

Keene State College, Keene, NH – Green Ribbon School (From the US Department of Education Highlights from the 2017 Honorees)

Cultivating stewards of place

The Keene State College story traces a strong, and deepening, commitment to environmental stewardship, sustainability, and health and wellness in all phases of campus life and the community. Through the years, the school's initial green efforts – well-intentioned, but less than systemic – have evolved into a comprehensive vision with strong buy-in from school leadership, faculty, and students.

In 2014-2015, using an inclusive civic engagement process endorsed and encouraged by college leadership, Keene State began assembling a framework to address every aspect of sustainability.

The college's mission statement articulates core values of environmental stewardship, sustainability, social justice, and equity. The strategic plan promotes student wellness and fosters a green culture through sustainability policies and practices that improve quality of life locally and globally. The campus master plan emphasizes improved natural resource management, energy efficiency, and high performance buildings. Related collegewide learning outcomes target civic engagement and well-being, and the school's academic and co-curricular plan identifies approaches to achieve the learning outcomes.

Efforts include vigorously improving energy management, stepping up efficiency measures, implementing more rigorous performance standards for new buildings, and exploring low-carbon and carbon-free ways to heat the campus. Keene State has conducted a baseline greenhouse gas inventory using the Clean Air/Cool Planet's Campus Carbon Calculator, and a baseline performance evaluation using the AASHE STARS assessment yielded a Silver rating.

Ongoing outreach efforts help to boost awareness in the broader community. For instance, the Office of Sustainability and the President's Council for a Sustainable Future recently launched the Green Keene initiative, for campuswide engagement and action on sustainability. The fall issue of the alumni magazine focused on sustainability, with an overview of current efforts. A recent video address by the college president underscored the school's sustainability priorities.

Key accomplishments from academic year 2015-2016 to the present day include the school's innovative, first-in-the-nation initiative to replace polluting heating oil with a carbon neutral, renewable biofuel made from 100 percent purified recycled vegetable oils. The replacement biofuel currently comprises 36 percent of the school's annual use.

The college's food waste education and composting programs support 30 percent diversion of waste with an award-winning EPA Food Recovery Challenge effort.

In other examples of its integrative approach, Keene State emphasizes organic landscaping using compost made from dining hall kitchen waste, to protect the local watershed, promote healthy ecosystems, and ensure that school grounds that are safe and chemical-free. Such efforts also engage students in hands-on projects and research, including conducting food waste audits to determine additional green opportunities, or participating in the school's award-winning biodiesel research project.

Another highlight is the college's new, state-of-the-art, high-performance building: a new residential living and learning center designed to comply with the Architecture 2030 standard of carbon-neutral/fossil free buildings by 2030. The school community also has established a socially and environmentally responsible investment option for the KSC Endowment Association.

The school's Center for Health and Wellness, counseling center, human resources, recreational sports, and dining services coordinate on-campus health efforts; additional partners include the Office of Sustainability, the physical plant, and academic affairs. Health promotion programs for students and staff, a FitBit Fanatics Loan Program, the KSC Moves Walking Program, Lunch & Learn Wellness Programming, one-on-one nutrition consultations, fee support for fitness center membership, wellness clinics – as well as counseling, psychological, and social services – all combine to promote the well-being of students, staff and faculty. Other community health initiatives range from a host of outdoor clubs and fitness programs, to a commitment to local and fair-traded food from over 80 farms and suppliers in New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts, which increase the sustainable and healthy food options in the dining facilities. Keene State is also an organizational champion in the innovative community wellness initiative, Healthy Monadnock 2020.

Academically, the school offers a liberal arts education that helps students to communicate effectively, identify connections between different branches of knowledge, and develop the wisdom to make a difference.

The Keene State model recognizes that students – and the workers, innovators, leaders and problem-solvers they will become – must employ critical thinking, creative inquiry, and intercultural competence in facing today's unprecedented challenges and opportunities. To develop solutions, they need strong interdisciplinary skills. This is especially true for environmental and sustainability education, which goes far beyond such familiar topics as energy efficiency, renewable fuels, and green buildings. In response, environmental and sustainability education at Keene State is not viewed as a

narrow discipline, but engages the whole curriculum, so students gain insights from the arts, humanities, health, and social sciences, in addition to the natural sciences.

Keene State's commitment to interdisciplinary approaches is reflected in its Integrative Studies Program. Every student is required to complete 40 credits within Integrative Studies, including a required course in quantitative literacy, one to three courses in natural and social sciences, and one class designated as interdisciplinary.

In addition to the Integrative Studies Program, Keene State offers four majors (environmental studies, geography, sustainable product design and innovation, and safety and occupational health applied sciences) that explore key relationships between environmental, energy, and human systems. Beyond these majors, some 35 percent of all academic classes address environmental or sustainability topics.

The Putnam Science Center houses biology, chemistry, physics, geology, and geography – as well as a rooftop greenhouse. The school's TDS Center, a LEED Platinum educational building, was purpose-built to support STEM education. Another point of pride is the Ecovation Hub Education Research and Training Consortium, which is a collaborative effort to develop a regional higher education center for green building and community development that fosters sustainability and resilience.

The college's location in the Monadnock Region, Ashuelot River watershed, and city of Keene offer abundant hands-on, field-based opportunities for learning STEM content, knowledge, and thinking skills through addressing real world issues. Community engagement efforts range from river cleanups, litter pickups, and landscape maintenance, as well as painting, cleaning, and other projects across town, to New Student Community Service Day, a team-building service opportunity for entering freshmen during orientation. In fact, Keene State College places a high value on cultivating civic knowledge, skills, and action through academic programs, community service, campus clubs, and participation in the American Democracy Project. As a result of its focus on civic engagement, Keene State is one of 240 colleges and universities awarded the prestigious Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. The goal of the American Democracy Project is to produce graduates who are committed to being active, involved citizens in their communities.

CURRICULUM



Keene State Environmental Science Students harvest local greens as part campus-wide community service initiative.



The Technology Design & Safety (TDS) building, Keene State's first LEED Platinum academic building, is powered using renewable energy, including rooftop solar panels, and is host to KSC's Safety, Architecture, and Sustainable Product Design departments.

PHYSICAL PLANT



ROCKS crew members collect tons of recyclable materials every week, from paper and co-mingled materials, to scrap metal and organic matter for composting.

WELLNESS



Keene State's dining commons annual fall Localvore Lunch featuring an entire menu of locally sourced foods.

WELLNESS cont.....



Keene State students choosing their Green Bikes to rent for free as a clean option for alternative transportation.