

WINTERGREEN: LEED-ING THE WAY IN SUSTAINABILITY

By Celene Lovato

High efficiency buildings were the first stepping stone in creating a more sustainable culture at UCCS. U.S. Green Building Council Southern Colorado Branch hosted their annual WinterGreen event to help celebrate and highlight the achievements made at UCCS in respect to LEED certification. As of March 2015, UCCS is home to six LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Gold certified buildings, two buildings currently pending LEED certification, and four buildings in progress that aim towards LEED Gold certification.

UCCS houses the most LEED certified buildings in southern Colorado of public institutions and continues to dedicate time in planning and maintaining these high efficiency buildings. LEED certified buildings help reduce UCCS' carbon footprint and act as a living-learning laboratory for students to receive real-time data to compare to non-LEED certified buildings. With each new construction, continues to build an ecosystem of sustainable buildings. Starting with the Recreation Center in 2007, continuing with the planning of the new Ent Center for the Arts, UCCS remains committed to sustainable design.

Each LEED building is unique in its features, yet they all meet similar standards for energy and water efficiency, use of renewable energy, and waste diversion during construction. The Rec Center has a solar-thermal heated pool, Gallogly has preferred parking for low emitting and fuel efficient vehicles, and 78% of the wood used in Centennial is certified by the Forest Stewardship council. Thanks to funds from the student-implemented photovoltaic fee, some of the buildings also feature their own set of solar panels, even further reducing the need for nonrenewable energy sources. Newer buildings such as the Copper and Eldora residence halls and the Lane Center feature on-site rain gardens to help filter pollutants from runoff and conserve water.

LEED is more than environmental health, it is about human health. Many companies turn to LEED to optimize the health of their employees and create happier work environments by making use of daylight and restricting the use of harmful chemicals. The upcoming Village at Alpine Valley is designed with walkability in mind, providing a safe and appealing environment that aims to reduce pedestrian injury and encourage physical activity.

A building more than just a building. From conception to design, construction to long-term conservation, LEED buildings are visionary, and important for the future of sustainability. UCCS's commitment to build and maintain high performance buildings provides a leadership model for Southern Colorado.

To learn more about LEED buildings at UCCS please visit our website at www.uccs.edu/sustain or visit the Sustainability Building at 12 Cragmor Village Drive.