



## *News Release*

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## **Century Makes “Green” Progress**

Biology Prof. Pam Thinesen and members of the President’s Campus Climate Committee could be called the environmental conscience of Century College.

Appointed by campus leadership, these committee members are dedicated to not only raising the campus consciousness about energy conservation, waste reduction and climate impact, but also formulating actions that will help Century do its part in combating climate change.

Century President Larry Litecky signed the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment in 2007, and the Campus Climate Committee was formed in 2008. Its 20 members include faculty, staff and students.

“We want to educate people who work and go to school at Century about ways to lessen their impact on the environment,” said Thinesen.

Job one for this group was to work with people across campus to put together a baseline greenhouse gas inventory of Century operations. The inventory was compiled using a software program recommended by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, which is one of the sponsors of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment. It was developed by an organization called Cool Air-Clean Planet. Data entered into the software program includes such things as electricity, natural gas, fuel oil, wastewater, paper and fertilizer usage, plus commuting data. The software then calculates the approximate amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that Century College is emitting.

"To become climate neutral, we need to decrease our impact on greenhouse gases every year," said Thinesen. "This will include purchasing renewable energy certificates and/or investing in green futures."

Recycling at Century is estimated to have increased by at least 30 percent in the last five years, and the college has made a big effort to purchase more sets of three containers – one for recycling paper, another for recycling plastic/aluminum and the third for trash. The sets have been placed in strategic locations across campus.

"This is probably our most visible effort," said Thinesen. "Some of the containers are even made of recycled plastic – mostly the ones in the new Science/Library Building."

As has been pointed out at this year's international climate conference in Copenhagen, climate change is a world-wide issue. Global temperatures are rising by 0.34 degrees Fahrenheit per decade, and twice as fast in the far north, melting sea ice at record rates. Oceans are rising faster than predicted, partly due to the melting glaciers. The Global Carbon Project, an international research group, says the carbon dioxide that has been built up in the atmosphere is at a record high as power plants, automobiles and other sources produce 29 percent more carbon dioxide than in 2000. As temperatures increase, the world could suffer more climate disruption, droughts, powerful storms, species extinctions, spreading disease, coastal flooding and other consequences.

Trying to be part of the solution to these issues, the Climate Committee is currently in the process of writing a long-term climate action plan, which will include a goal date for becoming climate neutral. Since the committee was formed, the college has developed a green purchasing policy for office supplies and equipment that says Century will purchase the least environmentally harmful items whenever possible - if they are available and if they are reasonably priced.

The college also has a policy that it will purchase equipment that is Energy-Star rated by the Environmental Protection Agency because these items are more energy efficient. In addition, the college now has a policy that all renovations and construction will meet the silver standards of the LEED energy-rating program.

The Climate Committee also has divided into smaller teams to work on improving site composting, solid waste reduction, landscaping, energy efficiency initiatives, and promoting carpooling, biking, and walking.

Century has become a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, a national resource of contacts, guidelines, seminars, webinars and research for colleges that are working to become climate-neutral. The college is developing courses in solar assessment and construction that will lead to an Associate of Arts degree in solar technology. In spring semester, several non-credit courses related to climate change will be offered. In April 2010, Thinesen is scheduled to teach a new four-hour continuing education course about the science of climate change ("facts versus fiction.")

In addition, sessions on climate change are given by Thinesen on Student Success Day and during the annual All College Conference. During fall semester, Dr. Cassandra Moe, a biology professor at Century, and Thinesen led sessions on Student Success Day and staff development day on the subject of how to make greener laundry detergent and other less harmful cleaners. Students and staff made laundry detergent and were able to bring it home to try it for themselves.

Century also is developing affiliations with area energy efficiency-promoting organizations including Mahtomedi Area Green Initiative, Community Energy Resource Teams, Society of College and University Planning and Alliance for Sustainability and Minnesota Waste Wise. Individuals associated with these organizations have deep knowledge in areas such as solar and geothermal energy, solid waste reduction and recycling.

Century hosted a successful community event on Sept. 3 that featured explorer Eric Larsen and brought together many community groups that are working on energy conservation.

The Climate Committee is also working with the Century Foundation to promote the Blue Sky Guide, a useful informational guide and coupon book that features sustainability strategies and coupons for energy-conscious businesses, including grocery stores, restaurants, the Minnesota Science Museum and much more.

The Century website now contains a page that features efforts of the climate committee. Eventually, the page will be linked to car pooling options, bike paths and walking routes.

In the future, it is hoped that Century will be able to purchase more of its energy from renewable sources such as solar or wind, and also purchase recycled paper for its considerable copying and printing. In the meantime, the committee is working on improving the efficiency of campus operations.

“Century’s Climate Committee is working to increase awareness and promote actions that improve efficiency and create less waste. Our best tools are straight-forward facts,” said Thinesen. “We want to keep our message as clear and understandable as possible. We are all in this together.”



Photo: Century Prof. Pam Thinesen