National Wildlife Federation®
CAMPUS ecology®

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
Spring 2008, Energy

BACKGROUND

Campus Profile

Ball State University, situated on 940 acres in Muncie, Indiana, serves approximately 19,000 students (45 percent male, 55 percent female). Seven academic colleges offer 120 undergraduate programs, 80 master's programs and 20 doctoral programs in 46 departments and schools. Some 750 faculty, 550 professional staff and 1,500 support personnel comprise the employee base.

Contacts

Francesca Hernandez
NWF Campus Ecology Fellow, 2007
Ball State University student
Email: francesca.her@gmail.com

Kevin S. Kenyon
Associate Vice President
Facilities Planning and Management
Ball State University
Phone: 765-285-8988
Email: kkenyon@bsu.edu

GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goals

The original goals of this project included a campus-wide energy audit and greenhouse gas assessment, an educational campaign targeting incoming freshmen and an effort to educate the university president and high-level administrators about the benefits offered by focusing on energy efficiency and green policy on campus.

Accomplishments

The goals of this project shifted slightly as the semester unfolded. Due to the size of Ball State University, it quickly became clear that a comprehensive carbon-footprint assessment would not be possible within the time frame allotted for the fellowship project. A more general energy analysis was employed in order to gain a clearer picture of the energy-use dynamics on campus; it highlights those buildings whose energy use was greatest in proportion to their square footage. Through this activity, several buildings were targeted as particularly inefficient consumers of energy. Then through a cooperative effort with three other students involved in an alternative energy class, we were able to map out a strategic plan whereby the most inefficient buildings could be retrofitted to be more effective at conserving energy. This was presented to the vice president of campus facilities and is now being incorporated into a larger document outlining an energy strategy for Ball State University.

Another adjustment in the original program proposal was the incorporation of an energy-monitoring project into one of the recently built residence halls. This was supposed to be implemented in tandem with a web-based educational campaign, but due to serious inadequacies in the online interface of the Washalert system, it could not happen. In addition, the energy monitoring equipment was not set up at an early enough date to get reliable results (from two time frames with comparable conditions), so it was

impossible to accurately gage the effectiveness of the educational initiative that was implemented (through signs and posters).

Through an interdisciplinary partnership that was created between the College of Architecture and Planning and the Institute for Digital Education and Entertainment (IDEE), a couple of short film clips or "webisodes" were created for the express purpose of educating students about conservation of energy and resources in their day-to-day lives. The content now exists, and action is being taken to have it made web-accessible on the university website.

The final goal of this project was to educate administrators and students about how to create a more sustainable campus and teach them why it is important. This is being accomplished through two separate projects. The first is a bottom-up process attempting to effect change by changing behaviors. It simply involves posting laminated signs in laundry facilities, computer labs, residence halls, restrooms and some selected classrooms. These will act as reminders of the small daily habits and routines that can help to lower levels of energy use. While rudimentary, sometimes these small, daily reminders are all it takes to help an individual adopt a new habit.

Challenges and Responses

The monitoring portion of the project was very frustrating, because it hit many snags, and also because I (Francesca Hernandez, Campus Ecology Fellow) was out of the country for the entire semester and was unable to creatively work around the problems that arose. However, one great development did emerge from the project: the formation of the College of Architecture and Planning and IDEE partnership and creation of the webisodes.

The education of incoming freshman students has proven to be a serious challenge. All freshmen are required to live in the residence halls for their first year of college. They are typically overwhelmed with paper; fliers, promotions and informative packets are handed out to them in massive quantities. Consequently, it makes little sense to contribute to this ineffective and wasteful means of conveying information. Instead, through discussions with residential assistants, it has been determined that the most effective way of educating students about conservation is to create opportunities for them to actively participate in and experience energy conservation.

One way to achieve this is to continue to encourage participation in competitive events with other universities, such as Recyclemania (Ball State participated in 2007 and 2008). Another means is to continue to promote the hosting of the Greening of the Campus event and to encourage student participation. Energy-reduction competitions between residence halls have been proposed as a means to increase awareness and participation, but as yet the university does not have the monitoring equipment required to make this a reality. Discussions have begun with AEP, the electrical provider for Ball State University, to provide the monitoring equipment to the university as a gesture of their increasing desire to pursue sustainable practices.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

Two campus groups, the Center for Energy Research/Education/Service and Students for a Sustainable Campus, are both collaborating on the educational component of this project, which will be completed in fall 2008. Various parts of the project have been achieved in partnership with other institutions.

Funding and Resources

This project was supported through a fellowship grant from NWF's Campus Ecology program

Community Outreach and Education
The second educational project tackles the problem using a top-down approach, effecting change by influencing the policies that impact everyone within their scope. While Ball State University administration has become increasingly sensitive to the notion of sustainability, many shortcomings still exist at the strategic planning and policy level. Having been a part of multiple research groups on campus, we have seen very compelling evidence supporting the potential savings that can be generated through campus-wide conservation programs. Much research goes unnoticed, however, and is quietly filed away into the archives.

In an attempt to make the case for change, research conducted by various Ball State student groups, Energy Star data and a series of studies from other universities are all being compiled into a professional-quality reference book. The book highlights the many strategies that have worked to save millions of dollars at other institutions, and will make the case for why it is important to adopt similar practices at our own university. It will include a best-practices manual for new buildings, landscapes and energy production. At least a dozen copies of this book will be printed and presented to the university administrators who are ultimately responsible for university policy making.

CLOSING COMMENT
Although the scope and trajectory of the project have shifted over time, it has been a great joy and honor to work with the National Wildlife Federation toward the common goal of creating a more sustainable future through conservation and education. The main obstacles throughout this project have been my own physical distance from campus (due to an internship in New York City and a semester spent in Asia). The NWF staff has been helpful, encouraging and ever-tolerant of my logistical issues throughout.