



Diversity Works

Office of University Partnerships

Minority-Serving Institutions Developing Partnerships, Building Communities

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Go-Green Assistance Center: A Hub for Energy Conservation Awareness

Energy conservation and going green are popular buzz phrases in today's society. And from the United Nations to Capitol Hill, in television commercials and magazine ads, there is a campaign of awareness about their importance in addressing global warming, energy security, and fossil fuel depletion. Now the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC) has joined the energy efficiency and green technology movement. With funds from a 2008 Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Office of University Partnerships, UTB/TSC established a Go-Green Assistance Center. The center is a regional clearinghouse of information that supports education, outreach on energy conservation issues, and training on such topics as energy awareness, solar and wind applications, alternative power, water conservation, biofuels, and green business concepts.

UTB/TSC staff John Sossi, director of the International Innovation Center; Ricardo Gonzalez, program director of the Go-Green Assistance Center; and Karen De Los Santos, a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-certified architect, led the effort to establish the center and were propelled by several key factors: HUD's interest in green-related activities; the increase in the number of green companies joining UTB/TSC's business incubator; the abundance of sunlight, wind, and sea water in the surrounding area—key elements for alternative energy sources; and the need for affordable, efficient, and safe housing for low-income residents in counties surrounding the university.

"Planning for the center began in November 2008, and one of our first steps was to perform a needs assessment,

which confirmed our perception that the greatest area of impact would be low-income housing. Our county and the surrounding counties have the lowest per capita income in the United States. Residents can't afford to pay high utility bills, so there was a lot of interest in building energy-efficient homes that keep utility costs down," said Sossi.

"The project had three main thrusts: establish relationships with businesses, individuals, organizations, and faculty, which would become our resource pool for outfitting the center; provide subject matter for workshops and training; and configure the center once the needs were assessed and base relationships formed," explained Sossi.



Entrance to the Go-Green Assistance Center.

The Go-Green Assistance Center was completed in 2009 and is equipped with solar, wind, geothermal, and recycling demonstrations; building material mockups, including partial structures that show types of materials used; and a complete demonstration home built by YouthBuild—a youth and community development program managed by the U.S. Department

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Benedict College Helps Residents Conserve Energy and Financial Resources

Energy. We use it to light our cities and homes, power machinery in factories, cook our food, and operate computers and televisions, as well as for a plethora of other activities. However, the limited amount of the earth's nonrenewable energy sources is fueling the energy conservation and renewable sources movement to ensure that our natural resources will be available for future generations. Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, is no stranger to promoting energy conservation and has incorporated it within the community development activities the college provides to the low-income communities it serves.

In 2006, the college and its partner, the Benedict Allen Community Development Corporation (BACDC), used its U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) grant to launch the Sustainable Urban Services to Advance Independent Neighborhoods (SUSTAIN) program. Through this comprehensive community development effort, they renovated a vacant community building and established the Community Education and Training Resources Center to provide resources and training information on energy conservation, homeownership and maintenance, credit counseling, and other community-building topics to residents of the Read Street/Waverly neighborhood.

Then, with funds from a 2007 HUD HBCU grant, the college and BACDC launched SUSTAIN II. This second phase of their community development effort focused on revitalizing neighborhoods located within the Columbia Empowerment Zone. Once again, one of the project's activities included a focus on energy conservation with the construction of four energy-efficient, single-family affordable housing units. Not only is the college helping residents to conserve natural resources, it is also helping them to manage costs and reduce their financial burden.

"Many of the families in our target area live in homes that are not energy efficient. As a result, they have high energy bills which cut into the little income they do have," explained Larry Salley, project manager for the HUD grant and executive director of BACDC. "With our campaign of energy efficiency, we want to lessen the financial burden on the homeowners themselves."

For SUSTAIN II, the college is providing oversight, limited financial resources, and the land for the energy-efficient houses. BACDC is the general contractor for the construction and is using its experience to pull together resources and manage the project. "So far, we

have completed two energy-efficient homes and plan to complete the others by September 2010," noted Salley.

The 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom homes have brick and vinyl exteriors and are retrofitted with:

- Energy-efficient appliances, including washers, dryers, and dishwashers.
- Low-flush toilets that conserve water.
- Fluorescent lighting, which uses one-third of the energy and lasts three times longer than traditional bulbs.
- Eco-friendly materials such as ceramic tiles that are made of clay, last longer, and are environmentally friendly; hardwood floors; and low-emission paint.
- Energy-efficient heating and cooling systems.
- Weatherization materials, including insulation and weather stripping to prevent heat loss or gain and maintain internal environments.

"Homeowners are encouraged to use programmable thermostats that will allow them to control energy use. Homeowners can set their thermostat to have the air conditioning or heat come on an hour before they arrive home or shut off an hour after they leave home. That way, the systems are not running all day long," explained Salley. "With energy-efficient appliances and heating and cooling systems, homeowners will qualify for an energy-efficient home tax credit from the federal government, and local utility providers also provide a one-time credit."

The completed units have been sold to low- and moderate-income families who are participants in BACDC's housing counseling program, the majority of whom are first-time homebuyers.

For more information on the SUSTAIN II Project, contact Larry Salley at 803-705-4672 or salley5@aol.com.



One of the four energy-efficient homes.

New Fitness Center Promotes Physical Rehabilitation and Green Technology

According to a recent study conducted by *Community College Week*, Bay Mills Community College (BMCC) is the fastest growing college in Michigan. For the BMCC president and Board of Regents, this growth meant that additional classroom space was necessary to accommodate the increasing student body and faculty. So BMCC constructed a new Health and Fitness Education Center with funds from its 2008 Tribal Colleges and Universities Program grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Office of University Partnerships. With this center, BMCC has increased overall classroom space dedicated to its health and fitness curriculum, provided space for future expansion and additional community programming, and demonstrated its commitment to encouraging energy conservation and green technology.

Construction for the 5,850-square-foot center commenced on May 23, 2009, using Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) guidelines. "The United States Green Building Council created LEED as a rating system for green and sustainable building. Green building refers to the design, construction, and operation of buildings in an environmentally friendly way. And BMCC used the *LEED for New Construction Reference Guide* in the process," explained Nick Ferro, special assistant to the president.

For the center's location, BMCC reused the site of a demolished building, thus lowering the impact on the natural environment by containing the construction on a developed campus and decreasing the risk of disturbing the native habitat. BMCC also installed low-flow toilets, which encourage water conservation, and placed windows strategically around the building to optimize natural daylight.

"Optimizing natural daylight is important because studies identify decreased absenteeism and higher test scores as some of the benefits of being in a learning environment which does this. These benefits lead to happier and more productive faculty and students," said Ferro. "Bay Mills Community College understands the importance of conservation and using the environment's renewable resources to lower its carbon footprint and potable water use and to be a living example for our community and other colleges."

On December 2, 2009, only 7 months after construction commenced, the Mukwa Health and Fitness Education Center opened officially. "Mukwa" means "bear" in Ojibwe, the language of the local Chippewa Indians. The new center houses BMCC's Fitness and Wellness program; two staff offices; one cardio-aerobic exercise room; a large main workout room with free weights, stationary exercise machines, and a wide variety of cardio exercise equipment; and locker rooms with showers for men and women.

BMCC also incorporated space in the center to accommodate the physical rehabilitation program of its partner, War Memorial Hospital. The space accommodates one War Memorial Hospital staff office, two physical rehabilitation exam rooms, and a large, fully equipped physical rehabilitation exercise room. By housing the physical rehabilitation program in the center, faculty, staff, students, and local residents are able to receive rehabilitation treatments locally, rather than having to make a 50-mile round trip to War Memorial Hospital in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.



Workout room at new Mukwa Health and Fitness Education Center begins to take shape.

"The new Mukwa Health and Fitness Education Center is centrally located within the Bay Mills Indian Community and is a benefit to BMCC students, staff, faculty, and residents of the community and surrounding area. It has been extremely well received by all its constituents," noted Ferro. "Currently, over 100 local residents are involved in the program."

For more information on the Mukwa Health and Fitness Education Center at Bay Mills Community College, contact Nick Ferro, special assistant to the president, at 906-248-8454 or nferro@bmcc.edu.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of University Partnerships
451 Seventh Street, SW
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of Labor—as part of UTB/TSC’s collaboration with the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville. The demonstration home features products that range from reflective siding to various insulations, Energy Star appliances, and architectural designs such as engineered structures that provide green, energy-efficient solutions. Three 46-inch flat screen computers with custom software allow users to interface with pre-selected energy conservation websites.

“Our target audience, which includes homeowners, builders, architects, city inspectors, companies, organizations, appraisers, and interested individuals, can see what others are doing in this area, learn about how a particular product works and about pricing and incentives, or locate someone who has knowledge and know-how about what they may be interested in,” said Sossi.

To date, more than 600 individuals have participated in 13 workshops or training sessions in energy conservation, recycling, basics of solar and wind

applications for homes, renewable energy, Energy Star homes, and Weatherization 101. Three home energy rating system exams were proctored at the center, and staff have established relationships with 123 organizations, businesses, and individuals, three times the number anticipated.

Some of UTB/TSC’s outstanding partnerships on this project include the Community Development Corporation of Brownsville; the UTB/TSC Architecture Program, headed by Dr. Murad Abusalim; Dr. Suzanne Lalonde of UTB/TSC Club Verde; Architecture for Charity, a low-income housing provider; PPG Architectural Finishes; South Texas Energy Partners; and SPI Go Green, a wind and solar design company from the UTB/TSC incubator.

For more information on the Go-Green Assistance Center at UTB/TSC, contact John Sossi, director, International Innovation Center, at 956-882-4119 or john.sossi@utb.edu or Ricardo Gonzalez at 956-882-4121 or ricardo.gonzalez@utb.edu.

HUD’s Office of University Partnerships (OUP) provides grants to institutions of higher education to assist them and their partners with the implementation of a broad range of community development activities, including neighborhood revitalization, housing, and economic development. This newsletter, *Diversity Works*, highlights the efforts of grantees in OUP’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Institutions Assisting Communities grant programs and includes a variety of interesting projects, compelling grantee profiles, and other valuable resources for minority-serving institutions.