Wilbur Wright College
Chicago, Illinois
Environmental Education and Outreach

SCHOOL
Wilbur Wright College (one of the City Colleges of Chicago), a public, two-year urban-based community college serving more than 20,000 credit, continuing ed, and adult ed students.

ABSTRACT
Wilbur Wright College submitted a case study to National Wildlife Federation (NWF) in 2003 documenting its recent natural landscaping and Earth Day activities. These activities were directed out of the Environmental Technology Program, an AAS curriculum devoted to training field and lab technicians for the hazardous waste management sector, although it has also attracted students and incumbent workers from a broader segment of the environmental, health, and safety industry. Because of the leadership of the academic and campus management at the school, in particular Wright President Charles Guengerich, the college has seen extensive growth in its march toward sustainability since that original report. The NWF’s Campus Ecology program has provided important resources, ideas, and context for these achievements, along with the many stakeholders and partners with whom we’ve coordinated in the past 6 years.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES
Goals
2003 marked a watershed for Wright College’s environmental and energy efficiency programs. Subsequent year goals included further expansion of existing programs, as well as development of new academic areas and, when resources are available, sustainable infrastructure improvements to the campus.

Accomplishments and Outcomes
With regard to the established areas mentioned in our 2003 report, a continuation and development of those projects has occurred annually:

- Wright now has 3 distinct native landscaped areas on campus, one of which is tended by students matriculating through the Environmental Biology 106 and 119 courses being offered;
- new native species of trees are planted each year on campus, which now has over 600 trees on the facilities grounds. In 2008, interns and biology staff began labeling the many species as a critical step towards achieving an arboretum;
- the Earth Day Celebration, managed by the student led Wright College Environmental Club, has grown to include local sustainable businesses, members of the community, poster sessions, technology demonstrations, web and video broadcasts, and registered attendance of between 500 and 1,000 individuals each year; and
- the original Environmental Technology curriculum has strengthened its educational focus in law and policy matters, while adding coursework in environmental geology and atmospheric sciences.

As impressive, however, is the college’s expansion into new areas of academic and infrastructure sustainability. President Guengerich has urged staff and provided resources to strive for the goal of
becoming the greenest of the City Colleges of Chicago and an archetype of urban sustainability within the State. These new projects and programs include:

- the creation of a six-course, 21-credit hour occupational certificate curriculum in Building Energy Technologies. This program is unique in its focus on energy efficiency concepts and techniques for employees in the building construction, operation, and assessment sectors, and has now graduated 21 students;
- the replacement of nearly 7,000 T-12 fluorescent bulbs with more energy efficient T-8 bulbs throughout the 5 buildings on campus;
- installation of both an 1.8 kW photovoltaic and a 380 gallon-per-day solar thermal systems on campus;
- a reduction of nearly 98% in cleaning and maintenance supplies with lower toxicity substitutes;
- the creation of an AAS degree program in Emergency Management, with tracks in Homeland Security, Incident Command, and Emergency Preparedness;
- partnerships in continuing ed workshops, symposia, and seminars in a variety of topics, including solar and wind energy, green building for contractors, construction waste handling, green roof installations, OSHA certifications green entrepreneurship, residential energy auditing, and green collar jobs programs;
- installation of a meteorological station with data tracking capabilities;
- in partnership with an urban employment network for worker training, the placement of an apiary on campus, which will generate both edible honey and wax for cosmetic products;
- establishment of a faculty and staff environmental task force, as an adjunct to the students’ Environmental Club; and,
- supplementing Wright’s existing recycling efforts, the addition of battery, cell phone, and print cartridge pick-up and recycling.

**ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

**Leaders and Supporters**

Many of these achievements have been made possible by personal individual efforts and partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders, because City Colleges of Chicago has had limited availability to discretionary financial resources during this period. However, a shared mission of becoming a model for sustainability has taken hold at Wilbur Wright College, from top management, through staff and faculty, to the student population, and has resulted in the planning, execution, and achievement of these project and program goals.

**Funding and Resources**

While Wright utilized some internal district resources and program revenues to sustain these goals, additional funding for many of these projects and programs had to be obtained from outside sources. These have included the State of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, as well as in-kind support by the Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and numerous partners with whom we’ve coordinated for both infrastructure and educational opportunities.

**Education and Community Outreach**

Many of the workshops, symposia, and seminars have been targeted towards either the local business or local residential communities.
National Wildlife Federation’s Campus Ecology Program
The NWF’s Campus Ecology program has provided important resources, ideas, and context for these achievements, along with the many stakeholders and partners with whom we’ve coordinated in the past 6 years.

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