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University of Dayton

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Tuesday May 17, 2016

## Green Revolving Fund

A 2012 student-led research project suggesting the University establish a green revolving fund is promising a big payoff to the University in cost savings, innovation, learning opportunities and creating a greener campus.

The University is investing \$1 million to seed the new Green Revolving Fund, designed to encourage the community to look at the entire campus as a laboratory, classroom and testing ground for energy-saving ideas.

The funds are increasingly popular with higher education institutions as a way to accelerate investments in energy-saving improvements to campus operations and at the same time foster sustainability-related research and hands-on learning opportunities for students. Experiential learning is a hallmark of a University of Dayton education and hands-on learning in sustainability is a focus of the University's Hanley Sustainability Institute, a partner in the campus initiative.

"Creating this fund really was a very easy decision. There are positive economic returns to the University while also being true to our mission as a Catholic, Marianist university," said Andy Horner, vice president for finance and administrative services. "We expect that over time the cost savings will be significant and will enable us to continue to invest in ideas that save money and protect the environment."

Here's how it works:

The University started the fund with \$1 million — primarily from rebates the University received from the Dayton Power and Light Co. and other organizations for already-implemented measures to save electricity.

Ideas for projects can come from anyone on campus — students, faculty, staff, researchers — who work with facilities management to identify opportunities and develop the projects.

Projects are given the green light based on projected savings in operational costs and are encouraged to include an educational component.

When the project is up and running, energy savings are tracked and those savings are credited back to the Green Revolving Fund to build the fund's balance to fund the next project.

"We are very excited about the fund and the opportunities it will create for energy-saving projects," said Beth Keyes, vice president for facilities and campus operations. "We have ideas for a lot of achievable projects with a very short return on investment that in the end will save the University on its overall utility bill."

Keyes said one already-approved project is a great example of the fund's potential.

Facilities management asked students in the School of Engineering's Industrial Assessment Center and Lean Buildings Program to explore what savings might result by installing new, high efficiency motors and variable frequency drives on air handling units in the Jesse Philips Humanities Center.

The engineering students calculated the predicted impact on usage and created a report on total energy savings. They found that the project would cost \$14,614 after applying a \$7,300 rebate from DP&L.

But in just one year, they estimated the project could result in an annual cost savings of an estimated \$31,188. That's means the project will pay for itself in about six months.

The environmental impact is even more impressive. Students calculated the project would save more than 445,546 kilowatt hours of electricity, equal to eliminating 307 metric tons of carbon dioxide (64.7 cars driven for a year or from the electricity usage of 42.3 homes.) It would take a year for 252 acres of forest in the U.S. to absorb all that carbon.

"We have a backlog of great ideas students brought or projects the facilities staff has wanted to do," she said. "But we really do want new ideas because as we grow the fund, we'll be able to do projects with longer payback times."

While the initial investment is \$1 million, Horner said the University will kick off a fundraising campaign with the goal of adding at least another \$1 million to the fund. The University has pledged to match gifts that exceed the \$1 million mark. He expects it to attract donors who want to support sustainability on campus.

It's also envisioned that new, cutting-edge ideas from faculty and researchers can be tested in campus facilities, advancing sustainability scholarship and innovation.

The fund also has already created educational opportunities for students in the School of Engineering and the School of Business Administration, and prompted a broad collaboration among finance and administrative services, facilities management, advancement and the academic units.

It's the latest example of innovation in student-led sustainability education, a priority of the Hanley Institute, which was established in 2014 through a \$12.5 million gift by the George and Amanda Hanley Foundation.

It's fitting then that the original proposal for the Green Revolving Fund originated from a student sustainability research project led by Jarred White, a 2014 civil engineering graduate and former president of the Sustainability Club.

White, now a water resources engineer-in-training with Stantec Consulting in Cincinnati, said, "It is incredible, to say the least, not only seeing the original framework developed by my team evolve into a live program, but seeing it managed by some of the very friends and mentors who were around for the original project proposal.

"Watching how sustainability has advanced at UD in the relatively short time since I've been there has been truly remarkable and rewarding. I look forward to seeing how much more progress will be made in another couple years."

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