



Center for Sustainability

JCCC's Center for Sustainability and the Student Sustainability Committee offered the third annual Epicenter Conference, a student sustainability conference held on the JCCC campus in October 2013. Topics included sustainable fashion design, sustainable agriculture, the college's sustainable hospitality internship program, composting, biodiesel and student engagement.

The Center for Sustainability at JCCC also hosts national webinars for community colleges.

Faculty who incorporate sustainable concepts into existing courses and who create new courses teaching sustainability applications within given fields and disciplines are rewarded with small grants through the Sunflower Project. Notable efforts this year included new content in nursing, automotive technology, biology, communications and culinary arts.



The center coordinated along with JCCC's nutrition and service-learning programs a meal-packaging event with Stop Hunger Now that packed 10,000 meals for overseas delivery as well as raised \$600 for the campus food pantry. The center hosted two annual awareness weeks called Harvest Days and Earth Days with events that focus on food and other environmental issues.

In 2009, JCCC's students asked for the creation of a green fee that gathers more than \$350,000 a year for sustainability projects. Outstanding recent examples of the use of these dollars were upgrading the college's recycling system, LED lighting upgrades on campus, tree planting, student intern positions and the final round of solar personal device charging tables built by solar technology students. In addition, the fund made possible both a second trip to Las Pintas, Mexico, where JCCC students installed low-tech solar hot water heaters on the roofs of houses of poor families, and an experimental experiential honors education class held in Big Bend National Park in Texas.





Galileo's Pavilion, a classroom building that opened on the JCCC campus in 2012, earned a LEED platinum certificate in 2013. LEED, which stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is a nationally recognized green building certification program that rates buildings based on their energy-saving and environmentally friendly construction. The top rating is platinum, which requires 80 or more points; Galileo's Pavilion received 85 points and is one of only 10 buildings in Kansas to achieve that rating. Galileo's Pavilion was constructed during spring semester 2011 by students from Studio 804, a design/build program at the University of Kansas School of Architecture, Design and Planning. In addition, JCCC's new Hospitality and Culinary Academy building earned a LEED silver rating, to join Galileo's Pavilion and the Olathe Health Education Center (LEED gold) in the college's green building portfolio.

In 2013–2014, revenue from the college's single-stream recycling system on campus topped the cumulative \$100,000 mark for student scholarships since the program's origins in 1994, with much of that coming since the conversion to single stream in 2010. JCCC's composting system has diverted close to 110 tons of organic waste from the landfill since June 2011. Waste diversion rates rose from 14 percent in 2010 to 45 percent in 2013. The recycling rate increased to 38 percent from 2011 to 2013, and overall trash weight decreased 37 percent during the same period. Overall, the college's waste minimization program has led to a \$26,000 decrease in trash disposal costs from 2011 to 2013.

Aggressive energy efficiency retrofits and conservation efforts through JCCC's Power Switch program have led to more than \$1,100,000 in avoided energy costs since 2008.



All from plastic bags: Alumna Donna Sanders

Most people bring back souvenirs from their travels. Donna Sanders brought home a business plan.

Her vision to run her own company appeared to her when Sanders was studying at JCCC's sister school, Northwestern Polytechnic University in Xian, China.

As one of 10 students who received full-ride scholarships to attend one semester at the university, Sanders originally had planned to do what most exchange students do: learn the language, soak up the culture and make new friends.

Sanders soon found a new aspiration: start a business that produces and sells bags, mats and wall hangings made from recycled plastic bags.

"So much plastic in the world is not recycled," Sanders said. In fact, the Earth Institute at Columbia University estimates that Americans use 33.6 trillion tons of plastic each year, but only 6.5 percent of it is recycled.

Sanders, who earned her associate's degree in energy performance and resource management from JCCC, always wanted to run an Earth-friendly business. She passed the certified energy auditor exam offered by the Association of Energy Engineers, and she started her own energy auditing business in Kansas City. The idea of creating items from recycled products seemed a logical extension.

"I've always been interested in the environment, and I always am looking for ways to improve the planet, which is why I got my certificate in the first place," she said.

Sanders was a member of the Student Sustainability Committee and the Student Environmental Alliance, and her honors project was an audit of areas where energy-saving measures had been installed at JCCC. She compared the projected savings to the actual savings and made suggestions to the Center for Sustainability for possible improvements.

Sanders expects to enroll in the London School of Business in January 2015. Until then, she is working with people she met in China to understand the resources available to her there, and she's researching the plastics industry.

"I think the products could be beautiful, so beautiful people will ask, 'That's made from plastic bags?'" she said. "Our goal is to help clean the Earth."