

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# GreenRibbonSchools



## 2015 Green Ribbon Schools

### Iowa Honoree

### Postsecondary Sustainability Awardee

**Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa**

*A green wind turbine blowing through all campus activities*



[Kirkwood Community College](#), enrolling over 15,000 students, is a leader in sustainability initiatives for higher education. Most notably, its commercial scale wind turbine has become an icon of the college's approach to going green. The turbine provides an estimated 5.6 million kW/h of clean renewable electricity to campus, and serves as an educational tool to both Kirkwood students and the community. The school's energy production and distribution technologies program teaches students about

complex mechanical and electrical systems, including megawatt windmills, steam-driven turbines, and solar fields that turn sunlight into electricity. Students assemble, disassemble, and troubleshoot parts and systems of the 2.5-megawatt wind turbine, gaining valuable hands-on experience.

Kirkwood's energy policy originally was adopted in 2007. The policy addresses energy use and conservation in a variety of ways. Using indoor climate control, universal temperature presets are 68 degrees in the winter. A software-based system controls equipment and lighting, allowing the college to save energy during periods of high demand by shutting down HVAC for ten-minute intervals. New construction and renovations are designed and built to minimize energy use. Kirkwood currently has 710,000 square feet of geothermal systems, with an additional 100,000 under construction. These systems use the constant temperature of the earth to moderate building temperatures. The Hotel at Kirkwood, the nation's only luxury teaching hotel at a two-year college, makes use of an ice storage system that reduces energy usage when cooling.

In 2012, Kirkwood was recognized with the Iowa Governor's Environmental Excellence Award for overall achievement and given special recognition in waste reduction. Also in 2012, the Iowa Recycling Association presented Kirkwood with the Best School/Organizational Recycling Program award. Through its commingled recycling and other waste minimization programs, Kirkwood is committed to steadily improving its recycling rates, and has adopted a goal of achieving 75 percent landfill diversion by 2014. As a result, food scraps from the hotel, the culinary arts program, and the cafeteria are composted, and textbooks are collected to be shredded and recycled as products such as paper towels and napkins.

The college has reduced the use of salt to treat ice on campus by using snow brooms and organic compounds such as beet juice for walkway and stairway maintenance. In addition to the environmental benefits of minimizing salt use, mixing the organic compounds with the salt results in a material that is effective in much colder temperatures, and reduces the amount of material needed per unit area treated. Kirkwood has been awarded Green Cleaning Gold status, and is green cleaning certified.

Students studying agriculture learn herbicide, chemical management, and manure management. Sustainable construction science provides an understanding of building science theory and applications in residential and commercial construction. Soil conservation concepts are covered in applicable areas with Department of Agriculture materials. An entire class session in the Introduction to Ethics course is devoted to the concept of environmental ethics. Through Kirkwood's horticulture program, the college has developed berms and reestablished native prairies. Landscape construction and design courses address trends in sustainability and landscape maintenance. Diesel fuel systems courses teach students about emissions control and how the emissions-heavy industry is switching to new clean technology.

Some food produced onsite is used in dishes at the Class Act Restaurant at the hotel, in the culinary arts program, and in the cafeteria. The Michael J. Gould Recreation Center features three full-size basketball courts and a 200-meter walking and jogging track; all students, employees, and retirees are invited to use the center for free. A variety of fitness classes are offered daily to students and employees. Kirkwood provides a variety of counseling services including online screening, personal counseling, educational counseling, and career counseling. Kirkwood is a certified Blue Zone worksite, which is a program to enhance a person's life as well as the life of their community. Many residents living in Blue Zone areas share nine healthy lifestyle habits that help them live longer, healthier, happier lives.