California Community Colleges

SYSTEM WEBINAR SUMMARY (Oct. 2023): Vision 2030: A Focus on Climate Action

This webinar was the third in a series focusing on Vision 2030, a framework for the system guided by the Vision for Success and the Roadmap for the Future. It covered issues related to climate action and sustainability goals for the system. Guest presenters included Jeffery Clary from the Foundation for California Community Colleges, Superintendent/President Joe Wyse of Shasta-Tehama-Trinity CCD, and Deputy Chancellor Zab Dadabhoy of Kern CCD.

What are System Goals and Actions to Address the Climate?

- We have four fields of climate practice: (1) Facilities and Operations, (2) Workforce Development, (3) Asset to Communities, and (4) Resource Development.
- The Board of Governors' Climate Action & Sustainability Framework encourages colleges to establish benchmarks with the ultimate goal of eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by 2035.
- To facilitate benchmarking, the Chancellor's Office collects information from colleges via an energy usage calculator and the EnergyStar Portfolio Manager. We also have STARS, a tool that offers goal setting and reporting on aligned metrics.
- Through the Board of Governors' energy incentive, the Chancellor's Office can provide funding to help capital outlay projects achieve energy efficiency goals, and Physical Plant & Instructional Support funds can be used to support energy efficiency and water conservation projects.
- The Foundation for California Community Colleges is building climate advisory teams and information flow structures, surveying existing programs and resources, and working to get all colleges involve in the Center for Climate Futures.

How are Colleges Addressing Climate Action?

- Climate issues offer opportunities to address enrollment challenges, develop apprenticeships and baccalaureate programs, and form partnerships. Large federal infrastructure and workforce initiatives in the pipeline will expand the options.
- Shasta College is providing skills training to meet industry needs:
    - To address fuel-laden forests that are increasing wildfires, programs provide forest operations skills and training in truck and heavy equipment operation.

    - The college leverages $12 million in forest health funding over 7 years, with 26% for equipment and startup, 48% for staffing, 6% for operations, and 20% to cover other costs (e.g., wraparound services and supports).
    - A 7-year MOU with a private timberland owner provides access to forest, and the program uses project-based training to develop competencies.
    - The college partnered with industry and community stakeholders to design the forestry program, which included development of the California Registered Apprenticeship for Forest Training and a pre-apprenticeship program.
- Bakersfield College's Agrivoltaics project is one of its efforts under the California Renewable Energy Laboratory (CREL), which focuses on curriculum, research, technology transfer, workforce development, and community education.
    - The project addresses the challenge related to the amount of land needed to produce renewable energy compared to fossil fuels, combining solar energy production with agricultural production on farmlands.
    - Benefits include generating energy, reducing water usage, increasing crop yields, and minimizing the impact on natural lands. The shade provided by the solar panels reduces the air temperature and water evaporation, while the water vapor given off by the plants helps cool the panels and increase efficiency.
    - Creating such dual use land allows farmers to diversify their income by selling unused power and reduce their own energy costs.
    - An agrivoltaics demonstration project at the Delano campus will provide hands on learning opportunities for students and industry partners and serve as an example for other areas of the state. The location will help to provide equitable access for students in outlying rural areas.
    - This living laboratory will include a solar energy producing greenhouse, a test plot with land mounted solar panels, matching control plots for comparison, and an EV charging station with battery storage to charge farm equipment.
    - Community and industry partners participated in the project's design, with assistance from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

What Resources are Available to Support Colleges?

- West Los Angeles College's California Center for Climate Change Education has developed curriculum in climate science that can be adapted by other colleges.
- Energy and Sustainability Awards to colleges for innovative projects and initiatives will be announced at the Board of Governors November 13th meeting.

- Upcoming events include climate panels at the CC Faculty Coalition (Nov. 6-8), CCC League (Nov 16-18), and California Higher Education Collaborative (Nov. 28-29) conferences, and the California Forestry Workforce Summit (Nov.6-8).