

Finalist's case study

Uxbridge College Best Newcomer E-Collegey at Uxbridge College

Section 1 About the project

Summary

To raise awareness across the College, engaging staff, students and partner organisations and implement environmentally sustainable solutions in every aspect of College life, from the Curriculum to the estate management. Our vision is that people should be able to learn about sustainability and have fun at the same time.

Project partners

Involvement from Students, Staff and Employer Partners, such as Chartwells. Funding for capital projects from the Skills Funding Agency.

Section 2 The results

The problem

The College has a responsibility to its community to ensure that we act in a sustainable manner, socially, economically and environmentally. The environmental aspect of this was mostly sidelined as not being a key aspect to our organisation. As such, although there had been attempts previously to showcase green issues through fair-trade fortnight and green week, these were not well attended events and had little impact.

There was a general lack of awareness and cooperation from staff and students. A number of unsustainable practices, mounting energy costs, and increasing volumes of waste to landfill were also a financial concern. With a requirement for increasing space through new builds and a growing recognition that the College was a large consumer of resources, the College felt it was time to put sustainability centre-stage.

The approach

The College started by forming a committee, chaired by the Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Services and requesting enthusiastic volunteers to join who have a genuine interest in sustainability, rather than coopting staff who were unwilling. The next step was to brand sustainability to ensure quick recognition by staff and students, which was done through a student competition, allowing quick publicity. The committee then set about reviewing a number of areas where changes could be made, including through estates, with staff and students and setting targets.



Profile

- General FE College, with 2 campuses in west London
- 8,000 students (includes full and part-time students, FE and HE)
- 500 staff
- Urban.

Finalist's case study

Our goals

Our goal is to raise the profile of sustainability issues so that it becomes integrated into all College activities and is not a sideline run by another committee. Our intention was to make the journey fun, engage as many people as possible and to make a real difference.

Obstacles and solutions

Staff engagement	Targeted communications with top tips, newsletters and events such as photography competition that appeals to many
Student engagement	Running events such as green travel days and having stands at freshers' fairs and healthy College week
Changing behaviours	Repeat messages and introduce concepts with training
Communication - staff not reading emails!	Target individuals in staff teams and spread messages by word of mouth. Keep repeating the message at every opportunity

Performance and results

The implementation of sustainable energy sources in the new builds, such as a ground source heat pump, biomass boiler and photovoltaic panels spurred on the estates side. This resulted in a much improved BMS and a commitment from senior managers, to implement a number of sustainable measures as part of the regular summer works. These included replacing inefficient boilers, installing waterless urinals, installing LED lights and light sensors, automatic PC switch off, installing thermostatic radiator valves and encouraging reporting of faults such as broken windows and dripping taps.

Next was the communication strand, which was critical to keep the message going. Newsletters were issued, along with monthly top tips for staff on subjects ranging from composting (which accompanied the issue of compost caddies for staff rooms), to energy saving ideas.

Engagement was the other main strand and consisted of events run by the committee or by third parties, designed to be fun, engaging and informative. Attractions at the stands included live compost worms, newspaper pencils, fair-trade chocolates and tee shirts, exercise and road bikes and cycling maps. A photography competition was run for staff and students, called Campus on Camera, and student involvement included designing recycling posters in different languages and working in a polytunnel to grow vegetables and plants.

The College gained ISO14001 early in 2014.
 Annual energy savings of approximately £20,000 from PC switch off.
 Annual savings of £6,800 from solar panels usage.
 Sustainability is now the 5th strategic aim of the College.

Finalist's case study

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

- Constant communication is key to keep the message.
- Staff have great ideas for engagement, if they can be persuaded to share them.
- Talk to other organisations to share good practice, and ideas.

Next steps

- The College is aiming to achieve ISO5001 (energy management) in the next year.
- Continuation of installation of LED lighting.
- Embed the car sharing scheme across campuses.
- Start detailed analytical work on energy usage to identify and iron out anomalies.
- An art installation from recycled materials is to be commissioned from a collaboration of Art and Engineering students, to celebrate the College's 50th anniversary.

Sharing our project

- Project shared internally, including with Governors.
- Externally through local press and social media.
- Elements are included in members report to the financial statements.

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

"Winning a Green Gown Award is important to Uxbridge College as it recognises our continuing commitment to providing a sustainable environment for our learners, staff and partners. As we continue to develop our sustainable practices the best newcomer award encourages and inspires us to do more."

Laraine Smith OBE, Principal and Chief Executive

Further information

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