obama that will hold all institutions accountable for energy efficiency and carbon footprint reduction through alternative solutions and innovation

One of the conclusions I have drawn is that to achieve the goal of sustainability, many colleges and universities are committed to encouraging and facilitating collaborative efforts of faculty, students, and staff to generate knowledge, acquire skills, develop values, and initiate practices that contribute to a sustainable, high quality of life on campuses and across the globe.

Networking Experiences:

The conference allowed me the opportunity to meet colleagues from various colleges and universities that have started sustainability programs and those that beginning the initiatives. Additionally, I connected with many trade organizations that are assisting colleges and universities with sustainability initiatives.

Texas Southern University's Initiatives:

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, 22% of electricity used in the U.S. is used to power lights. In a world with soaring energy prices due to the availability and control of fossil fuels, and with growing concern about sustainability of the environment, a revolution in lighting is inevitable.

Based on the information gathered at the conference, Texas Southern University's main objective is to implement as many sustainability projects and measures as quickly as possible to dramatically reduce Texas Southern University's energy consumption and subsequently operational expenditures. Our plan is to model successes of other universities and municipalities. One of the initial projects includes implementing a full-scale LED lighting initiative. TSU's Facilities Maintenance staff is working on a plan to implement an LED lighting strategy that will achieve increased energy savings, protect the environment, reduce maintenance costs, reduce carbon footprint, and provide better light quality for improved visibility and safety. Many universities across the country are deploying LED lighting in areas such as offices, dormitories, parking garages, signage, walkways, and even replacing streetlights that border their campuses.

Additionally, Texas Southern University will be the first university in Texas and Historical Black College and University (HBCU) to adopt the BigFix[®], Inc. platform for energy conservation and security in its information technology infrastructure. BigFix[®], Inc. offers the only converged IT security and operations platform that enables real-time visibility and control of globally distributed desktop, mobile and server computers. BigFix[®] will enable the University to continuously enforce IT security, IT policy compliance, and systems management on all computers, anytime, anywhere. It is designed for highly distributed and complex IT infrastructures, which delivers real-time endpoint visibility and control through its single-agent, multifunction, on-demand architecture. Based on potential cost savings and environmental and security concerns, the University is implementing a customized power conservation program utilizing BigFix[®] Power Management to reduce its electricity bills and carbon footprint. The Big Fix platform is a software energy management system that allows the University to power down computers university-wide, resulting in cost savings from reducing energy consumption by 25%.

Finally, TSU Campus Green Collaborative Program, a student program, primary goal will seek to identify green and sustainability opportunities across operations that will benefit TSU and the environment.