

Kresge Foundation Fellowship Program 2009

Strategic Outreach and Education for
Advancing Green Building in Higher Education

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Overview of the conference/workshops attended

I attended the ACUPCC Climate Leadership Summit in Chicago from August 12 – 15, 2009. I learned that over 650 institutions of higher learning have become signatories and that 400 climate action plans were due in fall, 2009.

Anthony Cortese, ScD, the President of Second Nature asked what Second Nature could do to help us as signatories. The ACUPCC website is an excellent resource for guidance in our climate control efforts. Much of the ARRA funds are being expended on sustainability initiatives and that information is readily available on the website recovery.gov. Dr. Martha Kanter, Undersecretary of Education at the U.S. Department of Education alerted us to the \$2 billion revolving loan fund for green buildings at community colleges.

I attended the session “Financing Higher Education Sustainability Initiatives” presented by Joseph Grasso of Cornell. We learned of Cornell’s efforts in reducing its greenhouse gas inventory as well as NACUBO’s Financing Guide identifying financing mechanisms for greenhouse gas mitigation.

One of the over-riding themes of the Summit was that we have been releasing carbon into the environment since the industrial revolution with no thought or effort about its adverse impact on our climate. That lack of focus has taken us to a critical point where we must take measures to mitigate and reverse the adverse impacts of greenhouse gases on our planet.

The dialogue about tunneling through the cost barriers was extremely useful in looking at the cost offsets of the incremental costs of capital improvements to achieve energy savings. Certainly the investment in energy saving measures like windows, day lighting, insulation and lighting produce HVAC savings in each operating cycle.

Michael Crow, the President of Arizona State University, brought the problem into focus by talking about the consequences of greenhouse gases – collapsing fisheries, rising temperatures and the effect on the world ecosystem (reductions in arctic ice mass, crop failures, climate changes, etc.). There is a very clear sense of urgency and his presentation was an effective call to action for all of us. He stressed that educators must lead in the effort of climate control. Sustainability must be

ingrained in our educational programs so that our graduates become the seeds of change in this important initiative.

As Peter Senge so eloquently stated, "Business as usual is not sustainable." We need to be more sophisticated about this and we can be. Our behavior has to change. We need to do this for ourselves and our children.

How the fellowship experience will help/has helped in dealing with the challenges for green building at KVCC.

This Fellowship has been extremely beneficial in providing access to resources and colleagues who are actively involved in creating and managing their respective climate control plans. The information has provided motivation and energy to our initiative at KVCC. It is clear that we at KVCC choose aspiration over desperation in meeting this challenge head-on now and going forward.

Second Nature has coordinated virtual meetings between the Kresge Fellows and that dialogue has been extremely useful in our planning efforts. We deeply appreciate the coordination of information and the support we have received in this important effort.