



## Faculty Interview Northeast Wisconsin Technical College



**Jenny Brinker**

Even from one conversation with Jenny Brinker, it is easy to see that she gets a lot of fulfillment in inspiring her students to make an impact beyond the classroom. She's worked hard to ensure that students in the Energy Management Program at Northeast Wisconsin Technical College help the community in addition to learning the skills they need for a variety of technical careers. Every year, students work with different non-profits to perform free energy audits and advise them on how to make their buildings more energy efficient. The program's latest community project was to assess the energy footprint of the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin's veterans building.

Although the program has been running strong for the last nine years, it hasn't been without its challenges. Keeping up with changing technology is hard, Brinker says. In the time that she's been leading the program, they've witnessed the changes of two very different lighting technologies and the integration of Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. Luckily, a strong advisory board helps the college to keep up with industry advances.

In January, the program moved to a goal of being a dedicated net-zero energy building and are diligently working to accomplish this task and have plans to see this completed before the end of 2019. The state of the art facility was specifically designed to give students and instructors access to the building's energy systems allowing them to analyze data and assess the building's function. Students also utilize the solar photovoltaic installation on the building's roof, where they learn to install solar systems each semester.

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When asked about advice for those aspiring to work in the energy industry Brinker says, "Stay positive, even at times when it's hard. The world of energy management and renewable energy is influenced by a lot of things. There are some days where you might be discouraged by what you read the news. But stay passionate. It *is* the right thing to do."

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