SUNY Canton Uses Less to do More

The College substantially reduced utility usage while maintaining record enrollments during the 2008-2009 academic year.

SUNY Canton used less water, natural gas, and electricity to educate more students than ever before.

Substantial capital improvements, overall sustainability awareness, and an innovative four-day academic schedule have contributed to reducing the College’s dependence on utilities.

“We have used and continue to use less than at any point in the previous six years,” noted SUNY Canton President Joseph L. Kennedy. “At the same time we are doing more for more students. We’ve adapted our business model in exactly the right ways to continue our economic viability.”

The College reduced its water consumption by about 24 percent, using 16,697,000 gallons of water during the 2008-2009 academic year, as compared to the 2001-2007 average of approximately 22,240,000 gallons. College officials suggested the four-day academic schedule coupled with the popularity of online classes through SUNY CantonOL contributed to less overall water usage on campus.

“We’ve also upgraded much of the campus with new high-efficiency fixtures in line with New York State requirements,” said Patrick G. Hanss, Assistant Facilities Planning Coordinator. “While no individual initiative is completely responsible for overall energy savings by itself, the combination of several factors has allowed for reductions across campus.”

The College reduced its natural gas usage by approximately 14 percent from its six-year average using a total of 75,559 million cubic feet (Mcf) during 2008-2009. The six-year average hovered around 88,136 Mcf. Some of the reduction in natural gas has been attributed to new energy-efficient boilers installed in each of the College’s four residences, and close monitoring of each building’s temperature. Kennedy suggested the College turn down the thermostats in all of the academic buildings as part of an overall cost-saving strategy implemented in 2008.

“Total estimates of our overall savings are an estimated $250,000 annually,” Kennedy pointed out. “We are also mowing less grass and streamlining other operations wherever we can.”

Electricity use declined during the last full academic year. The College used approximately 7,193 megawatt hours (mkWh) in 2008-2009 which represents an almost 13 percent, or a 1,070 mkWh decrease from the six-year average and a 9 percent reduction from the previous academic year.
“When we first started the four-day academic schedule in January 2009, we used approximately 560 megawatt hours, about 101 less than the year prior when we were holding classes five days a week,” Kennedy said. “We’ve saved even more electricity this year.”

The College’s Sustainability Taskforce has worked to reduce utilities usage. Many members encourage ways to save, reuse, or repurpose any and all available resources. Members of the Information Services Department have spearheaded an initiative to replace computers with newer up-to-date energy saving equipment.

“A number of individuals joined the taskforce as a means to reduce the College’s environmental footprint,” noted Taskforce chair and SUNY Canton Chief of Staff Ryan P. Deuel. “We look to members’ overall efforts as a means for us to become greener and cut costs.”

Future resource saving innovations include a grey water recycling system at the College’s Convocation, Athletic, and Recreation Center, nicknamed the Roos House. The entire building, and all future buildings at SUNY Canton, will be constructed to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Silver standards.

Other future plans include adding a wind turbine and an anaerobic digester to help supply electricity.

SUNY Canton offers a wide variety of career-driven bachelor's, associate, and certificate programs. Most of SUNY Canton's new four-year programs are designed so students can take them on-campus, online, or both. SUNY Canton OnLine features more than 100 courses online each semester. The College's athletic teams belong to the NAIA's Sunrise Conference, enabling students to compete in their respective sports for four years. Construction is now underway for the College’s new Convocation, Athletic, and Recreation Center.

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