

MD Delegate Visits USGBC Students at Howard Community College

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On May 8, Maryland Delegate Liz Bobo visited the campus of Howard Community College (HCC) to receive a tour of the LEED Certified Health Sciences Building, learn what the USGBC Students group has been up to and speak with students about the local sustainability issues. In addition to the USGBC Students group members, we were joined by faculty and facilities personnel from HCC and students from the environmental club, making it a diverse group of key stakeholders for campus sustainability.

We were fortunate to have Hannah Debelius, who oversees the USGBC Students program and Pam Wallentiny, a USGBC Students regional chair, join the event and ensure that the students were able to support information about the building's LEED features. I was joined by co-student group leader Sarah Ramstrom who helped lead the overall tour of the building. In addition to giving an overview of some of the green features, I spoke about the building's water efficiency related to the bathrooms and the water bottle refilling stations. Installing water bottle refilling stations was one of the initiatives our USGBC Students group focused on during the last year. Through a process of dedicated student research and proposals to administration, these stations have filled the equivalent of over 60,000 water bottles since their installation in Fall 2012.

During the tour, I highlighted the sustainable sites LEED credit for the building's connection with public transportation, a key asset to our community college campus. Sarah addressed the additional regional credits of storm water design, leading to a great discussion about sediment pollution in this region and the importance of protecting the local waterways. HCC has invested energy in addressing the storm water runoff because of the environmental impact it has on the Little Patuxent River.

The tour was a fantastic opportunity for the student group to be able to show what the group has done, explain a little about what the group plans to do, and with the tour of the LEED certified building, show what a USGBC Students group is capable of doing. Group members were able to showcase the experiences and revelations each student has learned since joining USGBC Students and expose themselves to the success and intricacies of green building.

After the tour, Del. Bobo sat down with the students and staff and shared relevant bills and information from the most recent legislature session. We had an open dialog about local sustainability issues, how they affect our lives and how they play into larger areas of national sustainability. I was excited and interested to understand what Del. Bobo has been doing within the Maryland government. Seeing that other people were working on sustainability issues on a higher level, with a wider influential base, has inspired me to work towards the larger movement.

Acting as the student group leader of the USGBC Students group at HCC has had its fair share of positive events, but meeting Del. Bobo is a valuable memory. Being able to give her a tour of the newly built Health Sciences Building gave me a new insight on how relatable people in the government can be when it comes to environmental issues. With this new exposure, I feel a greater sense of empowerment to make more positive changes beyond the accomplishments I have already been able to achieve.

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