

INSTITUTION PROFILE

FE and HE Land-based and Sports College
4000 FTE students,
602 FTE staff
100+ buildings on 6 sites
700 residential places

TITLE:

Student Engagement at Myerscough College Waste Directive

DATE:

May 2010



SUMMARY

A focus on energy and water linked to student engagement has led to a series of changes at Myerscough College and proved how important the student community can be when addressing sustainability.

EAUC COMMENT

Myerscough College has an on-going commitment to improving its sustainability credentials and has focused its attentions on how to engage with students in a meaningful way by getting them involved in "real projects" as part of their learning. The EAUC commends the energy and water savings made by the college and is encouraged to learn that their learners are important in bringing about those savings and are understanding the benef

PROJECT PARTNERS

Responsive College Unit

THE PROBLEM

Myerscough College has been working to address sustainability since 2007 and has always strived to include students in its activities.

The college wanted to increase the involvement of students in its sustainability activities. It was important that students felt engaged in the college's sustainability activities as their behaviour contributes to the impact.

A significant driving force for this initiative is emphasised in the LSC publication, 'From Here to Sustainability'; one of the milestones established was that, by 2010, colleges 'will embed Sustainable Development skills in education and training programmes so that all learners are able to acquire these skills'

Although environmental education is embedded within some of the current curricula, lecturers at Myerscough still encountered resistance from students and often met with limited success. Most students felt that there needed to be more done to tackle climate change and live more sustainably, however very few of them actively put in place any methods to reduce their energy consumption.

The college works by the mantra, "I will if you will," and demonstrates its commitment to sustainability by its actions, knowing this is the best way to get its learners to follow suit. Staff from every learning area of college are encouraged to embed the principles of sustainability within their lessons in order to promote student participation and interest of the subject. The fact that sustainability is built into Myerscough's curriculum allows students to learn about the ways to reduce energy usage and suggests ways that they can change their own behaviour in a way that is relevant and applicable to their course.



THE APPROACH

Throughout 2008 and 2009 the college's Head of Sustainability and Special Projects looked for trial projects which students could get involved with. The college already had a sustainability advisory group on which the Student President sits but wanted to get all of its students involved.

In 2008 students on Sportsturf courses were involved in recording the college's water consumption, gathering information as part of their studies and making suggestions about how best to make savings. The college recognised that this combination of a practical project linked to a course really enthused the students, so looked for other opportunities.

In 2009 the college ran an Awareness Week. Students studying for National Diplomas in Fisheries Management and Habitat Conservation conducted a secret audit of 100 rooms around the campus before and after the awareness week to measure its effect upon electricity consumption across college. The students then took the initiative to expand this further and also noted down which teaching rooms had monitors or computers left on whilst not being used.

The college believes that the students were far more motivated than usual as they were allowed to help design the survey and take responsibility to measure the impacts upon the energy savings week instead of just being given a list of figures showing the savings. Many of the college's FE students are practical in nature and learn best by doing, so it seemed natural to include practical activities such as this to enhance student learning.

Analysis of the results from the two surveys was undertaken by the students, all participants that undertook the trial recognised that small changes in behaviour, such as switching the light off when leaving a room, do add up and make a big difference.

The college also routinely involves students in monitoring the college's performance, carrying out an annual student survey. A specific question is included which asks students whether they feel sustainability is integrated into their courses. The college is keen that sustainability is truly embedded, rather than being seen as a bolt-on element and the survey gives valuable information about students' perceptions of this.

To encourage students' involvement in the college's sustainability work it uses the twice-yearly meetings with course representatives. Sustainability has been a standing item on the agenda for these meetings since September 2009. To prove the college is serious about their input the Head of Sustainability attends these meetings.

OUR GOALS

- To reduce the college's environmental impact through a partnership between staff and students
- To enthuse students about sustainability by integrating it into their curriculum
- To give students real opportunities to be engaged in sustainability and the confidence to know they can suggest projects or changes and these will be considered

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

- How to make sure students felt involved with sustainability initiatives, rather than having them forced upon them
- Gauging the impact on students of changes to the curriculum and understanding what impact this has had on them
- Insufficient student involvement in the implementation of sustainability initiatives
- Create opportunities for students to work on 'real life' projects as part of their studies and share in the successes
- Include questions about perception of sustainability and the curriculum in the annual student survey
- Expansion of Student President's role to include sustainability. Presence of Head of Sustainability and Special Projects at course rep meetings as catalyst to engage students

- Lack of understanding of sustainability
- Capacity building for staff in order to engage students

PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

In the first three months of focusing on water the college reduced consumption by 25 per cent. In the first 11 months the college had saved 2500m³ of water. And the college expects to save £30,000 over the full three years of the water-saving scheme.

Jane Allott has submitted a successful research bid for £10,000 from the Responsive College Unit to engage 42 students and their families in an electricity saving project in their homes.

The results of the energy survey conducted by students showed that there was a reduction in lights left on around the college from 23% to 11 % (which is a reduction of approx. 50 per cent) immediately following energy savings week. On a larger scale environmental savings of 259kg of CO₂ were made during the week itself.

The results of the student survey showed that in 2009 75 per cent of students who responded agreed that the college is effective in making them more aware of environment and sustainability issues. This rose to 83 per cent in 2010. The results have been analysed at a learning area level and Learning Area Managers are encouraged to integrate the data into their self assessment reports (SARs) as evidence of good practice or points for improvement.

Feedback from students has resulted in some significant changes at the college, from changes to the positioning of recycling facilities in halls of residence to the development of a project to study compost heaps. While the college is pleased its students are getting involved in the subject, the vast majority of suggestions are based on recycling. The college wants to expand this to include the more important reduce and reuse aspects of the 3 Rs which are needed in order to minimise the environmental impact of the college. Myerscough is seeking to develop all aspects of sustainability and is tackling this with changes to the curriculum to further integrate the subject.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The importance of sustainable actions carried out by the college estate as a vehicle for engaging with students e.g. the introduction of recycling infrastructure can turn complaints made by students into a strength recognised by them
- Staff must be trained to develop the confidence and competence to 'have a go' at embedding sustainability within their modules – this takes time
- Volunteer sustainability champions should be encouraged to lead developments within their individual Learning Areas
- Good practice case studies should be developed and promoted to encourage wider uptake and maintain impetus

FURTHER INFORMATION

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Myerscough College www.myerscough.ac.uk

Responsive College Unit – www.rcu.co.uk



The Environmental and Sustainability Champion within Further and Higher Education in the United Kingdom.

The EAUC provides training, advice and support to our members as well as providing a forum for best practice in the sector.

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