

Pitzer College in forefront of the green wave

Alan Jones has been the dean of faculty at Pitzer College in Claremont since 2001 and has led the education component of the Green Valley Initiative.

He was one of the founding faculty members of the college's Pitzer in Ontario program, an immersion program in critical community studies, and he was founding director of the college's Center for California Cultural and Social Issues.

The school has been awarded Gold Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification by the U.S. Green Building Council for its three new residence



halls. Pitzer is the first of the Claremont Colleges to receive Gold LEED certification for its residence halls and is among the few colleges or universities in the nation to achieve this major milestone.

This paper recently has the chance to ask Jones Six Questions:

QUESTION: There are a number of sustainability initiatives in which Pitzer is involved: the Green Valley Initiative, a

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LEED-certified residence hall program, and the Firestone Center for Ecology Restoration. What was the impetus for Pitzer to adopt sustainability as a platform and what challenges does the university face in doing so?

JONES: The ethos of environmental sustainability has very deep roots at Pitzer.

This ethos is even reflected in our mission statement "Pitzer College produces engaged and socially responsible citizens of the world

through an academically rigorous, interdisciplinary liberal arts education emphasizing social justice, intercultural understanding and environmental sensitivity."

Since its founding in 1963, the college has incorporated environmental studies and environmental science into its academic offerings.

A core group of the college's very early faculty, John Rodman, Paul Sheppard and Carl Hertel, did pioneering work in restoration ecology even before the field existed. They were also making environmental issues central in their writings and See **JONES** | Page A14

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artistic work as early as the mid-1960s. In environmental science, Robert Feldmeth, Dan Guthrie and Clyde Erierson were working on issues of environmental sustainability from a scientific perspective at the same time.

The number of Pitzer faculty currently in the field of environmental studies and environmental science has grown steadily since our early years and these fields are now among the most popular majors at the college.

It is not surprising then, that the college continues to be deeply committed to the principles of environmental sustainability.

Q: Pitzer built some of the nation's first Gold LEED-certified residence halls. Are they meeting the expectations of the campus community? Are there things you have learned and will do differently on the next project?

JONES: The addition this past fall of our new gold-level LEED-certified dormitories, the first college dorms in the country to receive such certification, is a product of many years of planning by Pitzer faculty, staff and students and is an outgrowth of our core commitment to the environment.

Q: Have there been any unanticipated benefits or drawbacks to Pitzer having LEED-certified residences?

JONES: We had certainly anticipated that the new LEED-certified dorms would, over the long run, return economic dividends to the college, and we had also anticipated that the architectural and environmental principles instantiated in the new dorms would provide the basis for ongoing academic discourse on campus.

Perhaps the biggest unanticipated drawback to date is that all of our students would now like to be housed in the new dorms.

We have received considerable pressure from students to accelerate the timeline for the Phase 2 dorm build-out, when we will replace our remaining old dorms with LEED-certified buildings — we are currently exploring the possibility of doing exactly that.

The biggest unanticipated benefit of the project to date is that Robert Redford heard about the project, was intrigued by it and agreed to be our keynote speaker at the building dedication ceremony. He has since become a friend

of the college.

Q: Tell us about the Green Valley Initiative and the role Pitzer plays in it.

JONES: Pitzer's involvement with the Green Valley Initiative, a regional initiative in the Inland Empire to attract "green" industry to the area and to incorporate the products of those industries into our regional growth plans and building practices, has been a wonderful opportunity for me and for the college.

The brainchild of Corona developer Ali Sahabi, the Green Valley Initiative is a wonderfully ambitious initiative to tie regional economic growth to sound ecological practice.

I was fortunate enough to have been asked to take leadership of the educational component of the Green Valley Initiative during its initial development phase and I found the experience to be wonderfully rewarding. Twenty-four colleges and universities in the Inland Empire have participated in planning for the Green Valley Initiative and have addressed such issues as job training, technical support teams for regional green industry, public education and a teacher-training program designed to help infuse "green content" into curriculum.

We have also been working with regional art museums and libraries as well as public television to develop programming in the arts which addresses issues of environmental sustainability.

The work of the Education Committee is coordinated with the work of two other GVI committees representing the areas of economic development and policy. The opportunity provided by GVI to think prospectively about regional growth and to do so with an eye toward sustainable building practices has been exhilarating for the hundreds of volunteers who have been participating in the project.

Q: How does the state of the economy, current real estate market and governmental budget conditions help or hinder the efforts of the Green Valley Initiative?

JONES: I think that one of the foundational assumptions of the GVI, and one of the reasons why the Inland Empire is a great fit for this type of initiative, is the fact that the projected pace of residential and commercial development in the area is so high. Much of the I.E. is still undeveloped and growth projections for the region are enormous. The possibility of getting out in front of that development, of shaping it in ways that maximize

the sustainability of emergent communities and the region is very exciting.

It is obvious that the current subprime mortgage crisis has hit the I.E. particularly hard and regional growth rates as reflected in new home sales has temporarily declined, but the underlying dynamics that make the I.E. an attractive place to live remain intact and in the not-too-distant future, accelerated growth rates will resume.

The current downturn in the real estate development may in fact provide a much-needed respite during which GVI can advance its very ambitious regional planning efforts.

Q: What other green initiatives does Pitzer have under way?

JONES: Pitzer College was also extremely fortunate to receive a gift of 150 acres of land on a mountainside overlooking the Pacific coast in Dominical, Costa Rica, about four years ago. The property, which was a gift of Diane Firestone, was used as a cattle ranch and, as a result, had been heavily grazed.

Under the careful management of Carol Brandt, vice president for international programs, and with the active involvement of Pitzer faculty members Paul Faulstich, Melinda Herrold-Menzies, Don McFarlane and Cheryl Baduini, the property has been transformed into a center for restoration ecology and a solid curriculum based in human and tropical ecology has been developed. Pitzer students and faculty actively chart the reintroduction of tropical flora and fauna into the property.

It is the only center for restoration ecology in Costa Rica owned and operated by a liberal arts college and the work done there is a wonderful complement to the deep and long-standing work that the college has always done on Southwest desert ecology.

Work at the Firestone Center has also uncovered a surprisingly rich collection of indigenous rock art which has enabled extended discussions of human ecology in the region from a historical perspective.

The Pitzer Arboretum, which functions as both a showcase and a laboratory for Southern California native plant species was begun by John Rodman and has been ably overseen by the current Arboretum director, Joe Clemens, formerly of the Huntington Gardens. Clemens, with assistance from the entire Pitzer community, has done a magnificent job in developing and expanding the size and the academic significance of the Arboretum.