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January 31, 2013

The University of Virginia has won the Crystal Award in Sustainability for Higher Education at the Energy and Sustainability Conference held this week at Virginia Commonwealth University.

The award, given by the Virginia Sustainable Building Network and the James River Green Building Council, is for the University's overall sustainability program, which includes integrating institutional practice with its academic message. The award was presented Wednesday in Richmond.

The "Crystal Awards in Sustainability" recognize Virginia companies and institutions for their sustainability achievements. Winners were selected in the fields of government, higher education, commercial real estate, kindergarten through 12th grade, health care and manufacturing.

"This is an acknowledgment that the University of Virginia is a good steward of its environment," said Nina Morris, energy and utilities sustainability outreach coordinator at **Facilities Management**. "U.Va. has strived for many years to build a strong and comprehensive sustainability program."

The University has an extensive and multi-layered sustainability program that encompasses recycling and composting, incorporating LEED building standards, re-commissioning buildings for energy savings, establishing a comprehensive stormwater run-off plan, setting carbon and nitrogen output reduction goals, reducing food waste, cutting back on water usage and devising extensive transportation plans to reduce the environmental impact.

"The University of Virginia considers sustainability an institutional and an individual value," Morris said. "We are committed to actions that mutually promote the health of our institution, community and environment. To achieve this, we support a system-wide collaboration and shared priorities, with frequent assessments of progress."

The University is also committed to supply students with knowledge and tools to address the environmental challenges facing them, Morris said.

"Sustainability is a broad term," said Andrew J. Greene, sustainability planner in the **Office of the Architect**, "and that breadth is one of the main reasons why sustainability is so important at the University. It has compelled us to reach out across the University to create new

collaborative efforts with students, faculty, staff and the community. And by forging these unique collaborations, our sustainability actions have generated new and exciting results.”

The University is developing new academic programs in sustainability, such as the **Global Sustainability minor** being offered through the **School of Architecture**; incorporating sustainability into existing curricula to introduce it to a larger number of students; and connecting its operational actions to education and research.

“Installing a solar panel is great, but it is a missed opportunity if students aren’t helping to plan and analyze it,” Greene said. “If you think of the thousands of young people who walk the Lawn every year on their way to become teachers, CEOs, doctors, scientists, lawyers, writers and much more, you realize that the greatest opportunity U.Va. has to advance sustainability is equipping our graduates with the knowledge and skills required to solve the thorny, complex issues facing society.”

This year's VCU Energy and Sustainability Conference featured national leaders across business and institutional market sectors exploring how sustainability is changing their organizations and how they're adapting and leveraging sustainability to enhance their business results.

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