

News

University Sustainability Project Lands \$50,000 Grant

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The recently established Sugar Bush Foundation has provided \$50,000 to aid in the implementation of a new initiative designed to reduce energy costs and usage in residential properties serving Ohio University students, according to a Jan. 8 press release.

The Green House Project, developed and supported by the Ohio University Office of Sustainability and the Corporation for Ohio Appalachian Development, will provide for energy-efficiency audits of off-campus housing units and the dissemination of information, recommendations and financial support to students and landlords interested in making related improvements.

Community outreach and education are key goals of the project, but economic and eco-friendly benefits are among anticipated outcomes, according to Ohio University Sustainability Coordinator Sonia Marcus. Work on the project is under way, and the first public information sessions for students and landlords will take place in the spring quarter.

"We project that participating units will generate an annual savings of up to \$621 per house, the equivalent of approximately 6.9 tons of greenhouse gas emissions avoided per house per year," Marcus said.

The Green House Project will serve a number of related goals, including offsetting Ohio University's carbon footprint as mandated by the Presidents Climate Commitment and reducing Athens' greenhouse gas emissions as directed by the Cool Cities Initiative. It also seeks to heighten awareness among Ohio University students and their landlords of the relationship between energy use, utility costs and climate change.

Participating units will benefit from:

- Whole-house audits performed to evaluate energy leaks, the efficiency of appliances and residents' patterns of energy usage.
- Peer-to-peer education on topics such as how to cut utility bills, the connection between energy use and climate change, and what to look for when choosing a rental in Athens.
- Distribution of compact fluorescent light bulbs and high-efficiency showerheads to students free of charge.
- Receipt of a report detailing the results of each audit, which will be accompanied by a list of recommended actions (such as addition or replacement of insulation, replacement of furnace, application of weather stripping) to improve the overall efficiency of the rental and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

This marks the first grant awarded by the Sugar Bush Foundation, a private family foundation whose mission is to "work with Ohio University and our communities to improve the quality of life in Appalachian Ohio by fostering sustainable development."