

TOWSON OPENS Green COMMONS



The new West Village Commons at Towson University in Maryland is a shining illustration of the sustainability initiatives being taken on campus.

In 2007, Dr. Robert Caret, then-president of the university, signed the Presidents' Climate Commitment, a pledge to become carbon neutral within some point in the future. "As part of that pledge, you have to take two immediate actions to start abating your carbon production on campus," said Jack Nye, the school's director of sustainability. "We actually chose three. One of which was to require all new major capital construction or renovation projects to achieve a Silver LEED certification."

The 85,000-square-foot Silver LEED-certified building features retail brands Einstein Bros. Bagels, Jamba Juice and Chartwells' proprietary brands Coyote Jack's Grill and Outtakes Quick Cuisine convenience store. The second floor features the campus's third all-you-care-to-eat residential dining venue.

"It is an additional facility to support enrollment growth," he said. "We have established a stra-



tegic growth initiative to increase our enrollment to about 25,000 to the year 2018 as part of our master plan. In the West Village campus, we really are developing

quite a bit of housing. This new facility will be the heart of that precinct. It will serve as a satellite union facility, very similar to the way our main union serves our main academic campus."

In addition to previous relationships and student preferences, sustainability was a factor in the choice of the retail brands in the building. "All of these brands have product available for us that are recyclable, which is an important part of the vision," said Roy Cubbler, resident district manager with Chartwells, the campus foodservice provider.

All of the equipment in the all-you-care-to-eat venue is Energy Star-rated, where applicable. "We thought it was important — because we are making this investment — that it also be very sensitive and very conscious of energy," said Nye. "Foodservice facilities are fairly energy intensive users. That was certainly a big part of the consideration in specifying the equipment for the facility."

SUSTAINABILITY

The Commons will continue the campus policy of waste minimization. “From a waste minimization perspective, we will be applying our trayless Tuesdays approach to this facility as well,” he said. “That really is an initiative where we try to promote awareness to folks relative to not using trays. If you are carrying back individual plates versus a tray that can carry a lot more, you are less likely to take food that you are not going to eat. It also allows us not to have to wash trays, which requires energy to heat the water.”

A new campus refillable mug and bottle program will also apply at The Commons. “One of our efforts here is to really get folks to continue to buy fountain drinks at a higher percentage than bottled products,” said Nye. “Bottled products require more energy to make and fabricate, thus increasing their carbon impact. If we can get more people to use reusable mugs or bottles, whether it be for water or their favorite fountain beverage, we believe that we can minimize or reduce the amount of waste that we generate and subsequently our carbon footprint.”

As part of the program, Chartwells offers users a discount on refills. “It is a 24-ounce refillable bottle and we are offering a 60-cent discount if they fill it with any beverage instead of buying the 20-ounce bottle,” said Cubbler. “It is a pretty significant discount. We want the program to work. We want to get the results. As a group, we sat around the table and for it to really take hold, it needs to be substantial. We are hoping that is enough to really drive participation with these bottles.”

He continued, “Last year on campus, we sold 1.3 million bottles of product. At the end of the year, a 10-20 percent reduction in bottles is huge when you are selling that many bottles.”

For Nye, the bottles, which are given to all freshmen and transfer students for free and available for purchase at cost for others, are an educational tool. “We branded them with our message about ‘why use a reusable bottle versus buying a disposable bottle.’ It has also given us an opportunity to bring together the private sector along with the institution in a partnership to try and move the campus more towards a sustainable environment.”

The culinary staff in the facility will also take part in a Chartwells waste management program called Trim Trax. “Basically, we challenge the staff everyday to weigh and measure our waste — scraps and unused food,” said Cubbler. “It is basically forcing them to improve their yield to get a little tighter with their production. All of that is weighed and tracked. It increases awareness with our associates. It is sort of a competition. Everything is measured — every end of a pepper, every carrot peeling — to see how much we really put into the dumpsters and also to challenge the staff.”

The building will also be participating in the campus’ recycling and composting programs. “One is a single stream recycling collection system,” said Nye. “Roy and his staff did an excellent job this summer of reviewing all of the materials that they use in their facilities that are disposable. I think they



came up with over 96 percent are recyclable. We haven’t really been aggressively pursuing a lot of capturing of that. This semester, we started to implement in our facilities a new collection system for recyclables so we can start to capture those bottles, plates, paper cups — all those types of things that were going in the trash before. We feel like there is a tremendous opportunity there relative to the amount that was not being

captured to really improve our recycling rates and take that and divert it from the waste stream that goes to the landfill.”

There is a financial incentive to the program. “By doing this, we avoid the tipping fee at the landfill for that,” he said. “We still have the hauling costs, regardless of whether we take it to the recycling center or the landfill — that is equal in either case. Where we really make the financial motivation work is really avoiding those tipping fees, which is about \$65 a ton here at the university.”

Composting has several benefits for the university. “We have put in place an organic collection system in all of the dining facilities where they train their staff along with our vendor,” said Nye. “They work together to train them on how to scrape it, keep as pure an organic stream as possible that is going into the containers. It is collected three times a week from each of our facilities and we get monthly reports on how much we are collecting. All of that goes to a composting facility in a local jurisdiction and for every ton of organic they collect from us, we get 40 pounds of mulch back on the other end of processing. We are really excited about that.”

Both Cubbler and Nye hope that these sustainability programs — and others on campus — have an effect on the campus community. “We have 300 associates here, along with 20,000 students, so hopefully when they go home, they have learned something and the impact goes beyond the campus,” said Cubbler. “There are a lot of people out in the community who are now aware of recycling and waste reduction.”

“We hope it has that pond with a stone in the middle effect, where it emanates out from the university into the community,” said Nye.

—OCH

Guilford Garden

Springs Forth

For more than 30 years, the idea of an on-campus farm had been considered at Guilford College in Greensboro, N.C. This year, it is a reality.

“The idea of having a farm on campus has been kicked around this campus for many years,” said Jim Dees, farm manager with the college. “I recently saw a proposal to do something like this that was dated in the ’70s. The idea had been kicked around for a long time.”

The land used for the Guilford Garden was part of an old farm the college purchased 15-20 years ago. “There was some clearing that we had to do,” he said. “The fence lines had overgrown tremendously, so we didn’t really clear any heavy virgin timber, but we did have to beat back the fence line pretty substantially.”

For Farmer Korey Erb, the farm needed to be up and running quickly. “When I started on the project, we were trying to go pretty fast because it wasn’t until mid-March when we got the field ready to go, so we were already traditionally a little behind,” he said. “We hit the ground running with the summer crops.”

Based on Erb’s experience working on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms, he knew what crops would work best at the Guilford Garden. “We decided to just start with tomatoes — Sun Gold cherry tomatoes were a big hit — eggplant and green beans, a lot of summer and winter squash too because the winter squash can actually store,” he said. “A lot of the problem with choosing what you are going to grow is choosing things that will go further — that you can either store well or that can go up to frost because students are coming back to school after the height of production. That is the one thing too that we were trying to keep in mind. The butternuts did extremely well. Now we are moving over into the fall vegetables and doing beets, arugala, Asian greens, head lettuce, Swiss chard, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and collards.”

All of the produce grown at the farm is sold to Dining Services, which is operated by Meriwether Godsey. “One of the reasons for that is when we are talking about

the production garden and the larger farm, we want for it to be sustainable financially as well,” said Matthew O’Connell, sustainability team member. “Korey’s salary comes from what we sell.

It is run as its own business. It has to sustain itself through what it sells to the dining service.”



That produce then makes it to the students’ plates.

“Korey and I talk a couple times a week about what he is going to have coming in the next few days so that I can anticipate it,” said Chris Blain, floating corporate chef. “As much as possible, we try to feature individual items either in a vegetable dish or roasted or something on the salad bar. We do signage to identify anything that comes from the Guilford Garden. For example, the Sun Gold Tomatoes are probably the most popular, most well-known item that we get from the farm. There are cherry tomatoes on the menu as much as possible. Kids go nuts for them because they are fantastic.”

He continued, “We try to look at what the farm is producing and work it into slots in the menu. For example, we do a vegan dish — butternut squash rancheros — with some squash, beans, vegan cheese and salsa to show off something awesome that the garden is producing.”

Student reaction to the homegrown produce has been astonishing. “We were surprised, the corporate chef had penciled in quantities for us to start the year off,” said Blain. “We have been serving almost double what we anticipated. Last year, the students didn’t eat a whole lot of veggies. This year they are really loving them.”

O’Connell has seen the popularity firsthand. “The other day I was in the dining hall and the salad bar is situated ironically next to the ice cream. I saw two students walking by with bowls of just the tomatoes. That was neat to see.”

Snehal Deshmukh, director of Dining Services, is proud to serve the produce. “Putting up those signs and talking to the students when they come to eat and saying that it is from our Guilford Garden. There is so much enthusiasm there.”

—OCH

Bowdoin Goes SOLAR

As part of its environmental initiatives, Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, recently added solar water heating in a dining hall on campus.

Revision Energy installed 48 4x10 flat-plate solar hot water collectors on the roof of Thorne Dining Hall, the school's largest dining facility, and plumbed them to a closed-loop heat exchanger. The system includes eight hot water tanks with a total storage capacity of 840 gallons, which fulfills more than half of the dining hall's hot water needs. It is estimated to eliminate more than 90,000 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

The project is part of Bowdoin's goal to be carbon neutral by 2020. "For the investment, there is a very good payback in terms of the ability to really impact energy consumption," said Mary Lou Kennedy, director of Dining and Bookstore Services at Bowdoin. "The first phase went on line during the middle of the academic year last year. As far as we can tell, it is working great."

An energy "dashboard" in the lobby offers a glimpse at the energy usage. "We can actually see what the energy demands are at any point during the day," she said. "Once there is more data, we can see comparisons in usage also. It is a very visual reminder of how much energy is being consumed. They can see it when they walk right into the dining hall."

The solar water heating is only one of many environmental initiatives on campus. "In conjunction with the water savings, we have an environmental committee within our own department so that all of our employees are involved," said Kennedy. "Our employees are very conscientious to only operate the dish machine during the peak periods. For them, it is very nice too that the new solar energy panels for heating the water are actually enhancing the savings that they have already contributed to."

Dining recently added another acre to its organic garden and does a great deal of local purchasing, including the only bottled



Kennedy

water it uses, from Poland Spring. "We have been working with our primary vendor, Performance Food Group, for them to increase the number

of local vendors they are working with," she said. "Two years ago, we had a map with about 12 local vendors on it. This year, the map has 68."

They also work with local farms through Farm Fresh Connections. "We usually get deliveries from them two or three times a week and that all comes from local farms," said Kennedy. "We are buying from 49 local farmers through them. Our definition of local is a radius of 150 miles."

Dining also works with the Environmental Studies department to do a series of events. "Their dining portion is called Meet What You Eat," she said. "We started this year with a Maine-themed dinner during orientation. We had a 'locovore' dinner in September. We have another local dinner called Celebrating the Culinary Traditions of Maine for late October. During these events, we have made maple syrup. We tap trees on campus and served that in the spring."

She continued, "The point is to make them more familiar with where their food comes from. We have farmers come in. We have Feed the Farmer Fridays. We get farmers in the spring when they are a little less busy who come in for lunch and students can join them at the table and talk to them about their farms, what they produce and the methods that they use. It is a demonstration to show how food is made and where it comes from."

—OCH



UNH Dining Teams with Academics

For On-Campus Produce

The salad greens served at the Dairy Bar at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) in Durham, couldn't be more local. They are grown several hundred yards away in the school's Macfarlane Greenhouses.

The greens are grown as part of a research project to investigate the feasibility of profitably producing greens and herbs in underutilized greenhouses during the winter months. The project represents a collaboration among UNH Dining, which operates the Dairy Bar, and UNH Cooperative Extension and the New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station at UNH, which spearheaded the research.

"It stemmed from a research grant that a couple of professors got to try to find ways to help New Hampshire farmers utilize greenhouse space that is not used in the winter," said Rick MacDonald, assistant director of Business Affairs. "When they came up with their research project they decided that greens would be a good thing to look at – fairly high value, fairly easy to grow. When they decided that that was what they were going to do, they thought it would be a great idea to work with us to use the product that they were growing. We agreed and we worked with them."

"They were also testing how long it would take to grow each of the different varieties, so they could get data on harvest time," said David May, assistant vice president of Business Affairs.

The researchers launched their pilot study in September 2010 by planting 12 varieties of greens – including lettuce, endive, arugula, mache, mizuna, tatsoi and spinach – in two identical UNH greenhouses with minimum temperatures of

60 degrees Fahrenheit in one and 40 degrees in another. All were grown in potting mix in "benchtop production" rather than in beds, since that's the setup of many greenhouses that are empty during this time period.

All of the greens grown in the greenhouses are served at the Dairy Bar, a sustainable restaurant, launched in 2008. About 50 pounds are used a week.

The program will continue this winter. "This winter there will be about the same," said MacDonald. "They learned this past winter about what not to grow, what doesn't do well in that atmosphere, what takes too much energy. They refined the mix of greens they are going to grow. They actually have a graduate student who is going to be in charge of the research program. It is moving along."

Dining receives the greens at no charge

and supplied some undergraduate students to work in the greenhouses. "We paid for that labor and they gave us the greens," he said. "It really wasn't a commercial venture so to speak. It was more like a partnership."

For May, the entire project was a win for all concerned. "For us, any time we can partner with academics and give students some real life experience with what we are doing, it is a win-win for the university."

It was also a marketing win for Dining. "There was so much good will associated with it," said MacDonald. "The customers thought it was fabulous because we did really nice marketing for it. People knew that they were grown less than two miles away. I think that it did bring us more business. There were some people who came over because they wanted to try it."

—OCH



From left: May, UNH Director of Dining Jon Plodzick and MacDonald.