

Edinburgh College win two awards

Edinburgh College celebrated double success at the Scottish further education sector's flagship awards, taking home two top prizes from the College Development Network's annual ceremony.



The CDN Annual Awards recognise the talent, skills and achievements of colleges and their staff and students, celebrating the outstanding projects taking place in colleges across Scotland. The winners received their awards at a ceremony in Edinburgh on Thursday night.

The college won the following awards:

- The Changing Colleges Award, for the college's groundbreaking partnership working agreement with Edinburgh College Students' Association (ECSA), the first of its kind for one of the country's newly merged colleges. The agreement formalises how the college and ECSA work together, giving the students' association a strong voice to influence decision making at all levels of the organisation. This award category recognises leadership and innovation in the development of regional colleges. ECSA was also named the Further Education Students' Union of the Year 2014 by the National Union of Students.

- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award, for ECSA's commitment to reaching, representing and supporting some of the most under-represented and hardest-to-reach groups in the local community. In close partnership with the college, ECSA has developed a range of events and initiatives to ensure

that all students are treated fairly and with dignity, and that their rights are respected. These include events giving under-represented groups such as care leavers and refugees the opportunity to tell their stories.

The college was also highly commended in the Sustainability category, for the continuing development of its solar meadow project at its Midlothian Campus, which includes an increase in student involvement.

The £1.2m, 2,560-panel solar meadow launched in 2013 in partnership with energy firm SSE and generates the equivalent energy for the campus to meet its electricity needs and reduce its carbon emissions by 300,000kg per year. Engineering students have been using data generated from the solar meadow in their studies to learn about renewable energies. This year, the use of the facility as a teaching tool will be expanded and more students from other subject areas will have the chance to use it.

Edinburgh College interim principal Elaine McMahon said: "Coming away with these awards is a fantastic achievement and our staff and students deserve huge congratulations. Winning and being highly commended across this range of categories shows the great diversity of excellent work being done at the college. There's so much creativity and ingenuity here and it's great to see it being celebrated this way by our peers in the college community.

"It's particularly satisfying to see our students' association rewarded as the college places huge importance on students' involvement in key decision making throughout the organisation to provide the best learning environment. The equality award for ECSA is also truly deserved. The students have taken the initiative to make sure we engage with all our students, including those who are perceived as hard to reach, to give

them every chance to succeed.

“The solar meadow commendation is a great credit to the sustainability work the college is becoming well known for. With renewable energy now Scotland’s main source of power, it’s important that we equip students to be at the forefront of this field. Our work in renewables is positive not only for students and our industry partners, but also our surrounding communities.”

Jeroen van Herk, president of ECSA, said: “This was an amazing night for us and we’re thrilled with the two awards. The whole ECSA team has done great things over the last couple of years and it’s an honour to be recognised for all the hard work.

“These awards reflect the close partnership we have with the college and the importance it places on listening to the student voice. This shows what an independent students’ association can do while working in partnership with its institution.

“We’re also delighted that we’re able to bring attention to groups such as students from care backgrounds and asylum seekers. As a student body, we must represent all our students equally and give them all the support they need, and this recognition shows we’re heading in the right direction.”

The awards dinner was hosted by Sally Magnusson at The George Hotel.

Photo :

From left to right: Myra McCabe, head of Student Services; Julie McCran, vice principal, quality, performance and the student experience; Zoe Croy, ECSA vice president (women); Elaine McMahon, interim principal; Craig Wilson, deputy principal