

SUSTAINING GREEN

Georgia Tech Receives Sustainability Grant

Georgia Tech (Georgia Institute of Technology) Dining Services, operated by Sodexo, was recently awarded a \$5,000 grant in recognition of its comprehensive, cost-neutral approach to foodservice sustainability from the Hobart Center for Foodservice Sustainability (HCFS).

The school was selected for the grant from among numerous entrants nationwide, which included K-12 schools, higher-educational institutions, restaurants and healthcare and hospitality facilities.

A major reason Tech received the grant was because many of its sustainability programs are cost neutral. "I think this is going to give us a great opportunity to show the schools and campuses that are a little bit behind or overwhelmed with the idea, that there are some really great low-hanging fruit items that you can do right away that impact the environment in a very huge and easy way," said Dori Martin, district marketing manager with Sodexo.

Dining Services' sustainability programs — previously highlighted in the October 2009 issue of *On-Campus Hospitality* — include energy- and water-saving initiatives, intensive composting and recycling, and the introduction of more local and organic produce. Over the next five years, these programs are expected to generate a cost savings of \$807,200, and help achieve aggressive goals of 26 percent energy-usage reduction and zero waste by August 2015.

Dining Services has several ideas for what to do with the grant money. "The first thousand, we are going to be creating an operating budget for our sustainability department," said Nell Fry, sustainability coordinator. "There is a need for signage and initiatives. The other \$4,000 we are going to look into creat-



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ing incentives for our employee education program. A big part of the cost-neutral solution to this is creating an education program for our employees that will reduce energy. You can reduce energy by more than 10 percent if you can teach employees how to correctly use equipment.”

She continued, “It is a complicated and difficult program to start just because there is a large chain of command and you need people to change their daily habits, which is very difficult. Some of that money is going to go into creating a rewards system for that because the return on properly educating the employees and getting them to use equipment properly is phenomenal. That is going to be the other portion.”

Martin said the employee education program is very important. “It is going to be as simple as not turning equipment on until it is needed, or turn lights off when they are not needed.”

Dining is working with other food organizations on the program. “We are working with a lot of food organizations around Atlanta and with Sodexo as an organization,” said Fry. “We are also working with Emory University and recently did a presentation to a dining sustainability group that was organized by the National Wildlife Federation.”

She continued, “We reached out for partners there as well.

AT-A-GLANCE

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Atlanta, Ga.

Enrollment: 20,720

Type of operation: leased to Sodexo

Number of dining facilities on campus: 24

Approximate number of meals served daily: approximately 12,000

Key Staff:

Vern Johnson, district manager

Todd Schram, general manager

Rimbold Bordeau, executive chef

We are working with a lot of people because this kind of program can be really widely applicable. Employee training is employee training no matter where you are. There is not really anything out there yet that is a clear employee training system for a large-scale food distribution unit. We are working a lot of people on it, and it should be a really cheap and effective way to reduce energy use, not only on our campus, but on a lot of other campuses as well.”

In addition to receiving the grant, Martin will now serve as an HCFS Fellow. “I will get to go through the proposals for next year with another group of Fellows,

and I will get to see what others are doing on their campuses and help decide who next year’s winner is going to be. There are a lot of wonderful Fellows on the board.”

“The quality of entries in terms of innovation and best practices in sustainability was extremely impressive,” Rick Cartwright, vice president, ITW Food Equipment Group and HCFS Fellow, said of this year’s grant proposals. “The entry from Georgia Tech stood out due to the comprehensive, coordinated nature of its sustainability programs that provide significant environmental impact and cost savings while remaining cost neutral.”

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