

Center for Sustainability

Student and community engagement

The staff of JCCC's Center for Sustainability conducted 33 tours of the college's sustainable features, as well as supported 34 presentations from students and student groups concerning increased knowledge of and support for sustainability on campus. In the classroom, the center supported sustainability enrichment in more than 120 unique course sections in 17 disciplines.

In August 2014, in conjunction with the JCCC Foundation, the center hosted the annual Harvest Dinner featuring Alex Pope from Local Pig and Lindsay Larricks from Little Freshie. With support in donations from a dozen local chefs, restaurateurs and business owners, the event served 120 donors, with proceeds going to sustainable agriculture scholarships.

In May 2015, JCCC student researchers, the "Eco-Reps," were selected for travel to St. Petersburg, Russia, on a U.S. State Department grant administered by the University of Kansas. Kait Bridges, Megan Gladbach, Emily Reno and Kendyl McDougald were the only community college team chosen nationally. Their project, an evaluation of student understanding of and engagement with sustainable features of campus begun in November 2014, was directed by staff from the Center for Sustainability. In addition to the surveys and interviews to assess understanding of sustainability, the project also produced a map and guide for the community that will be distributed in new student and employee orientations. JCCC also hosted 12 students from St. Petersburg, Moscow and Omsk, Russia, as part of the Eco-Rep exchange program.

The Student Environmental Alliance club, leaders, events and adviser (Kristy Howell) were nominated for six JCCC Clubbie awards, winning "Event of the Year" for Earth Days.

JCCC's Center for Sustainability and the Student Sustainability Committee also offered the fourth annual Epicenter Conference, a student sustainability workshop held on the JCCC campus in April 2015 focusing on greening the culinary industry, that was attended by 150 high school and college students.

Recycling and composting

In 2014–2015, revenue from the college's single-stream recycling system on campus topped the cumulative \$125,000 mark for student scholarships earned since the program's origins in 1994. Much of the revenue comes from ever-increasing amounts and types of materials being recycled at JCCC, along with vendor changes that increased revenues. JCCC's composting system has diverted close to 150 tons of organic waste from the landfill since June 2011. The recycling rate (recycling and compost) increased to 41 percent from 2011 to 2014, and overall trash weight decreased 37 percent during the same period. Overall waste diversion rates rose from 14 percent in 2010 to 45 percent in 2015, and the college's waste minimization program has led to a \$26,000 annual decrease in trash disposal costs from 2011 to 2014. Student interns assist the center's recycling and composting efforts, gaining valuable experience about these processes.

JCCC's Power Switch program

Aggressive energy efficiency retrofits and conservation efforts led to more than \$1.2 million in avoided energy costs from 2008 to 2014. This year, JCCC revamped energy conservation efforts through its Power Switch program, which included improved building scheduling, temperature setpoint changes and LED lighting retrofits. These efforts resulted in a 12-percent reduction in energy usage and \$300,000 in additional avoided utility costs for the 2014–2015 fiscal year.

JCCC's Open Petal Farm

The Open Petal Farm, the 2.5-acre farm run by JCCC's Center for Sustainability, had a successful start to the 2015 growing season. The farm manager, Claire Zimmermann, worked closely with students and interns to develop a no-till vegetable producing system. No-till farming is an important practice that uses green cover crops and special equipment to maintain and improve healthy soil structure. The year 2015 is the International Year of Soils, and Open Petal Farm's goals were to sustain a healthy ecology both above and below the ground. In the first year, the no-till management system showed great potential for weed control, increasing the organic matter and nutrient availability in the soils and providing habitat for beneficial insects and soil microbes.

Student involvement at the farm in 2015 continued to grow as interest in sustainable farming increases both in rural and metro regions; students receive training in agricultural practices that support healthy soils and communities. Most of the work on the farm is completed by students in the sustainable agriculture practicum course, which provides valuable lectures in farming know-how and gives students the opportunity to implement the sustainable and organic techniques they have learned. Students operated the farming equipment, handled and processed harvests and, in the spring, set up a market that ran alongside the hospitality management program's pastry sale. In the summer and fall months, the farm produced an abundant harvest of tomatoes, peppers, sweet corn, onions, garlic, melons, potatoes, berries and other crops.

