

Pacific Lutheran University's Center Earns LEED Silver

May 16, 2008

PLU recently learned the University Center reached silver-level certification in the [U.S. Green Building Council's](#) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program.

"It makes you feel good; we're not creating more problems for the world," said John Kaniss, construction projects manager who oversaw the renovation.

Even before the project began, the university decided the \$14 million renovation would comply with LEED standards. The university is proud to achieve the silver rating, Kaniss said.

According to the council's Web site, which lists registered green buildings across the nation, the UC is the first student center on the West coast to achieve the rating, added Mischelle Devine-Nunner, senior assistant for construction management and LEED accredited professional.

Earth-friendly building codes have permeated campus. The new KPLU building under construction on lower campus should achieve a gold rating, and all residence hall upgrades are designed to adhere to LEED standards, Kaniss said. The residence hall projects simply aren't extensive enough to apply for certification.

In the UC, improvements to the kitchen, the lighting system and the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) unit were factors in earning the silver rating, Kaniss said. Enhancements to all three significantly cut energy costs.

In the kitchen, all appliances were replaced with [Energy Star](#) rated-models. Garbage disposals were removed, since [Dining and Culinary Services](#) had voluntarily committed to compost most food waste – a program that has diverted nearly 70 percent of dining waste from the landfill.

A snazzy new lighting system goes beyond simple sensors that turn off lights when a room is unoccupied. This system has an internal, perpetual calendar. It controls what lights turn on and when, based on the rising and setting of the sun, or the percentage of daylight infiltrating a space.

Additionally, building occupants received "task lights." The fluorescent desk lamps use little to no energy and can be used in place of overhead lights.

The building's HVAC unit transformed from a heating only device to having the capacity to both heat and cool the building. Old and broken pieces of the systems were replaced, while other parts were tweaked to work more efficiently.



The upgraded unit features an advanced sensor system that measures the outside and inside atmosphere 50 times a second. It responds immediately to impending temperature changes, based on a variety of parameters.

“We’re really controlling the environment now,” Kaniss said. “It made a big difference in the building. And it makes it nice, more user-friendly.”

Other earth-friendly features include concrete flooring that requires no chemical cleaning products or waxes; low-flow toilet and faucet fixtures that save water; and wood flooring certified by the [Forest Stewardship Council](#). Nearly 95 percent of the construction waste – toilets, concrete, rebar, steel, and the like – was recycled.

Another LEED point-getter: the UC is powered entirely by renewable energy, which is generated from natural sources that cannot be depleted, like wind and solar power. PLU signed a two-year commitment to purchase wind energy through Parkland Light and Water and the [Bonneville Power Administration](#).

Established in 1993, the [LEED](#) program evaluates buildings in five areas: sustainable sites, water efficiency, energy and atmosphere, materials and resources, and indoor environmental quality. Points are available in each credit area, and the number of points a project earns determines the level of certification. There are four progressive levels for certification: certified, silver, gold and platinum.

University Communications staff writer Megan Haley compiled this report. Comments, questions, ideas? Please contact her at ext. 8691 or at haleymk@plu.edu. Photo by University Photographer Jordan Hartman.