

TITLE:

## Savings and sustainability at Warwickshire College



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### SUMMARY

Taking a strategic approach to sustainability has enabled Warwickshire College to shift its culture, reduce its environmental impact and make financial savings.

Staff, students and the local community are involved in a group which guides the college's actions on sustainability, meaning all stakeholders have a voice.

Sustainability has been integrated into the college's diverse curriculum and made relevant to all learners through a series of bespoke exercises rather than a stand-alone module.

### INSTITUTION PROFILE

Further Education College  
2,000 staff  
25,000 students  
6 sites

### EAUC COMMENT

Warwickshire College demonstrates their on-going commitment to sustainability across their six sites and the challenges faced when co-coordinating a cultural, educational and strategic paradigm shift in a large organisation. This study gives an insight into how embedding sustainability at a strategic level is vital if an institution wants to embed sustainability in every aspect of its working and learning experience.

## THE PROBLEM

In 2004 Warwickshire College realised it needed to address sustainability across the institution. The college's ethos is to live up to its responsibilities not just through policies and strategies, but through action.

With six campuses spanning two counties and a curriculum covering 23 subject sectors, the college realised that any action it took had to be coordinated and carefully considered in order to really make a difference. The college management team wanted to put sustainability at the core of what it does.

## THE APPROACH

The college recognised the importance, not only of its impact on its students, but also of its impact on the wider community. A Sustainability Group was formed with representatives of staff, students and from the local community. The members of this group are the drivers and the champions of everything the college does on sustainability. To demonstrate its commitment to the issue, the college appointed a vice principal, two directors and two governors to the group, which reports directly to the Senior Management Team.

Warwickshire College has three core values:-

- Put learners first
- Deliver quality in all that it does
- Promote a fair, open and respectful culture

The Sustainability Group was asked to come up with a sustainability policy which embraced these values and which also identified behaviours which could influence change.

The group sought the help of students, staff and stakeholders to review the policy and help to create an action plan with four themes:

- Exposing learners to sustainability by embedding sustainability into the college curriculum
- Making sustainability key in management decisions



- Improving environmental performance and developing resource efficiency
- Working with wider communities to help secure our sustainable futures

The ultimate aim was to embed sustainability in the college's culture. The action plan covered the curriculum as well as the business of running the college and included actions such as making duplex printing the default setting, a revision of the college's waste strategy and the installation of wood chip boilers to reduce the college's reliance on fossil fuels.

## OUR GOALS

- Proactively contribute to sustainable development through the management of our resources and helping the communities we serve to be more sustainable
- Expose learners to opportunities to learn about sustainable development and empowering them to make a difference
- Create a culture at the college which promotes economic growth and a healthy environment, and work to minimise the college's environmental footprint
- Incorporate sustainable principles in the design and running of college buildings
- Further reduce waste at all college centres, reduce energy consumption and conserve water to minimise our carbon emissions
- Develop a successful Power Industry Academy – a training forum on green technologies - as part of the new Rugby development

## OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

### Obstacles

- Raising internal awareness to support cultural change was, and still is, a major barrier
- It is difficult to make sustainability meaningful to learners studying a diverse range of subjects
- Balancing the aim of incorporating sustainable principles in the design and running of buildings with capital investment opportunities during a recession has proved challenging
- Sustainably managing a diverse college estate with varying ages of buildings
- Integrating sustainable procurement in support services and infrastructures can be difficult to achieve while balancing equality and diversity

### Solutions

- Embedding sustainability in the college's core values - students, staff and stakeholders are clear that they have a responsibility to help ensure sustainability underpins all that the college does.
- Sustainability is a high profile aspiration of the college and is clearly identified in its 'Values, Aspirations and Directions' document which is freely available. These aspirations are highlighted on the college's website and in publicity material
- Instead of delivering a stand-alone module on sustainability the college has reviewed its curriculum across 23 subject sectors and identified ways of integrating sustainability into it. Examples of existing good practice are also being used as case studies to help encourage others
- Capital building projects are difficult to get right with increased pressure from Government agendas and a diminishing reservoir of funds. Warwickshire College prioritised technologies that have environmental and financial benefits. Payback times are carefully considered to ensure projects are viable. The college has also sought external funding to complement its own investment
- Maintenance and upgrades are assessed and reviewed with payback times and environmental benefits prioritised. Careful consideration is given to the on-going management of older buildings in order to minimise the environmental costs
- Sustainability is a core value of the college and this has empowered staff to consider sustainability in decision-making. Staff responsible for procurement have been trained and have a forum to support the decisions made based on sustainable solutions. This means that decisions are made with sustainable benefits factored in, rather than purely on cost benefits. These behaviours form part of the underpinning behaviours of the college's core values

## PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

Warwickshire College's approach shows how having clear behaviours, policies and procedures enables everyone in the college community to recognise how they can contribute towards a sustainable future. The college policy for sustainability is a balance between curriculum, estates and social responsibility from which there are tangible examples of success providing environmental, social, economic and other benefits for the college and the community.

- Increased exposure of learners to sustainability through the curriculum, enrichment and citizenship programmes has embedded sustainability in the college culture
- Sustainability is embraced at a strategic level as a key factor in decision-making. This has helped demonstrate the college's commitment and ensured that sustainability is embedded into the culture of the institution, encouraging change right across the college community
- A reduction in energy and resource use has made financial savings as well as environmental ones. Paper use reduced by 20% from April 2008 to April 2009, saving £11,000 in eight months
- The college's new waste management system has been coordinated centrally and has reduced waste and improved recycling, saving £6,000 in six months
- Carbon emissions have decreased by 855 tonnes each year following the college's installation of renewable energy boilers and solar thermal panels on new buildings. The pay-back of installation costs of the wood chip boiler creates savings of £66,764 each year with a pay back of just over three years
- Sustainable drainage has saved 480m<sup>3</sup> in 12 months at the college's land-based centre in Pershore
- Energy monitoring has shown that energy use per FTE student fell by 20% in 06/07 compared to 05/06
- Successful partnerships have been forged, both with the local county council through the SmartLIFE project, and with companies which are developing and marketing green technologies, through the Power Industry Academy.

## LESSONS LEARNT

True sustainability is a long-term commitment. While there may be some short-term wins, true change is only embedded over a longer period of time. However, the benefits to the college and wider community make the commitment worthwhile.

Achieving cultural change takes a long time and needs sustained enthusiasm and support from senior management. It also needs investment, which is always difficult in this economic climate. With hindsight, staff at Warwickshire College wonder whether a more radical approach earlier on would have yielded faster results.

Leading such a culture shift in a large college is difficult, but at Warwickshire progress is being made through recognising and celebrating the college's achievements. This has changed the college's culture in a positive way.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

[http://www.warkscol.ac.uk/about\\_us/sustainability/index.htm](http://www.warkscol.ac.uk/about_us/sustainability/index.htm)

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