

Santa Barbara City College is the 2014 City of Santa Barbara Water Hero

The number one community college in the nation is also the 2014 City of Santa Barbara Water Hero! The City gives out the Water Hero Award every year to highlight individuals, businesses, and organizations that go above and beyond in their water conservation efforts and serve as an example of resource efficiency in our community. Santa Barbara City College (SBCC) is being honored for its commitment to improving sustainability efforts on campus, reducing water usage, and retrofitting facilities.

Julie Hendricks, Senior Director of Facilities, Planning, and Campus Development said that the college has always been sustainably minded, and that they were motivated to move forward with more sustainability projects with the help of the City. In 2013, SBCC participated in the City's WaterWise Survey and Incentive Program, wherein City staff conducted an indoor water use study and presented recommendations for improving water use efficiency. The results of the study showed that SBCC could increase conservation by almost 30% and save more than \$35,000 annually with campus-wide retrofits.



“We recognize that we are probably one of the largest water users in the community and quickly recognized that we had the opportunity to make a big difference,” stated Hendricks of the recent retrofits. The retrofits included replacing faucets and installing spray nozzles and aerators in science labs, locker rooms, cafés and kitchens, installing low-flow showerheads in the locker rooms, and adjusting all toilets to flush at the designed 1.6 gallons per flush.

Outdoor changes include retrofitting overhead irrigation to drip systems, changing landscapes from turf to water wise plants, incorporating mulch, creating bioswales and rain gardens, and turning



the irrigation off completely to certain areas of campus. According to Mark Broomfield, Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, 1.5 acres of turf have been removed to date, and there are plans for further improvement. “This is a long term commitment. The only way we can be ready for the next drought is to keep doing all the right things in between the drought,” stated Broomfield. He emphasized that the conservation efforts have been collaborative

throughout the SBCC community, and that now is the time to “take advantage of this crisis and turn it into an opportunity to adjust our cultural look at how we take care of our landscapes.”

At the Schott Campus, about 20% of turf was removed and a rainwater garden was planted in early 2014. Joshua Murray, Facilities Supervisor at the Wake & Schott Campuses, said they immediately saw improvements in water savings, adding that the rainwater garden requires less maintenance and time. Murray said, “For every inch of rain, we’re collecting roughly 1,000 gallons of water that would have flown



out into the street and out to the ocean carrying pollution. Instead of polluting our environment, the rainwater garden is actually feeding and nurturing our plants.”

For Jay Sullivan, Construction and Project Manager, this is the second major drought that he has seen prompt change on a college campus. “This is a campus that has a very forward thinking culture,” stated Sullivan of SBCC. While most facilities on campus were originally built in the 1950s and 60s, new sustainability retrofits can be seen throughout campus. For example, the exterior of the campus has been retrofit with LED lighting, the stadium restrooms use recycled water, and solar panels can be spotted on the parking lot rooftops near the Facilities and Operations Building. According to Sullivan, in most instances they were able to achieve water savings approaching 60%. “A drought like this is an opportunity to do the right thing and to save water,” stated Sullivan. He also says they are going for the gold – LEED Gold Certification that is, in the new West Campus Classroom & Office Building. In 2015, construction will begin on this building, which is to include a bioswale for harvesting rainwater, a vegetated rooftop garden, and restrooms that use recycled water.

Of the City’s WaterWise Survey and Incentive Program, Hendricks said “I would definitely recommend the program to other large water users within the community because of all of the resources that you’re offered.” Congratulations to Santa Barbara City College for being a Water Hero!

