

## ‘Greening’ Urban America

The green building movement plays a crucial role in creating a sustainable and healthy environment. While the benefits of creating and using green buildings are numerous, environmentally responsible construction is the exception rather than the rule. Many of the nation's urban areas have few examples of innovative green building practices. To advance the broader goals of sustainability, we must focus on the



greening of urban communities. More than 200,000 students are enrolled in the Los Angeles Community College District's (LACCD) nine colleges. Overall, 80% are minority students and 40% report incomes at, or below, the poverty line. Bringing green opportunities to underserved communities is a vital part of the LACCD's green efforts.

The LACCD is planning or constructing, or has already completed, approximately 90 LEED-certified facilities through its Sustainable Building Program. In addition, the District also is producing carbon-free energy through its Renewable Energy Program. Together, these efforts demonstrate the LACCD's commitment to improve the environment in the various urban communities that the District serves.

South Los Angeles is the most recent beneficiary of such practices through Los Angeles Southwest College's new four-megawatt solar project. The initial phase of this green-energy program will generate more than 5 million kilowatt-hours of electricity, which will ultimately help meet LASC's electricity needs and save the District \$280,000 per year. Designed and constructed by Chevron Energy Solutions (CES), the project is the first big green effort in its community.

Last year, the LACCD partnered with CES to unveil a 1.2-megawatt solar project at East Los Angeles College, another urban campus.

As the LACCD explores the use of fuel cells, thermal storage and other alternative technologies, South Los Angeles will soon benefit from these green technologies.

The District's green efforts also thrive in the classroom. New green technologies introduce students to sustainable practices in construction, design and the sciences. Southwest College, in particular, provides South Los Angeles with a sustainable campus that offers training for a new generation of green-collar workers.

It is time for the scope of eco-friendly building to be expanded to areas that are not traditional centers of green development. Unless we continue our efforts to educate residents in urban areas on sustainability, many of these students and communities will be overlooked and left sitting on the sidelines as the green movement sweeps across the city and the nation.

*Larry H. Eisenberg  
Executive Director  
Facilities Planning and Development  
Los Angeles Community College District  
Contact: [mwalker@mww.com](mailto:mwalker@mww.com)*