**Trends in Green**

**SUSTAINABLE INNOVATIONS ON CAMPUS**

**Sustainability in the Culinary Arts**
Lincoln Land Community College prepares students for food innovations.

**BY KIM BLOMQUIST**

**COMMUNITY COLLEGES** are becoming premier venues for promoting sustainability, as new technologies and green standards continue to shape the future of major industries. For the next generation of workers, skills in sustainability will be vital and expand their job opportunities.

Sustainability is one of seven core values at Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) in Springfield, IL. Similar values have brought LLCC together with 16 other community colleges through the Illinois Green Economy Network to develop 32 new associate degree and certificate programs in sustainability. Through the allocation of a U.S. Department of Labor grant, the consortium identified and divided responsibilities that cover five key areas.

LLCC Workforce Specialist Marnie Record explains, “The open source curriculum conserves resources for the colleges by pooling needs, skills and talent to develop accessible courses in key fields for the entire state. The flexibility is still there for each college to adopt the courses to best fit their own situation, but much of the work is already done.”

**Shaping the Curriculum**

At LLCC, curriculum is being developed in culinary arts and green facilities. Record is overseeing the creation of a value-added local food certificate program, combining the new curriculum with existing culinary and business courses. “Several influences came together for the value-added local food program to be a natural fit for LLCC,” she says.

In January 2012, the college opened its new Workforce Careers Center, with taste-of-the-art cooking, baking, food production and practical dining labs featuring the latest technology in commercial cooking equipment. At the same time, the college’s Green Center was completing a three-year grant program to engrain local food into the campus and community culture. LLCC started a community garden on campus and constructed a high tunnel for year-round growing.

Record says, “Students who complete the value-added local food program will receive an education not just about cooking food, but about where food comes from, how it is grown and the effects the food system has on the environment, the community and personal health.”

A “value-added product” is a product grown by a farmer that increases in value due to labor, creativity or processes. Actions like turning milk into cheese, strawberries into jam, or preserving vegetables are traditional ways to maximize value, but conservation and zero-waste practices can also extend resources. Students will learn alternatives for when a product does not meet the specifications of large-scale producers, or when sales in fresh produce dip due to seasonality.

LLCC is collaborating with Alisa Sattler, Ed.D., MSHTM, CCE of Beyond Green Sustainable Food Partners to develop courses such as “Local Food Cuisines,” “Fermentation Methods,” “Food Preservation Methods” and “Local Food in Institutions.”

Dr. Sattler says, “Culinary and hospitality professionals are realizing that sustainability is important to our future as operators and entrepreneurs within the industry.”

**Rounding Out the Program**

Dr. Sattler adds that learning about issues such as food waste and water footprinting can be eye-opening for those with a traditional background in culinary arts or hospitality. “LLCC is introducing new and creative programs just as chefs are starting to think more about the impact of water footprinting, use of fossil fuels and other natural resources. We’re asking culinary and hospitality students, future chefs, owners and industry professionals to really examine the food system in a critical way that promotes sustainable industry practices.”

Understanding these concepts prepares future culinary professionals for a world that values nutritious and delicious food, where workers in the food system make a fair wage, communities come together around food, economies thrive and the planet continues to provide our agricultural needs. In addition, as the competition for every hospitality dollar increases, adding value to food helps food service and product providers stand out.

Record says the food community in central Illinois is overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this program. “People who have struggled on their own to start local food businesses and people who are looking for skilled workers in local food are very supportive and excited to see this program coming.”

In the future, LLCC envisions the campus high tunnels and gardens filled with food to be used to create value-added food products for the community and jobs for students. Continued program growth is expected as people become aware and want to eat food grown and produced by people they know, using practices they value.

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