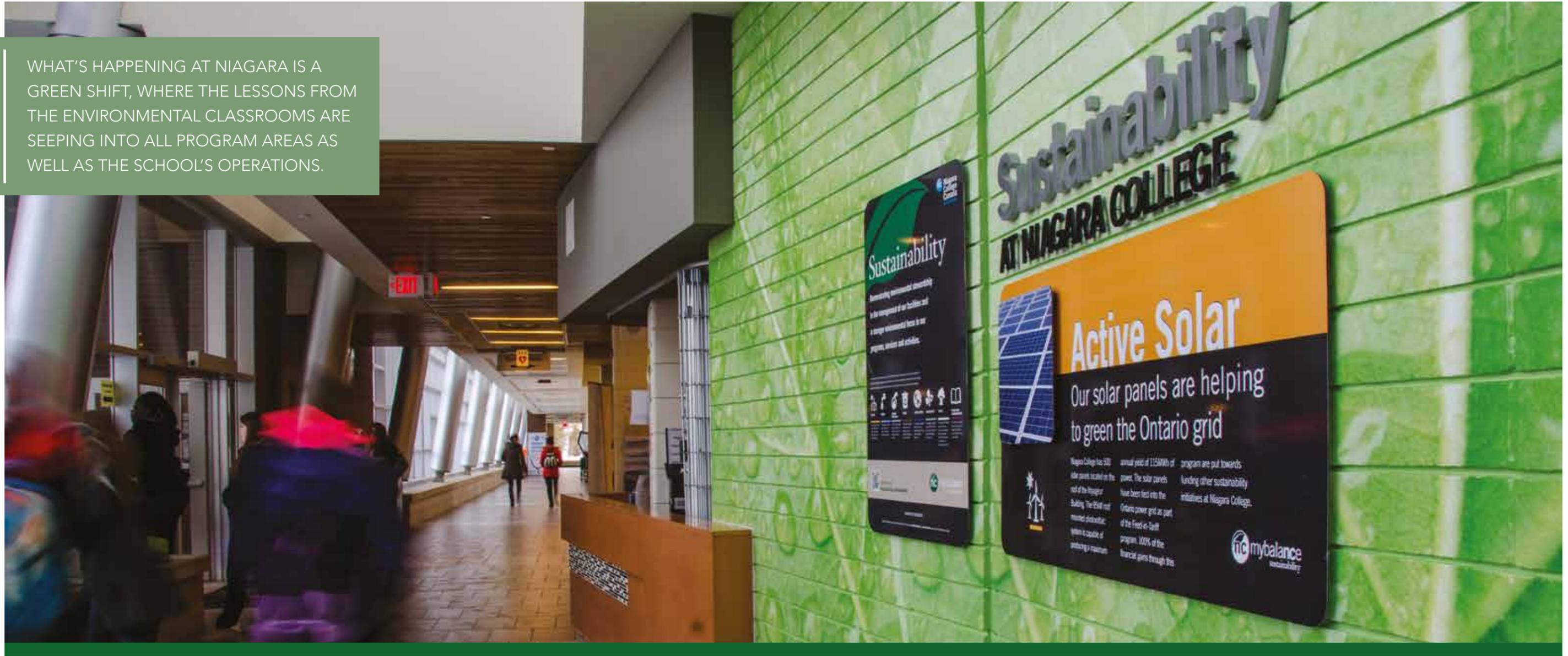


WHAT'S HAPPENING AT NIAGARA IS A GREEN SHIFT, WHERE THE LESSONS FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL CLASSROOMS ARE SEEPING INTO ALL PROGRAM AREAS AS WELL AS THE SCHOOL'S OPERATIONS.



NIAGARA COLLEGE EMERGING AS A GREEN LEADER

 Sustainable Business Magazine speaks to President Dan Patterson and Sustainability Coordinator Taryn Wilkinson about how Niagara College is promoting sustainability.

Ontario's Niagara College is quietly emerging as a green leader within its community and among post-secondary institutions.

Niagara College has a well-respected School of Environment and Horticulture, where students benefit from applied education and the unique living laboratory that surrounds them. What's happening at Niagara is a green shift, where the lessons from the environmental classrooms are seeping into all program areas as well as the school's operations.

Niagara College has made environmental sustainability a key strategic priority. The result is a horizontally and vertically integrated culture of sustainability that goes beyond operations to create living laboratories for student, employee, and community learning.

"As educators, we provide outstanding applied education in environmental studies and renewable technologies, and our graduates are making significant contributions in this sector," says Niagara College president Dan Patterson. "Sustainability has become an important part of our long-term strategic plan, inside the classroom and out."

With an enrolment of more than 10,000 full-time students, Niagara College operates from specialized campuses located in the heart of the Niagara region. The Welland Campus is home to programs in media, applied health, community services and safety, and technology – including a Renewable Energies Technician program. Nestled in the shadows of the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Campus is home to

the School of Environment and Horticulture, tourism and business programs, and the College's Canadian Food and Wine Institute, which includes 40 acres of teaching vineyards, gardens, hop yards, and more.

In 2011, the College set five sustainability targets for the next five years: Cut paper consumption by half, achieve a 65 percent diversion rate for waste (achieved in 2012), achieve a 10 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and achieve a five percent reduction in water use. In 2012, the College banned the sale of bottled water while installing several hydration stations throughout its campuses. "This initiative was significant in terms of building a culture of sustainability at Niagara College," says Taryn Wilkinson, Niagara College's Sustainability Coordinator and a



graduate of NC's Environmental Management and Assessment (Graduate Certificate) program. "The bottled water initiative has the obvious benefit of reducing waste from plastic bottles but, more importantly, it supports the notion that clean drinking water is a right, not a privilege."

Part of the College's green shift includes embracing green technologies and

innovative energy conservation initiatives at its campus facilities. The Welland Campus features solar panels and a geothermal heat pump, as well as a small demonstration-size wind turbine, which also provides the Renewable Energies Technician and environmental students with the opportunity to use the campus as a living lab within the classroom. Two

on-campus facilities, the Rankin Technology Centre in Welland and the unique Wine Visitor + Education Centre in Niagara-on-the-Lake, have earned Carbonzero Certification as carbon neutral buildings. Students from the College's Environmental Management and Assessment (Graduate Certificate) program gain valuable real-world experience working with a local

company, Walker Industries, to conduct annual greenhouse gas inventories for these buildings.

Niagara College has also entered into strategic partnerships that promote sustainability in the community and beyond. The College is a member of the Niagara Sustainability Initiative (NSI), a not-for-profit organization that is focused on improving

environmental and economic performance by engaging the community to reduce carbon emissions, enhance sustainability, and improve economic performance. Niagara College is also a member of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) and participated in the Sustainability Tracking & Rating System (STARS) in October 2013, achieving a Bronze rating.

"Niagara College has demonstrated its commitment to environmental education and awareness for students, employees, and visitors by actively implementing a variety of unique projects," says Katrina Kroeze, NSI's executive director. "The cross-functional and cross-disciplinary relationships Niagara College has developed over the past few years provide endless creativity to drive sustainability in a number of ways including student life, operational efforts, and campus culture."

These efforts are earning recognition locally and internationally. In 2014 alone, Niagara College was awarded the

Energy Manager Excellence Award from the Ontario Power Authority, Outstanding Post-Secondary Institution from the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication (EECOM), was listed as one of the Top Environmental Organizations in Canada by Environmental Careers Organization (ECO) Canada, and was awarded the Green Business Award by the Niagara Region.

The future at Niagara College looks green as well. A new Sustainability Strategic Plan is under development in collaboration with students, staff, and community stakeholders, and will include goals, targets, and new initiatives.

"We're making important strides and we continue to broaden the scope of sustainability," says Ms. Wilkinson. "It's an exciting era of change at Niagara College." □

For more information about Niagara College, visit niagaracollege.ca. To learn more about the College's sustainability initiatives, visit niagaracollege.ca/sustainability.



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