

September 23, 2009



By John Terhune/Journal & Courier
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Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird, a plane, a green roof!

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Purdue's red brick buildings could someday sport a little more color with the installation of "green" roofs such as the one unveiled Tuesday on Schleman Hall's balcony.

With the help of a \$68,700 grant and Purdue University architects, Boiler Green Initiative introduced its sustainable roof system project to the Purdue community.

The plant-covered rooftop and other green roofs are known to retain rainwater and insulate, but close monitoring will quantify the benefits. Soil moisture probes, rain gauges, and temperature probes powered by a solar panel will measure water levels to determine the plants' absorption of rainwater.

"The data will be used to promote the use of other green roofs on campus," said Heather Gill, a Purdue graduate student and head of monitoring. She said the monitoring will keep her busy.

She believes in the need for more green roofs because of benefits that include building insulation, energy efficiency, and increased life span of the roof.

Information gleaned from the Schleman Hall roof project will be used to draw up more precise proposals for green roofs elsewhere.

Prospective campus roofs include Mann Hall, the Horticulture Building and the Armory. Boiler Green Initiative will work with Purdue architects to determine the next green roof based on structural tests, available funding and condition of the roof. The student organization is also discussing a possible rain garden in Purdue's Hillel building.

Boiler Green Initiative has been pursuing green roofs on campus since its founding in 2006. Two landscape architect students had hopes of bringing one of the green roofs they'd studied in class to campus. The student organization includes more than 400 students and supports campuswide environmental efforts.

The Schleman Hall roof was chosen because of its accessibility and load-handling ability. More than half of the 1,750-square-foot balcony is covered by self-sufficient sedum plants. The remainder of the area consists of reflective pavers that provide access to benches and tables.

"We wanted students to be able to come out, sit, and eat lunch on the roof," said Hollie Colony, Boiler Green Initiative vice president and head of the green roof subcommittee.
