Purchase College Awarded $765,000 for Green Infrastructure Project

by Tom Renner  Schools  01/09/15

Grant from the Regional Economic Development Council will help support the greening of Purchase College. Photo Credit: Facebook/Purchase College

PURCHASE, N.Y. – Purchase College, SUNY, has announced a $765,000 grant from the Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) to implement green infrastructure and significantly improve stormwater management.

Created by Gov. Andrew Cuomo, the council has awarded more than $2 billion for economic growth and job creation during the past three years.

“Purchase College proudly accepts this green infrastructure grant from the REDC,” said college President Thomas J. Schwarz. “This opportunity embodies the college’s ‘Think Wide Open’ motto, encompassing environmental and educational benefits for the betterment of our students and community.”

Two major green infrastructure practices — bioretention swales and porous pavers — will be used to manage stormwater runoff from formerly impervious surfaces (parking lots and pedestrian paths). The bioswales will divert water away from the hardscape, while the porous pavement will allow it to permeate the surface instead of going down the storm drains.

According to Tom Kelly, Purchase’s senior energy manager, “Sustainability is one of the pillars of the college’s strategic plan. This REDC grant affirms the college’s commitment to the environment by proactively addressing local stormwater issues. It also is a notable validation that Purchase College is a leader in the green campus movement.”

Chris Gavlick, Purchase College’s director of facilities and capital planning, added, “The green infrastructure project will serve as a living laboratory for students and the general public — demonstrating how these practices can be incorporated throughout the larger campus and the Blind Brook watershed to reduce flooding and improve water quality.”

In addition to its positive impact on the campus and larger environment, the project has an important educational component. Faculty members of the Purchase College Environmental Studies program will design comparative studies on water quality within and outside the project area, with data to be collected over a three year period.

Undergraduate senior interns will collect the field samples and conduct laboratory analysis as part of independent research requirements. Preliminary results of the studies will be included in the college’s Stormwater Master Plan and reported annually to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

“This project has the potential to inspire the next generation of green infrastructure stewards, who will advocate for new environmentally resilient systems in many settings,” Kelly said.

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