

Quad City Company Assists ISU Students in the Installation of a New Green Roof

Written by Jake Glimco
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ISU installing Student-Funded Green Roof atop Memorial Union

Project illustrates the student body's commitment to sustainability

AMES, IA / April 9, 2012 – Students are helping turn Iowa State University's Memorial Union's roof green, both literally and figuratively. In a bold move that echoes the origins of an Iowa State University landmark student center, ISU's Government of the Student Body (GSB) has agreed to allocate funds from the mandatory student activity fee to help install a green roof that had been planned for the center, but had not previously been funded. On April 13th, volunteer students from ISU's Landscape and Horticulture Clubs and the Green Umbrella organization will install an 855-square foot green roof under the supervision of LiveRoof® Certified Installer Central States Roofing of Ames. The project promises to be both educational and functional: providing hands-on experience with a leading green technology, while reducing the university's operating expenses and storm water runoff. In addition, this LiveRoof® Hybrid Green Roof System project, grown by Roof Top Sedums of Davenport, Iowa, will instantly add a beautiful habitat to what until now has been a barren rooftop. ISU's Memorial Union was built in the 1920's entirely through private donations from students, alumni and other supporters as a memorial to Iowa State students and alumni who died in World War I.

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The Memorial Union project was the brain-child of ISU senior Miles Thompson of Cedar Rapids, who studies green roof technology under ISU Horticulture Lecturer Jennifer Boussetot, of DeWitt, IA. Thompson so enjoyed working on another green roof on campus that he sought out and advocated for other suitable green roof sites at ISU. When he learned that a green roof had been planned for the Memorial Union, but funding hadn't been approved, he took it upon himself to bring the issue to the GSB, which allocated funds from student activity fees to finance what MU couldn't. "I just really wanted to make a difference and turn this into a teaching opportunity for fellow students and a lasting testament to the importance that ISU students place on sustainability." Lecturer Boussetot adds, "The passion these students have for this project is powerful. I'm so impressed with what they've been able to make happen for ISU."

The colorful mix used in ISU's latest project features hardy, drought-tolerant groundcover plants, which display a variety of colors and textures, even during the fall and winter months. Besides being beautiful, the green roof's vegetation soaks up rainfall and reduces storm water runoff. The green roof helps reduce rooftop temperatures during summer, thereby protecting and extending the life of the roof membrane. Green roofs are estimated to double the life of roofing materials and they work as insulation to reduce heating and cooling costs. In addition to using plants that are well-established in soil specially engineered for the extremes of a rooftop environment, the LiveRoof® System also features a patent-pending hybrid design combining the best features of all green roof systems. The LiveRoof® System reduces labor costs to maintain compared to most systems, and because the established plants thrive as their own living mulch.

This project is particularly meaningful to Roof Top Sedums founders Roxanne Nagel and Teresa Nelson. Both are ISU alums; Nagel graduated with BS in Horticulture ('99) and Nelson with a Bachelors in Landscape Architecture ('87). Nagel adds, "We're honored that the institution that helped instill our passion for the environment will now use this product to teach the next generation about green roof technology."

About Roof Top Sedums: Roof Top Sedums was established in 2007 and is a Regional LiveRoof® Licensed Grower servicing Iowa, Western Illinois, Eastern Nebraska, Eastern Kansas, and most of Missouri. The business is 100% women-owned and certified nationally as a Women's Business Enterprise as well as an Iowa Targeted Small Business. For more information on projects previously grown by Roof Top Sedums or information about the LiveRoof® System, visit www.rooftopsedums.com.