WKU Green Ribbon School

VFTH

6/11/15

WKU’s sustainability efforts are garnering attention at the federal level.

Amy Bingham has more on the university’s status as a Green Ribbon School in this week’s View from the Hill.

WKU is one of only nine universities to receive this award---a green ribbon school award ---last week in Washington D.C.

This is also the first year the prestigious honor has been expanded to colleges and universities.

“We want to stand out from the rest and I think we do.”

The U.S. Department of Education agrees. A banner touting WKU’s most recent sustainability award hangs prominently in the Downing Student Union.

“The proposal limit was 15 pages and our biggest challenge was keeping it to 15 pages. We kept thinking of more amazing things that we’re doing here that we could add.”

Those amazing things have resulted in a 25 percent reduction in energy use on campus over the last five years according to Sustainability Coordinator Christian Ryan.

“We have all kinds of honors thesis and capstone and masters thesis that have been developed around using this campus as a living laboratory for sustainability so they really love that.”

For the past two and a half years, the office of sustainability has been located in this house near campus. It’s the perfect home for programs like Big Red Bikes and the food pantry.

“In the backyard we have a community garden where we are growing fresh vegetables so folks, students, faculty and staff, that need assistance can come get …”

The university is constantly adding vendors in it’s new Farm to Campus initiative that was unveiled this spring.

“The goal is to get more local farmers to sell direct to WKU, so no middle distributor, it’s literally farm to campus.”

Ryan says recognition likes this means collaborations in more groundbreaking sustainability.

“There’s a lot of things we can do to be more climate ready, to be more resilient to start adapting to this new reality we know is coming.”

The award was judged on three pillars: Reduced Environmental Impacts and costs, improved health and wellness and effective environmental and sustainability education.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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