Success Story

Experiential Learning Opportunity for Penn State Students and Economic Opportunities for Local Businesses

By introducing sustainable business practices using next generation approaches to innovative learning through energy efficiency (E2) assessments, the SBDC Environmental Consultant and Penn State students inspire next generation business leaders to operate sustainably. Penn State Outreach’s SBDC help businesses improve their competitiveness by providing energy efficiency assistance and identify and work with businesses in conjunction with Penn State faculty who provide opportunities to immerse the learning experience of Penn State students beyond the classroom. Penn State students perform E2 assessments to help businesses reduce costs through energy reduction. The primary objectives are to expose students to supervised energy research and to expand economic opportunities for local businesses throughout Centre and Mifflin Counties.

The Penn State SBDC started the experiential learning opportunity for Penn State students approximately ten years ago. The Penn State SBDC and the Department of Energy and Mineral Engineering’s Professor, Sarma Pisupati developed a project for his EGEE 102: Energy Conservation and Environmental Protection class. As a final project at the end of each semester the class provides energy assessments to local businesses in the area. The energy assessments perform help the businesses to reduce costs through energy reduction while increasing energy efficiency and the Penn State students benefit by obtaining a great opportunity to get out into a business, apply the principles they learn in class, and put their theories into practice.

During the past ten years the SBDC and Penn State students have reached out to 30 local businesses providing them with E2 assessments as mentioned above. During the E2 assessments recommendations were made on how to save money through reduced energy cost. A total of 145 students have had the opportunity to work with the SBDC Environmental Consultant and apply what they have learned in class into real world applications. The students worked for approximately 880 hours putting together reports for clients making E2 recommendations and providing return on investment (ROI) upgrades for energy efficient projects.

In November 2014 – Eight Penn State Students participated in an energy assessment for Fasta & Ravioli Company located in Pleasant Gap, PA.