



Eastern Connecticut State University

NEWS

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For Immediate Release

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Eastern Awarded Gold Innovation Prize from CQIA

Willimantic, CT—Eastern Connecticut State University was recently awarded a Gold Innovation Prize from the Connecticut Quality Improvement (CQIA) partnership for its efforts to promote environmentally friendly campuses at Eastern and elsewhere.

For consideration in this year’s competition, Eastern submitted the pamphlet “The Greening of Eastern.” Developed by the University’s Institute for Sustainable Energy (ISE), it outlines the process the University is taking to promote eco-conservation across college campuses. Of all the award recipients, Eastern was the only institution of higher education to receive a Gold Innovation Prize.

The competition, now in its 19th year, began in 1987 using criteria from the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for Performance Excellence. Founders of the CQIA partnership hoped that developing the award would advance innovative programs that improve quality, performance excellence and marketplace competitiveness around the state. It wasn’t until 1995 that education and other non-profit groups like Eastern could participate. A unique aspect of this award is that it has never received funding from either the state or federal governments. Support for the awards program comes directly

from application fees, corporate sponsorship and conference admission. “It is inspiring to see the continuing number of organizations driven by innovation and performance excellence,” says Sheila Carmine, director and founder of the CQIA partnership.

Thanks to a team of several individuals at Eastern, the “greening” has already begun. Energy use has been reduced across campus by issuing hybrid vehicles managing gasoline use and reducing green house gas emissions. Facilities management and capital projects work has led to the installation of solar panels at several bus stops and recycling centers on campus. The solar panels fuel lamps that use less electricity and have a life of 50,000 hours.

One of the biggest advancements thus far is that the South Residential Village residence halls as well as the new science building under construction are both Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified. The LEED buildings are made of environmentally friendly materials and conserve water while using 30 percent less energy than code-built residence halls. William Leahy, director for operations for the ISE, noted that although great strides have been made at Eastern, the University’s aim is much higher. “We have also completed energy and environmental impact studies for both Southern Connecticut State University and Western Connecticut State University, and will be working with students at Central Connecticut State University this fall on their study. We are also participating in workshops and meeting 90 universities throughout the northeast and eastern Canada to set new standards for sustainability on campuses.” Also, Professor Fred Loxsom, endowed chair for sustainable energies studies, has developed a minor in Sustainable Energy Studies so that studies wishing to further their knowledge in the field may do so.

Eastern is also the recipient of two CQIA silver awards; the first is for the way Eastern has reformed its liberal arts curriculum. By redesigning the process in which the faculty votes on curriculum approval, the length of time it took to gain approval was reduced drastically. Furthermore the faculty was engaged to a greater degree through the process, improving the overall quality of the liberal arts program.

The other award was given to honor a program that recovers funds for unpaid accounts at Eastern. Associate Vice President for Finance and Administration John Sweeny researched state statutes to discover that funds could be taken from a person's tax refund to settle unpaid debts. Within its first two months of the program's operation, Eastern has received close to \$40,000 from debtors. Prior to this, the intercepting of tax refunds has never been done for college debts and will now be a mainstay in the University's collection activities.

An award ceremony will be held during the CQIA annual conference, being held on Oct. 20, at the Water's Edge Resort in Westbrook from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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Eastern Connecticut State University is part of the Connecticut State University (CSU) system and is the state's public liberal arts university. ECSU serves more than 5,000 students each year on its Willimantic campus.