New greenhouse in the SITE offers students and faculty exciting research opportunities

By CHLOE GRANT
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Another new addition is underway at Quinnipiac University. A greenhouse is coming to the third floor of the Science, Innovation, Technology and Exploration (SITE) building.

Said to be operational by the end of October of this academic year, the building is still under construction, with only the exterior glass panels visible at the moment.

According to Associate Professor of Biology and Environmental Science and Studies Program Director Sarah Lawson, the greenhouse will have two separate spaces, one designated for teaching and the other for research.

The space will also be temperature and humidity controlled, allowing it to accommodate the wide variety of greenery it will house. Lawson explained how most of the plants being grown in the greenhouse will be native to local ecosystems.

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>
> – Ian Hahn
> JUNIOR ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND BIOLOGY DOUBLE MAJOR

She also touched on the prospect of growing certain types of produce, such as lettuce, carrots and other root vegetables that tend to grow rapidly, if students express an interest in doing so.

"We have a really nice collaboration with the Keefe (Community) Center in Hamden, and they are the food bank for Hamden," Lawson said. "A lot of students who are interested in food security have volunteered there because they grow all of the food…So the plants are mostly going to be used for that reason, and also just for students to study."

It will mostly be utilized by classes as a teaching opportunity, however, any student is able to gain access if need be. There is also mention of potential work-study positions opening for the greenhouse and those will likely become available at some point in spring 2027.

Joined by Lawson, Assistant Professor of Environmental Science Jeffery Lombardo, as well as Assistant Professor of Biology Trevor Tivey will be working with their students on research opportunities for the greenery grown inside the greenhouse.

Both in their second years of teaching at Quinnipiac, they are excited for this new opportunity on campus. Lombardo hopes to use the greenhouse to grow Japanese stilt weeds, an invasive species he finds fascinating. He plans on studying the life history of the plant and how we can combat it. Tivey's expertise lies in fungal plants and types of grasses, both of which will be found in the greenhouse.



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The new greenhouse will be home to a variety of native and invasive plants, with it potentially growing produce like lettuces, carrots and other root vegetables.

"For the ecology lab, we'll probably do some experiments with monocots versus dicots and growth rate…I would imagine we're going to grow a lot of native plants," Lawson said. "We had the pollinator garden over at Albert Schweitzer, which is a really great seed bank we can grow any of those from. We've talked about produce. The challenge there is that produce tends to come to like harvest during the summer, and that's when students aren't available, and also they can't utilize (it)."

Student of Lombardo and junior environmental science and biology double major Ian Hahn looks forward to using the greenhouse in coming semesters and worked alongside Lombardo this past summer recording data and measuring Japanese stiltgrass along disturbed and undisturbed interiors. He plans on continuing this research throughout this semester.

"September… or October, we're going to collect some seeds from that sample site, and hopefully the greenhouse will be up and will grow those seedlings through," Hahn said. They will "see if (the plants') characteristics can be passed down to their offspring, or (if) they were just due to being grown in that certain part.

Hahn looks forward to the potential research opportunities the greenhouse will have to offer students and faculty of Quinnipiac.

"I personally am kind of excited for it," Hahn said. "...We are going to be able to have the potential to do more research and more complex research (being) able to grow plants in a sterile environment. So this will be good for students and faculty alike who want to do research projects as well as you know more interesting labs per se."

Students are encouraged to reach out to Lawson at sarah.lawson@quinnipiac.edu for any inquiries regarding projects they are interested in utilizing the greenhouse for.

ETHOS from cover

with new ideas to help students navigate the hardships that come with AI. From her strong background, she has had to follow through with misconduct procedures and help educate students on why using AI academically can be a wrong approach. But it doesn't always have to be.

"Through my work in academic integrity, I have seen an increase in cases involving unauthorized or improperly documented use of artificial intelligence," Voth said. "Alongside a lot of confusion about the expectations and the appropriate use of AI in classes, not just with students."

First-year civil engineering major Alex Bernardo highlights negative characteristics that come from using AI often in an academic setting.

"It does everything for you; you're not learning anything about you," Bernardo said. "It makes you look lazy. You're not willing to do the work, and you're just taking the easy route."

Both can agree with students who have this mindset, as it can be tempting to use AI because it does the work for you. In addition to highly assisting you, it can cut the work load in half.

"One of the things from the academic integrity side of things, is our students using AI with their learning in mind, (is that) they (are) using it because it's fast as it will help them," Voth said.

Voth noted that the reason why some students may fail to understand how to accomplish some work is because they are allowed to put it off and allow for Artificial Intelligence to support them to the degree that they need.

"They're falling behind and AI is available. It's a temptation."

Voth noted that teachers are also responsible for helping students go about these areas of education.

"We're educators; even from academic integrity perspectives, we're here as educators. So how can we best have a conversation about ethical ways of using AI?" Voth said.

When Voth originated the program, she wanted to address the educational gaps she noticed in Quinnipiac's curriculum.

"My initial goal was looking at how I can cut academic integrity cases," Voth said. "I saw a gap in education."

As more time went on, Voth decided to address the issues and find a solution.

"It's my goal to recognize these patterns and to address them," Voth said.

Voth encourages students to get involved to have a better understanding of why they can face repercussions for AI use and how using it too much can set them back a step.

"I really expect it to be something where students contribute and ask questions, but not just students," Voth said.



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Quinnipiac introduces the ETHOS initiative to help students, faculty and staff understand all elements of AI.

First-year mechanical engineering major Mia Rizzo noted how AI can be a helpful "tool," often in math and English when material needs to be dialed down to an easier level when studied independently.

"It can help you word something so it sounds more professional if you are struggling on how to word something," Rizzo said. "It can help you use the steps to a math problem and the reasoning behind the steps."

Voth originated the idea to mend technological use in an academic setting.

"(I) created ethos, which is for ethical technology use, through humanity, outreach and shared learning," Voth said.

Voth argues that students need to know how to work alongside the positive and negative impacts AI can have on academic pride.

"I do feel like students feel left out," Voth said. "They get told, use AI or not to use AI without a lot of context."

The Quinnipiac ETHOS Initiative is currently figuring out the correct way to deal with these types of situations. As they grow, they continue to host panels to have everyone in the community be involved.

"They're making the decisions about whether and how to use AI and ETHOS here to create a space for them to understand really what those decisions mean," Voth said.

AI can be both a tool and a trick. To Voth, it is how you decide to use it.

"You want it to help you, not replace you," Voth said.