Working together toward a more sustainable future

This year, the city of Kent announced a climate action plan to reduce the city’s greenhouse gas emissions and address other environmental concerns. After the detailed plan was crafted, city officials realized something was missing. The plan includes transitioning municipal lighting to energy-efficient LEDs and laying the groundwork for an electric vehicle infrastructure. But someone needs to shepherd the initiative from idea to application.

Kent could not afford to hire someone full time, says Bridget Susel, the city’s community development director, so it turned to Kent State University for help.

Kent City Manager Dave Ruller, who has worked with three Kent State University presidents to invest in Kent’s renaissance, asked if Kent State would share a sustainability coordinator. And the university agreed. (The position is equally funded via city ordinance and the university’s facilities planning and operations budget. The university supplies employee benefits.)

“The city and the university have engaged with each other around sustainability issues for years,” says Melanie Knowles, Kent State’s sustainability manager. “It’s an important partnership, she says, “I know then that I wanted to be a part of helping create solutions and resilience in the face of these wicked problems.”

In 2016, she graduated with a master’s degree in sustainability from the Fink School of Sustainability and Environment at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. That year she was appointed to a three-year term on the city of Kent’s Sustainability Commission, where she served as a volunteer until 2019. During her tenure, she helped strengthen community relationships and guide policies for the development of a city-wide climate action plan. When it came time to fill the sustainability coordinator role this year, Morris was an obvious choice, Susel says.

The city of Kent still must formally adopt the climate action plan and the university still must approve its sustainability plan. However, Morris has already been hard at work, splitting her time evenly between the city and the university. She looks forward to executing the plans soon.

“I am excited to help bring the initiatives outlined in the city of Kent’s climate action plan and Kent State’s sustainability plan to life,” Morris says. “I love collaborative work, and it will be wonderful to get to connect with all the folks who are already doing great work in our communities around the area’s of action the plans call for. I look forward to working together to implement the suggested initiatives.”

—Jillian Kramer, BA ’06

Bright Future for Electrical/Electronic Engineering Technology Students

In response to a request from Intel®, Kent State University is leading a network that includes 13 partner higher education institutions throughout Northeast Ohio. They are poised to prepare the workforce to make components for the small electronic devices that play a large role in our everyday lives. The plan is part of the multinational technology company’s Ohio Semiconductor Education and Research Program.

According to Intel’s website, the company will invest $50 million directly in Ohio higher education institutions to address immediate semiconductor manufacturing challenges and workforce shortages. The US National Science Foundation will match an additional $10 million from Intel in national funding opportunities. Intel’s education financing is part of the company’s recent announcement that it would invest more than $20 billion to construct two leading-edge semiconductor chip factories in Ohio.

The College of Applied and Technical Studies is home to Kent State University’s associate degrees. As the university further develops its partnership with Intel, readying the workforce with a world-class education is key. In fact, 2,100 of the 3,000 jobs Intel brings to Ohio require the associate of applied science degree in electrical/electronic engineering technology currently offered at Kent State’s Trumbull and Tuscarawas campuses.

Graduates of this two-year program are in high demand and prepared for careers as engineering technicians in state-of-the-art technology, including alternative energy, drone technology, electric vehicle industry, engineering design, manufacturing and robotics.

Academic program leaders throughout Kent State and its partner institutions are united in meeting the educational needs of a diverse 21st-century workforce that is prepared for good-paying jobs that propel the future.

“We plan to scale existing educational opportunities, develop new experiential curricula and establish or refine pathways for learners seeking to enter, reskill or upskill in areas relevant to semiconductor fabrication,” says Peggy Shadduck, PhD, Kent State’s vice president for Regional Campuses and dean of the College of Applied and Technical Studies. She served as Kent State’s lead principal investigator on the grant titled Pathways to Semiconductor Careers.

“These strengths can be amplified through collaboration with our 13 partners to address the immediate and future workforce needs of Intel and its suppliers.”

—Deb Ellwood

Learn more at www.kent.edu/cats/intel. Learn more about the two-year EEET degree at https://catalog.kent.edu/colleges/ap/electrical-electronic-engineering-technology-aas/.