



College of Arts & Sciences

News Archive

Students win Fairfield University grants for rainwater-harvesting system, worm composter, green dryer installation

(Posted on December 13, 2012) A rainwater-harvesting system, a worm-inhabited composter for food scraps, and eco-friendly hand dryers are the three student-designed projects that have been awarded grants this year by Fairfield University's Campus Sustainability Committee (CSC).

"We are supporting these undergraduate projects that will make our campus even more green," said CSC member James Fitzpatrick, assistant vice president of student affairs and administration at Fairfield. "This move by the committee supports efforts by the University to further reduce the campus carbon footprint."

Six students were awarded grants ranging from \$500 to \$1,500 to implement their cost-effective ideas on campus this academic year; they're also part research project.



Mechanical Engineering majors Joseph Bocchino, of Mills, Massachusetts, Andrew Jackowitz, of Moosic, Penn., and John Perry, of Farmington, Connecticut, have devised a rainwater run-off system for the Barone Campus Center (BCC) roof projected to capture about 41,000 gallons of water annually to be used to water lawns and shrubs. "This rainwater harvesting system will be a cost saver and cut back on the University's water intake from the town," said Bocchino.

The seniors have already met with the Facilities Management Division about collecting rain in existing pipes near the patio alongside the BCC food court and roof, all leading to a new water storage tank. They are developing the project as part of a School of Engineering senior design course taught by faculty member Dr. Shahrokh Etemad, with Dr. Shanon Reckinger serving as faculty advisor.

Sophomores Julian Myer-Smith and Kimberly O'Toole, of Pearl River, New York, proposed a plan to purchase a small-scale, worm composting bin to be filled with discarded food from the dining hall. To be located in the campus community garden, the composter will produce nutrient rich soil to be used there, and at the same time cut down on waste disposal fees by using thrown away food in a sustainable manner. "It has environmental, social and economic parts," said Myer-Smith, who envisions the composter playing a part in a student-run educational program connecting the garden to courses. Added O'Toole, an International Studies major, Environmental Studies minor, "It shows the potential for a larger scale composting project on campus."

Spencer Higgins, of Sherman Oaks, California, proposed the installation of 'XLerators,' energy saving, paper towel-less hand dryers. In a pilot project, several of the hygiene-promoting, LEED approved machines will be put in campus restrooms. "Fairfield University will cut its waste of paper and save money by doing so," said Higgins, who like the composting students will have as his advisor Dr. Scott Lacy, associate professor of sociology and anthropology.

A major goal of awarding the CSC grants is to create a community that is respectful of the wonders of nature and the beauty of campus and the world.

Image - Back row: Spencer Higgins, Kimberly O'Toole, Julian Myer-Smith, Andrew Jackowitz, John Perry, and Dr. Shanon Reckinger. Front row: Dr. Scott Lacy, Dr. Shahrokh Etemad and Joseph Bocchino.

Media Contact: Meg McCaffrey, (203) 254-4000, ext. 2726, mmccaffrey@mail.fairfield.edu

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