

Iowa – FY2017 Green Ribbon School Honoree

College Sustainability Awardee

Iowa Lakes Community College, Estherville, Ia.

Powered by the force of the wind and an engaged community

Iowa Lakes Community College provides quality lifelong learning for students, staff, faculty, and community members within a five-county area. Learning in this school community is enhanced through resource efficiency and sustainability education efforts. Iowa Lakes incorporates sustainability education into numerous college programs, designs learning centers for maximum resource efficiency, and enhances each college campus with updated products that reduce environmental impact and improve health.

Iowa Lakes practiced green initiatives prior to 2006, but, in October 2011, the school's board adopted a Healthy School Program. Iowa Lakes was the first community college in the state to sign the American College and University President's Climate Commitment. The institution strives to align decision making with its commitment to the College Climate Action Plan, and aims to achieve climate neutrality with no net greenhouse gas emissions. Iowa Lakes has instituted many changes in order to achieve this goal, and continues to make changes and improve efficiency usage throughout each of its five campuses. For example, all new construction meets or exceeds LEED Silver standards. In addition, the college participates in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager and B3 Benchmarking.

The Sustainable Energy Resources and Technologies Center was constructed with geothermal renewable energy systems, controlled lighting and heating systems, 10 percent recycled content, and recyclable building materials. Iowa Lakes constructed a Vestas Wind turbine for training purposes, and sells all of the electricity from the turbine to the city of Estherville. Just short of \$130,000 worth of electricity is generated each year, which covers more than 70 percent of what is used in electricity in the educational buildings on the Estherville campus.

Equipment or technology is replaced with environmentally sustainable products and technology. Paperless communications are encouraged, and any copies printed are set to automatic dual-sided printing. Recycling bins are located on all five campuses for plastic, paper, and aluminum cans. Iowa Lakes hands out reusable cloth grocery bags and cloth backpacks at events, such



as the Clay County Fair, Career Day, and Student Orientation. End-of-year rummage sales provide the opportunity for students to purchase gently used items for their dormitories or other needs. Restrooms use automatic hand dryers rather than paper towels. Water fountains include water bottle filling stations, reducing plastic bottled water usage. Food service grease is recycled for biodiesel, and used oil from equipment is also recycled.

Iowa Lakes addresses faculty and staff wellness through health and wellness events, online financial awareness sessions, money toward fitness club memberships, paid family sick leave and personal sick leave upon hire, and annual health screenings. Wellness fairs are held tri-annually during mandatory employee in-service gatherings, and provide mini-sessions in health and wellness that cover a wide range of topics, including fitness, recreation, and office ergonomics.

Iowa Lakes provides faculty with a stipend toward a membership at a wellness facility that offers comprehensive cardiovascular and weight training equipment. Iowa Lakes Wellness Committee, in existence for over 25 years, continually works to promote wellness.

Students, faculty, and staff enjoy fresh vegetables, herbs, and fruits from the college garden. On average, the garden produces some 11,000 pounds of food yearly, much of which is eaten fresh or stored for later use. Iowa Lakes uses natural or green certified products when available during campus and housing cleaning. Mechanical or natural means are used for pest management. All paint, carpet, glues and other construction materials minimize air contaminants and help maintain healthy indoor air quality. Mold testing is done on a regular basis, and new HVAC systems are being put in place to enhance air quality. Fresh air exchangers or exhaust systems have been put in place to maintain a healthy learning environment.

Sustainability education is incorporated through numerous college programs: Construction Technology revolves around green building processes. Environmental Science and Water Quality and Sustainable Aquatic Resources address environmental stewardship through education on waterways, as well as units on preservation, restoration, and management of clean water systems and the technologies that store, distribute, treat, and restore water quality through waste water treatment. Engineering Technology coursework introduces students to the concept of using excess energy from equipment coming offline to route excess power to areas that can use it, rather than losing that energy as waste, illustrating that manufacturing processes have become energy harvesting processes. Wind Energy and Turbine Technology courses provide study in wind power generation, distribution, and operations and maintenance, using two college-owned wind turbines.

Students take interdisciplinary courses and general education courses incorporate sustainability as well. The Energy, Sustainability and the Environment course illustrates for environmental, electrical, and HVAC students how systems are linked together, from the environment to building efficiency. Chemistry labs perform micro-experiments, which use less chemical and create less hazardous waste.

The 66,000 square-foot garden serves as a living classroom, and provides a model for local garden projects throughout northwest Iowa to illustrate the process of growing, storing, processing, and preparing locally-grown foods within the five county region of the state. Community patrons, Head Start students, kindergarten through 12th-grade students, and college students benefit from the nutritional, social, and economic benefits of the garden. Garden success relies on volunteers and nonprofit partnerships throughout the area.

Iowa Lakes' green efforts even have gone global. In March 2015, the school sent nearly 100 cloth backpacks to Kitale, Kenya to replace the plastic sacks many students were using to carry books on their several-mile trek to and from school. Moreover, students are involved in maintaining the beauty of the five-county area by helping to assist in cleaning up area lakes, roadsides, and communities. In Clay County, Iowa Lakes soccer players have volunteered at the Spencer Transfer Station in an effort to improve the public's education on recyclables, including what can be recycled and how.