

## Community Colleges Going Green

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It has been more than two years since Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* opened many eyes to the consequences of global warming and unleashed a wave of all things "green." Now, one need only walk down the supermarket aisle, scan the web or turn on any television channel to experience the constant hum of "green noise" — digital information, misinformation, marketing messages, documentaries — designed to influence our opinions and actions when it comes to environmental stewardship and awareness.

Fortunately, we can look to New England higher education for prime examples of forward-thinking responses to today's environmental imperatives. As reported in this issue, five of the 11 colleges and universities listed in *The Princeton Review's* Green Rating Honor Role are New England institutions. And, presidents of 89 New England colleges and universities are among the 523 to date who have signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), a pledge to meet ambitious goals and requirements and to eliminate greenhouse gases from their campuses over time.

One might suppose that only institutions with flush endowments and overflowing construction budgets can incorporate sustainability into their mission and turn a commitment to the environment into action. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Cape Cod Community College (CCCC) president Kathleen Schatzberg is one of the most outspoken advocates in all of higher education for the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions and reaching carbon neutrality. The community college's position as an

environmental leader dates to 1996 when it began testing electric utility vehicles as replacements for gasoline-powered maintenance trucks. Today, the college's fleet of electric vehicles continues to eliminate hundreds of tons of airborne pollutants each year — and they are recharged with renewable electricity from CCCC's solar panels.

The college's Lorusso Applied Technology building was the Commonwealth's first publicly financed LEED-certified building. Moreover, the project was the impetus for a major state policy change: Today, all new state buildings and major renovations in the Commonwealth must meet LEED standards.

Impressive recycling efforts, the purchase and use of recycled and environmentally preferable products; water conservation, including an 8,000-gallon rainwater capture and diversion system; and "zero impact" landscape design and management are all standard operating procedures at CCCC. Even the president's car reflects the campus's commitment, Schatzberg has driven a Prius Hybrid since 2005.

Another New England community college is a leader in employing cutting-edge technologies to reduce emissions and expenses. Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC) converted its all-electric main campus to a biomass heating system in 2002. Since then, the college has reduced its carbon footprint by more than 22 percent; cut electricity usage by 38 percent; water usage by 52 percent; and saved nearly \$3 million.

MWCC was able to implement this huge conversion at zero net cost to the institution through the wise use of federal and state grants and a performance contract with the energy service

company NORESKO. The resulting energy savings provides a significant environmental and health benefit from the reduction of air pollutants that extends beyond the campus. Emissions reductions include 11,000 tons of carbon dioxide, 18 tons of nitrogen oxide and 47 tons of sulfur dioxide. This translates to the equivalent of planting 3,012 acres of trees and removing 1,920 cars from the roads.

Community colleges also play key roles on the academic side of sustainability and environmentalism. The American Solar Energy Institute estimates that more than 8 million Americans worked in renewable energy and energy efficiency industries in 2006 and this number will grow as the nation commits itself to reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. A 2008 report by the Apollo Alliance, in collaboration with Green For All, says that many jobs in the new "green economy" require the type of training acquired at the certificate or associate degree level. Some of these positions are bridges to high-skill professional jobs; others bring entrepreneurial opportunity; and some provide a pathway from poverty to the middle class.

Exemplary programs of study can be found at many of the region's community colleges. The new green economy is growing fast, and the role community colleges play in building a green workforce to support this new economy is crucial.

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