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Grant signals green light for green cause Funding enables expansion of Kanawha Project

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By Monica Chapman

The greening of the curriculum on campus received another green light with recent news of an Ohio Environmental Education Fund grant for \$49,500. The grant from the Ohio EPA will fuel Ohio University's Kanawha Environmental Education Project (KEEP) for the next two academic years.

With the funding, KEEP will expand [a pilot project](#) intended to integrate concepts of environmental sustainability into Ohio University's curriculum and address the growing need for environmental literacy among college undergraduates. Named for the Kanawha physiographic region in which Ohio University's Athens campus lies, the pilot has been under way and successful on the Athens campus this academic year.

Michele Morrone, director of the Environmental Studies Program and an associate professor of environmental health, developed the idea with inspiration from Emory University's Piedmont Project. Morrone and Associate Professor of Political Science Nancy Manring secured the green (via an 1804 grant) to launch the Kanawha project in 2007.

The grant allowed 20 Athens campus faculty members from a wide range of disciplines to participate in the pilot project. It covered modest faculty stipends, books, a workshop and monthly meetings.

But the future of the Kanawha Project hinged upon additional revenue.

"If we didn't get the EPA grant, we'd be done," Morrone said. "The grant is providing us the resources that we need for the faculty, and it's providing a part-time coordinator (Environmental Studies Outreach Coordinator Loraine McCosker) for the program as well."

Next year, grant money will extend KEEP by an additional 20 faculty members -- 10 from the Athens campus and two from each of the five regional campuses. The training will take place on the Athens campus. The following year, trained faculty will teach Kanawha concepts to fellow faculty members in their own departments and at each of the regional campuses.

"We'll be talking about regional environmental issues," McCosker

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said. "For example, the Southern campus is in an area of the state that is surrounded by forests, so that topic may be explored because their community may be environmentally, economically and culturally tied to public and private forests, whereas the Lancaster campus may explore urban growth and development pressures."

All faculty members who complete Kanawha training will be asked to modify at least one of their undergraduate course syllabi to integrate environmental themes into their course content.

"Mine has been fairly simple because the hospitality industry is really looking at going green," said Assistant Professor of Human and Consumer Sciences Diana Manchester, who will complete her Kanawha training this spring. "We talk about return on investment for different light bulbs or thermostats that regulate temperatures when a room isn't being occupied. We talk about theoretical concepts and then see if they'd be applicable for business."

Another participant, Associate Professor of English Albert Rouzie, has refocused several of his reading and writing assignments to deal with environmental themes. Rouzie's students write personal essays about relationships with nature, track issues through environmental blogs and report on local sustainability groups. These types of projects lead to ecologically charged discussions, the likes of which Kanawha coordinators hope to inspire.

Manchester and Rouzie are among many professors who are adding a green perspective to their course content as a result of the pilot.

"Everything that we had hoped has been accomplished," Morrone said. "Some of the faculty are even proposing new courses based on what they've been experiencing through the project."

Project coordinators also are hoping to recycle and reuse what they've developed.

"Right now, we're expanding our grant writing with the goal to include 20 colleges and universities in the state of Ohio," McCosker said. "We will create a Sustainability Educators Network (that) will be a resource to faculty throughout the state."

Related Links

Kanawha Environmental Education Project
(KEEP): http://www.ohio.edu/envstu/Kanawha_main.cfm
New faculty learning community has green bent:
<http://www.ohio.edu/outlook/07-08/December/224n.cfm>

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