

TITLE:

## Securing Sustainability at Worcester College of Technology

DATE:

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INSTITUTION PROFILE

FE  
8900 FTE students  
790 staff  
Urban  
12 buildings on 3 sites

### SUMMARY

Worcester College of Technology was the first FE college in the UK to employ a sustainability officer in 2001 and has since continued its work to bring environmental issues to the attention of staff, students and the general public.

It was the first FE College in the Midlands to achieve official Fairtrade status as early as 2004.

The college's environmental group is made of volunteers spanning Estates, Executive, Corporation, IT Support, Student Support, Purchasing and Study Centre Assistants.

### EAUC COMMENT

This is an excellent example of a college integrating sustainability into the curriculum and engaging its students to make them more environmentally aware.

### THE PROBLEM

Worcester College of Technology had a thriving and active environmental group led by the college's environmental officer. When this person left, the group became dormant until two people from the Business/Academic team and Student Support decided that environmental issues should still feature on the college's agenda. The challenge was to resurrect and reinvigorate the group so it could return to influencing college policy and, ultimately, help reduce the college's environmental impacts.

### THE APPROACH

A 'slowly but surely' approach was adopted by the two key players responsible for restarting the group. Other interested members of staff quickly joined them and they soon felt strong enough to approach the college principal, Chris Morecroft, for endorsement.

This top-level support was crucial in securing the membership of senior staff on the group, giving it more influence and direct contact with decision-makers. This helped the group to ensure the ideas and policies they were creating would get the support needed to implement them. Their aim was to re-engage the college in considering and dealing with its environmental impacts.

The college's vice principal and estates manager currently sit on the group. However, the final piece of the jigsaw was it to join the college's existing Quality Management Team, ensuring that all projects are minuted, regulated and reported.

The group devised a number of initiatives based on using recycled products and saving energy, including introducing a Shutdown Routine, which instructs staff to follow a daily routine of switching off all non-essential electrical items before leaving a room. In order to set an example the group persuaded the college to invest in new super-efficient boilers, low-energy lighting and new printers to print double-sided as standard.

### OUR GOALS

- To educate the students on sustainable development and how the way they lead their lives impacts on the world and others
- To reduce waste – including energy – and increase recycling
- Helping people make small but lasting changes such as switching off equipment, walking, cycling and using the car less
- Focus on the role that Fairtrade plays in improving people's quality of life
- To be a beacon for other FE colleges, universities and schools by setting the standard and leading by example

## OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

### Obstacles

- Getting recognition for the group
- Proving the value of the group
- Keeping people interested and involved
- Overcoming previous obstacles
- Embedding a new attitude across the college

### Solutions

- Build staff and student awareness through a series of events and promotions such as World Environment Day and Fairtrade Fortnight
- Monitoring initiatives, such as the Shutdown Routine, provide valuable information about the impact the group can have, both in environmental and monetary terms
- Lesson plans make it easy for staff to include sustainability in their classes. Regular promotions and events – such as a Fairtrade football match – help maintain enthusiasm
- Easy wins, such as putting recycling schemes in place and installing new bicycle racks to encourage more people to leave their cars at home, were delivered quickly to build confidence in the new group. Old problems were then tackled to show the group could make a difference
- Regular communication with staff and students keeps sustainability in their consciousness. The college uses emails with reminders to recycle and turn off equipment when not in use, questionnaires and sustainability working groups on Staff Development Day

## PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS

The college now uses only recycled paper in all of its printers. New printers that allow print jobs to be cancelled if not needed, combined with doubled-sided printing and limited credit given to users, will further reduce paper usage.

In the first two weeks of the campaign on energy usage - the Shutdown Routine – there was a drop of 2% in electricity use. A recent scheme to replace all of the college's lighting with low energy bulbs has cost around £150,000, using money obtained from a grant given through Salix by the LSC (see link below). The payback period is estimated at only 2.9 years and after this the energy used for lighting should be reduced by 40%.

More energy will be saved through an innovative device fitted to the college's gas boilers which frees the molecules which collect in pipes to the boiler, making it burn much more efficiently. This enables the gas flow to be turned down and gives an improvement in the efficiency of the boiler, giving the college another saving.

## LESSONS LEARNT

- Never give up – persistence and patience are vital when pursuing projects
- Senior support is crucial – it helps get projects up and running, speeds up the process, and provides important feedback. It also gives the group some involvement with decision-making within the institution, which can be vital for making significant changes
- Enthusiastic members keep the group alive – they need to be regularly recruited from the student body to ensure the group stays active and isn't seen to be imposed on the students

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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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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