

U of T finalist for Green Toronto Awards

BY JENNIFER LANTHIER

Like signs of spring creeping across campus, the gradual greening of U of T is attracting attention — earning the university a spot as one of three finalists in the 2010 Green Toronto Awards for energy conservation.

And it only took a few decades of innovation and dedication.

“There has been a strong culture of conservation here for a very long time — as the result of hundreds of conser-

vation projects, we’ve avoided over a million tons of greenhouse gas since 1973,” said **Ron Swail**, assistant vice-president (facilities and services). “Back in 1977, the university created a full-time professional engineer position exclusively dedicated to energy conservation.

“We’ve been doing this much longer than most universities — our recycling program is one of the most comprehensive and effective of any university in North America with a diversion rate over 65 per cent,” he said. “But do we want to do more? Absolutely.”

Individuals, groups and companies from across Toronto comprise the 27 finalists in nine categories of environmental excellence, including areas such as green design and water efficiency. The city will announce the winners at a ceremony April 23.

A number of the university’s innovative programs and policies were already in place when it was nominated for the same award three years ago but many

key programs are new. They include institutional changes such as replacing water cooled air-conditioning units with high-efficiency air conditioners and working with students and researchers to lower laboratory fume hoods when not in use, as well as supporting individual efforts such as recycling cellphones or lugging coffee mugs.

“The installation of the solar thermal panels at the Athletic Centre was a major feature of our nomination,”

Swail said. “And then there’s all the work we’ve done on lighting retrofits and bulb replacements.”

People may not have noticed the lighting changes that will yield substantial energy and cost savings. In 2007, the Ban the Bulb program prohibited the purchase of incandescent bulbs and in 2008, facilities and services replaced approximately

86,000 indoor lamps with more efficient T8 fluorescent lamps. Then they turned their gaze outdoors, to LED and induction lighting.

Government incentives helped fund some of the larger projects but most of the university’s energy conservation continues to be funded through its operating budget.

“We undertake these operational changes because it’s the right thing to do and it saves money, money that can go to supporting the academic mission,” Swail said. “And the side benefit is that it makes you feel good knowing you are contributing to a more sustainable environment.”

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