

Kresge Foundation Fellowship Program 2009

Strategic Outreach and Education for Advancing Green Building in Higher Education

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The Kresge Fellows Program has provided a remarkable professional development opportunity with three-fold benefits: knowledge of green building initiatives, a network that offers exceptional resources for sustainability projects and expanded capability to promote climate action programs. These three outcomes will be instrumental in advancing the work of green building at Saint Peter's College.

The ACUPCC Summit in Chicago in August 2009 generated significant knowledge of green building programs. The pre-conference workshop, "Exploring Green Building on Chicago Campuses: Tour and Roundtable" showcased creative green building strategies, such as air systems that promote healthy living, green roofs, white boards created from recycled materials, and solar sensitive window screens. More important than the demonstration of green technologies was the advice on the need to address green planning at the earliest stages of construction and renovation. Discovering that 100 climate decisions are made during the schematic design phase has been critical knowledge in my role as chair of our student center building committee. My campus colleagues and I had been misinformed by consultants about the cost differential for LEED certified buildings. The conference offered insights into the costly learning curve when working with personnel with limited green building experience. This advice has been critical in selecting partners for our project and also in the RFP we recently issued for updating our campus facilities master plan.

Networking resources are the second benefit of the fellows program and the ACUPCC summit. Presenters provided essential information: federal funding initiatives, portfolio-based approaches to reducing carbon emissions, NACUBO guidance for aligning green building planning and financing strategies, and AASHE resources. The data has helped to develop a framework for addressing the enormity of climate issues. Saint Peter's College deals with financial challenges similar to many small independent colleges, but we now have the tools to explore funding and other types of support for advancing green building.

The third outcome of this experience is perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the program. The fellowship and conference have been motivational in expanding the capability to promote action. As Peter Senge so effectively noted, our institutions are learning organizations. The program has encouraged me to work in new ways to scale up our climate action program, to leverage the strengths of the ACUPCC signatory network, to promote the engagement of students in all aspects of sustainability activities, to commit to green building in all of our facility projects, and to connect the various campus operations to this common goal.

The community of Saint Peter's College believes that ACUPCC is "a brilliant vehicle to assist complete cultural transformation in the way we imagine and understand all of our vital relationships." To achieve

the goals of green building and climate neutrality, we must, as President Clinton so aptly expressed in a very special moment at the conference, “embrace complexity, identify priorities that make a difference and advance through adversity.” The Kresge Fellows Program is providing the support to succeed in this critical endeavor.