

Women Leading the Way at Small Liberal Arts College

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An Interview with Susan Kidd, Sustainability Director, Agnes Scott College

Agnes Scott College is a private liberal arts college for women located in Decatur, Atlanta. Agnes Scott seeks to “educate women to think deeply, live honorably, and engage the intellectual and social challenges of their times.” The Center for Green schools sat down to talk with Susan Kidd, Director of Sustainability at Agnes Scott, about how their campus and local community is embracing sustainability.

Center for Green Schools (CFGS): Susan, can you give a little background on Agnes Scott and its work around sustainability?

Susan Kidd (SK): Agnes Scott College was founded in 1889 as an independent liberal arts college for women. It is located in metropolitan Atlanta and has just under 1,000 students. Since 2007, Agnes Scott has been active in its sustainability work when it signed the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment.

CFGS: Where did you start?

SK: A big focus has been placed on building involvement of the campus community and connections with different departments so that our work can be coordinated and synergistic. We prioritized waste minimization and waste diversion through single stream collection and have since added in food waste composting. More recently, we have been focused on building efficiency and retrofitting as a way of addressing our carbon footprint.

CFGS: How has that been?

SK: Well, to be honest, we’ve had to start at the beginning by trying to wrap our minds around the current state of buildings. We have performed many studies over the years and are compiling them all together to create a full picture of where we stand and where we want to go.

CFGS: How have you financed your energy reduction initiative?

SK: We have done this in a number of ways, including grants. We received one such grant from the Jesse Ball duPont Fund to look at facilities and energy conservation from a behavioral science perspective. As a result, we have been able to install a performance dashboard for seven buildings and plan to double that number of buildings this year.. If we are able to help educate occupants in fourteen out of our twenty-nine buildings on campus, we will have made a lot of progress!

CFGS: Any other initiatives of note?

SK: Southface, a local leader in green building practices and technologies, partnered with Oakridge Research Lab to make improvements on ten buildings in Atlanta metro area. Agnes Scott has agreed to upgrade five of their residences this summer and they will all become mini-labs, of sorts.

CFGS: Beyond the facilities on campus, what else are you excited about on campus?

SK: Our other big push has been around curriculum integration. We have created an environmental sustainability studies minor and continue to encourage faculty to incorporate sustainability into curriculum.

CFGS: Who have been your biggest champions on campus?

SK: President Elizabeth Kiss has been an outspoken advocate and leader for these issues on campus and beyond. Additionally, the trustees have been engaged in the conversation and have been incredibly supportive, including the approval of renovating the alumni house in its pursuit of LEED certification. The top leadership at Agnes Scott is challenging me as the sustainability director! It keeps me motivated to dream big.

CFGS: About what initiative over the last year would you say you are most proud to share?”

SK: You might be surprised to hear me say that our partnership with city of Decatur has been an unexpected boost to our work in that they partially fund a fellow position in the sustainability office, which has created an authentic town-gown connection. We helped draft Decatur’s green restaurant certification program and plan to help manage it going forward. Additionally, Decatur has a residential energy program that Agnes Scott has agreed to help support, which makes for a mutually beneficial relationship.

CFGS: How do you envision Agnes Scott becoming a green campus?

SK: Agnes Scott went about sustainability as being a serious change agent for the campus; it was meant to be transformative and was meant to be institutionalized. We have spent a lot of time with the leadership and will continue to dig deep and wide to transform the campus so that it will never be the same. We are committed to always going forward and never backwards.

CFGS: Any advice for other schools as they get started?

SK: Agnes Scott came along later in the pack and has learned a lot from people who have been around for a while. Thank you Emory for being an open book! It’s great to learn from those who have traveled before you. I’ve heard it said that “it’s really great to reinvent the wheel, but it takes a long time,” which has helped me to take the time to learn from my peers and be in regular contact with them.

To learn more about Agnes Scott College’s latest green initiatives, please visit their [sustainability website](#). To view the full project profile on the above mentioned LEED Silver Anna I. Young Alumnae House, please visit the [resource section](#) of [centerforgreenschools.org](#).

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