Ecologically Sound Nutrition: Senior Shares KEY Business Plan

One day, Lillian Dickerson hopes to open a café. Her aspiration stems from a desire to share the value of nutrition and healthy living.

This past Thursday, the senior and KEY scholar delivered her business plan to launch a sustainable eatery. KEY, formally known as the Kauffman Entrepreneurial Year, allows undergraduates to take a tuition-free fifth year to pursue any form of entrepreneurial venture.

Entitled “The Business of Health,” Dickerson’s plan envisions a café that would provide healthy food options, abide by sustainable business practices, purchase local products, and inform the community about the value of nutrition. Dickerson pursued this venture in light of “making Americans more aware of unhealthy behaviors, and creating a larger demand for food services that incorporate nutritional values into their tenets,” according to her project description.

An English and music major, Dickerson first became interested in sustainability during her internship at the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY). There, she spent time immersed in the language and process of food production corporations and their relationship to the environment. The experience made her “want to emphasize [in the plan] how important it is to be conscious of one’s actions and consequences in relation to the environment.”

During the year, Dickerson created a timeline of necessary preparations, determined costs, created and priced four seasonal menus, designated a floor plan for a real space on South Avenue, and formed agreements with potential care employees in developing the business plan. “I discovered just how complicated it is to try to develop your own business,” she added.

Even though she anticipates the café only fully materializing within five to ten years from now, she remains a staunch advocate of sustainable living.”Eating healthy and sustainably is important to ensure that we can continue to support our food system in years to come. If we keep feeding chemicals into the land, there won’t be anything left to cultivate… If we don’t take steps to limit the damage we’re causing to the environment, who knows what problems we’ll leave our children and grandchildren with.”

O’Brien Hall Receives LEED Gold Certification

O’Brien Hall, the University’s latest addition to campus housing, recently earned LEED Gold certification for its sustainable construction, landscaping, and operations.

Established by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) and verified by the Green Building Certification Institute (GBCI), LEED certification recognizes high-performance green buildings based on ratings in areas such as water efficiency, material and resources, indoor environmental quality, and more.

Though O’Brien Hall joins URMC’s Saunders Research Building in the University’s portfolio of recognized buildings, it is the first building to be LEED-recognized on the River Campus. “The O’Brien Hall project efficiently uses our natural resources and makes an immediate, positive impact on our planet, which will tremendously benefit future generations to come,” President of USGBC Rick Fedrizzi said.

Overall, O’Brien Hall uses 26 percent less energy than a baseline building. Other features include: a highly reflective white roof and vegetative “green” roof; high-efficiency LED lights outside of the building; efficient plumbing fixtures, such as dual flush toilets and sensor-controlled faucets; and an extensive insulation system, called a “thermal envelope” that helps to reduce the amount of energy needed to heat and cool the building.

CleanTech Open Accelerator Application Window Closes May 1

CleanTech Open, the world’s oldest and largest clean-technology startup accelerator, currently accepts applications into its 2013 CleanTech Open Accelerator Program, a business competition program that seeks to fund entrepreneurs “solving the globe’s greatest energy and environmental challenges.”

Since 2006, CleanTech Open has used the program to mentor, train, showcase, and network to support alumni and has awarded over $6 million in cash and services to support clean technology growth companies. The 727 participating companies in the accelerator program have raised more than $800 million in external capital.

The application window closes May 1, 2013. Attend a webinar on April 29 or learn more at the site.

Upcoming URMC Seminar Discusses the Risks and Benefits of Hydrofracking

Dr. David O. Carpenter, the director of the Institute for Health and the Environment at University of Albany’s School of Public Health, will present a talk entitled “Hydrofracking: Are the risks worth the benefits?” on May 9 at 11 a.m. in the K-307 auditorium of the University’s Medical Center (URMC).

Carpenter, who received his doctorate from Harvard Medical School, was recently named to New York’s Renewable Energy Task Force and is charged with implementing plans to reduce electricity use through new energy efficiency programs in industry and government.

The presentation is part of the Environmental Health Sciences (EHSC) Seminar Series.