UCM Offers Overview of Sustainability Successes

WARRENSBURG, MO (Feb. 17, 2010) – The University of Central Missouri’s commitments to sustainability and green initiatives were the topic of a day of discussion as the university recently hosted a visit by Greg Razer, field representative for U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill.

Razer visited several areas of campus, meeting with UCM representatives who provided briefings on ongoing academic and administrative efforts that have brought the university national attention.

A visit to the Center for Alternative Fuels and Environmental Systems, located at the UCM Energy Park and Learning Center, provided an overview of the education, outreach and research being conducted by students and faculty with regard to alternative fuel sources.

Scott McKay, director of the center and chair of the Department of Biochemistry, Chemistry and Physics, explained the center lends assistance and resources to individual projects and provides solutions to chemical-related problems for central Missouri businesses and communities. The center also provides opportunities for undergraduate research while working with academic, government and business partners to increase technical and scientific support in collaboration with the Institute for Entrepreneurial Studies and Development located in the Harmon College of Business Administration at UCM.

The development of non-credit training programs for displaced, dislocated or incumbent workers is the focus of Workforce Central, housed in the School of Graduate and Extended Studies at UCM. Among the programs developed and implemented by Workforce Central are those training people to work in areas of industry and services that complement sustainability and energy efficiency in the workplace and home environments.

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Joe Vaughn, assistant provost and dean of the School of Graduate and Extended Studies, said the training provided by Workforce Central incorporates a holistic learning program that assists participating students in developing basic workplace and life skills, work readiness, and job skills targeted to a specific industry.

Betty Roberts, vice president for administration and finance, and Mike Hines, senior account executive for Trane, led a discussion on UCM’s commitment to sustainability through a series of ongoing initiatives and capital projects that have gained the university international recognition. UCM has embarked on a two-year energy savings project, known as ESCO, with Trane as the energy services contractor.

The project includes various combinations of retrofit upgrades of water, lighting, windows, fire alarms and heating and cooling systems in 26 buildings on the UCM campus, along with new centralized building automation systems in some buildings. A significant feature of the project is the installation of a geothermal well field. One hundred fifty wells will allow efficient heating and cooling of three main buildings on the UCM campus.

The ESCO project also will allow the university to make significant progress on major deferred maintenance items. Energy savings recouped by the university will provide the funding to pay for the project over a period of 15 years.

Roberts and Chris Wellman, UCM’s director of facilities, planning and operations, gave an overview of the work underway on the renovation of the Morrow-Garrison complex and the construction of the new student recreation center. The project, which is designed for silver LEED certification with progress toward gold certification, will provide renovated classroom and gymnasium space for academic use, along with a new recreation center for students.

Roberts introduced Nick McDaniels and Manny Abarca, two UCM students whose initiative in launching a pilot recycling program on campus during summer 2009 resulted in a campuswide program that now includes academic buildings and housing. The program has grown rapidly, recently collecting a record 7.9 tons of recyclables in one week.

“Senator McCaskill is interested in any initiatives that will expand efforts to save energy and resources,” Razer said following the presentations and tour of the facilities. “You should be proud of what you’ve done here.”

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During a tour of facilities under renovation as part of the University of Central Missouri’s ESCO project, Ryan McConnell, Trane district project manager and manager of the UCM ESCO project, explains the improved function of the geothermal well heating system in the university’s Administration Building. Among those present for the tour were, left to right, Chris Wellman, UCM director of facilities, planning and operations; McConnell; Mike Mahoney, Trane senior project developer; Betty Roberts, UCM vice president for administration and finance; Mike Hines, Trane senior account executive; and Greg Razer, field representative for U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill.