



University of Illinois at Chicago Chicago, Illinois Energy

SCHOOL

University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), public, 4-year, 27,580 students, Chicago, Illinois.

ABSTRACT

UIC competed in a nation energy-use reduction competition called Campus Conservation Nationals (CCN). This competition pitted universities across the United States against each other to see who could save the most electricity over a three week period in April 2012. UIC decided to not only compete in this nationally but to create its own competition amongst its residence halls. Two teams were created: James Stukel Towers (JST) versus Thomas Beckham Hall and Marie Robinson Hall (TBH/MRH). To provide incentives, UIC Environmental group, EcoCampus, gathered prizes from local-area businesses and the University itself, amounting to over \$1000 in prizes for students to win by participating. Throughout the competition, weekly events were held where students were made more aware of ways to save energy and create a more sustainable campus. When the competition was over and JST was declared the winner for UIC, it was calculated that 2235 kWhrs were saved over the span of the competition. This was an average energy reduction of almost 10% per competing building. We hope the energy saving techniques students put in place for the competition will persist throughout their lives, in some form.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

When this project started, we were not sure how well the university would do, being our first year competing in CCN. Our main goal was to have just some sort or measurable result that would show some energy savings. Luckily, the effects were very prevalent and we showed that people did reduce the amount of electricity they used, and to a very surprising degree. However, we would like to have a larger impact next year, possibly shooting for 15-25% energy use reduction. Additionally, instead of making teams out of the residence halls, we hope to get every building involved in the competition so that it's a campus-wide effort by every student, living on- and off-campus. It will be a larger task for our small organization and Office of Sustainability, but the effects seem by our first undertaking definitely point to a possibility to have a very large impact on UIC's energy usage in the future.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

Our university was able to show some significant savings in two of the three competing residence halls. Over the three weeks, JST saved 11.5% of its normal energy usages, MRH saved about 16%, and TBH showed no significant savings. This lack of results for TBH was due to its isolation. Focus was concentrated on the more centrally located JST and MRH, so the bad results from TBH likely reflect this lack of connection to the rest of the campus.

At any rate, we hope this competition helped show students and staff how simple it can be to make small changes in their lives to save energy. Simply turning off the lights when you leave a room can be a

very effective start to living within one's energy means, and we hope that this, among other energy-saving techniques, will remain a habit in every participant's life. By adopting these simple habits throughout their lives, the energy saved will help reduce the greenhouse gasses created in the production and use of this energy, thus helping slow the effects of global warming. This was the overarching theme that we wished the program to accomplish.

Challenges and Responses

This project faced a number of challenges, the first being gaining access to the electrical meters. Getting this required cooperation from Campus Housing, Campus Facilities, and Campus Utilities. Getting these three separate units on one task was difficult to accomplish, and a hiccup in communications almost prevented the first data point from being recorded. However, having the phone numbers of the directors of these three branches proved to be beneficial because eventually the correct director provided access. The second large hurdle that had to be overcome was getting the attention of the students. With a campus of almost 30,000 students, so many activities are going on simultaneously. Luckily for us, our competition dates were set for Earth Month, so we were able to supplement our advertising with that of other events being done by other student organizations and our Office of Sustainability. Our third largest hurdle was getting financial support to offer prizes for the winning residence hall. Being a school in the great city of Chicago, there were multitudes of opportunities for outside donations. However, there are also multitudes of other organizations competing for support from these businesses. Unfortunately, many of the environmentally-friendly businesses we approached had already promised support to too many others, and therefore could not offer us anything. Working with our Office of Sustainability, we looked within our University and found great support from our Administrative Office, who provided T-shirts, light bulbs, gift cards to our bookstore, and best of all, an iPad. This was a very surprising source of support because we did not expect the University to have such resources for our group; however, overlooking this resource would have been a critical mistake for anyone to have made.

The overall lesson to be learned for next year is managing resources correctly. Contacting University and outside resources as soon as possible is by far the most necessary task, because a simple task, when taken through an administrative body, can take much longer and be much more complicated than might be expected. Certain organizations, like our Student Activities Funding Committee (SAFC), have an application process that takes months before funding is awarded. Additionally, our Campus Housing has many resources to offer within the residence halls, however, their weekly schedules are filled to the brim months beforehand, so getting a head start on talking with them is a must do.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

This project directly saved 2235 kWhrs for our university. The savings in electricity indirectly connect to the reduction in use of resources, which can have a very measurable and beneficial effect on reducing the effects of climate change because it means less pollution from the production of this energy. We calculated* that in saving this amount of energy, we prevented about 1.54 metric tons of CO₂ from being released into the atmosphere – the equivalent of 173 gallons of gasoline emissions. (**calculations based on 2007 data from the United States EPA*)

Commentary and Reflection

This competition was headed up by EcoCampus, UIC's environmental organization – an organization that was revived in Fall 2011 for its first time back in action. It was also UIC's first attempt at CCN. With a

brand new organization and a previously unattempted competition, UIC is very proud of the success that it had in rallying students to the cause of sustainability. However, no matter how dedicated the students were, it could not have been done without the great assistance of the University, specifically the wonderful Office of Sustainability, Campus Housing, Administrative Services, Campus Facilities, and Campus Utilities. When people of all different lives come together for the cause of sustainability for everyone, the effects can be great. Our unity for the cause of sustainability was the real power that set everything in motion and made everyone work hard towards our campus' success. Finding people to support you and your cause is the single best action that can be taken to guarantee success.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The student environmental organization at UIC, EcoCampus, was the primary student force behind making this a reality. From this organization, the Residence Hall Ambassador David Klawitter, headed up a large portion of the project – including taking data, performing calculations, soliciting donations, working with Housing staff, planning and setting up events, and coordinating the efforts of all the individual teams involved. Additionally, EcoCampus President Colin Pannier, Vice Presidents Lauren Smith & Jinit Desai, Treasurer Neharika Akkoor, Secretary Riti Chokshi, and member Victor Ramirez all provided support with event advertising and planning.

UIC's Office of Sustainability provided great administrative help and consultation from the Associate Chancellor for Sustainability, Cindy Klein-Banai and her staff.

From UIC's Administrative Services, Mark Donovan, the Vice Chancellor for that Department, provided much needed financial and administrative backing for the events and prizes.

Director of Campus Housing, Susan Teggatz provided resources, advice, and administrative support to this project within the residence halls where the competition took place. In addition to her, Resident Directors Anthony Marotta & Miranda Ambuske and their staff helped coordinate the student events in their respective residence halls.



Funding and Resources

This project comes with a \$0 price tag. All that is really requires is for students to reduce their personal use of electricity. However, to offer students incentives to participate, EcoCampus solicited donations from local businesses and the university, amounting to about \$1000 in prizes that were raffled off to the winning student teams. Local businesses were willing to provide resources but were less able to do so due to the large amount of other groups they were supporting. However, through the university, by working with Administrative Services, we acquired several prizes from the campus Bookstore, like an iPad and gift cards; and by talking with the university's utility providers, energy efficient light bulbs were provided as prizes. The space to have these events was provided by Campus Housing within their residence halls. No NWF Fellowship was provided.

Education and Community Outreach

To get the student body involved, motivated, and informed, Weekly events' were provided for students to participate in within their residence halls. The first event was a "Blackout Party" for both of the competing teams, where the lights were turned off and glow sticks were handed out to students to create a fun environment of music, dancing, and food. This was mainly a fun way to kick off the competition and get more students aware that they should be saving electricity. For the second event, a more educational approach was taken. This was the "Vampire Electronics" event in which we provided students with food and information about appliances that use electricity even when not in use. The third event was more relax and was a movie night. We showed the film *Wall-E* to portray the importance of environmental responsibility and the possibly future consequences if we don't protect our planet. These events were the main way of advertising for the competition as a whole.

This particular competition specifically involved campus resources, so no local community outreach or participation was done.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contacts

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

UIC has had an Office of Sustainability since 2008, and this institution has worked independently and with students to make UIC's campus more sustainable in its daily functions. Before its establishment, UIC had a few lecture centers renovated in 2007 to be more energy efficient – using solar panels, geothermal heating, and more natural lighting. This green initiative spring-boarded UIC to being a more sustainable school. And so with the establishment of the Office of Sustainability, UIC undertook even more environmentally friendly efforts. The student body, along faculty and staff, regularly participate in an annual competition known as RecycleMania, in which the entire campus tries to recycle as much materials as possible, having the total score counted and entered for national consideration. Additionally, our annual Sustainability Week (usually done first semester) and Earth Month (April) teach students about how they can get involved in on-campus environmental efforts, highlighted by "the Great Stuff Exchange" where students can trade items they no longer wish to keep, rather than throwing them away. UIC Police work tirelessly to encourage students to bike around campus, thus reducing greenhouse gas emission from other forms of transport, while also teaching them about bike safety. UIC's Office of Sustainability has also been working to make buildings more energy efficient. Thus they created the Green Office Challenge – which encourages efficient use of office energy and supplies for university offices – and have been working on retrofitting building with more accurate meters to show energy use (a major part of UIC's involvement in CCN), so that energy-wasting buildings can be targeted and adjusted. This is just a small part of the 2011 Climate Action Plan that the University developed to decrease greenhouse gasses by 80% in 2050. To aid in the funding of such an effort, a Green Fee was proposed in 2010 by a student organization to gather about \$4 from each individual student's tuitions and fees to put towards sustainable efforts. These funds are currently only in the

developing stages of use but hold great prospect for the future. So overall, UIC has grown greatly as a more sustainable school. The united effort of faculty, students, and staff has put UIC on track to be a trend-setting school for sustainable initiatives on-campus, and it only shows signs of getting better from here. (UIC's Office of Sustainability website can be found here at <http://www.uic.edu/sustainability/>)

Image Credit: David Klawitter