



University of Illinois Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
Transportation

SCHOOL

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) is a major public research university located in the heart of one of the world's great cities. UIC provides a first-rate education for its students and is committed to creating and disseminating new knowledge as a university of growing national and international stature. The largest university in the Chicago area, UIC has 25,000 students, 15 colleges and annual research expenditures exceeding \$331 million. It has more than 110 buildings on over 240 acres. Historically known as a commuter campus, construction of three new residence halls on the new South Campus has nearly doubled the amount of students living on campus.

ABSTRACT

A five-year, baseline greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory was conducted and a climate action plan was drafted for the University of Illinois in Chicago (UIC). This project is part of UIC's larger commitment to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, as per the American College and University President's Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). Data for conducting the inventory was available for Scope 1 emissions, (those generated on site for generating electricity, heating and cooling as well as for running the campus fleet), Scope 2 emissions (purchased electricity) and Scope 3 emissions (waste disposal). However, no information was available regarding the commuting habits of the UIC community. A commuter survey was conducted to obtain that data. The baseline greenhouse gas inventory was then used to develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP) for the campus. The UIC CAP reflects the City of Chicago CAP background information and strategies but also relies on resources provided by the NWF and AASHE. The UIC CAP lays the path for the campus to become climate-neutral by mid-21st century.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

The first goal of this project was to quantify the greenhouse gas emissions generated by commuting to campus and to standardize the methodology for collecting data and calculating the emissions. The second goal was to then set targets of GHG reductions of about 2 percent per year through 2050. Although UIC already utilizes cogeneration from natural gas and purchases electricity provided from a low-carbon source (i.e. nuclear), future goals would be to track progress towards these reductions by conducting annual commuter surveys and the GHG inventory and to support the implementation for the reduction strategies in the CAP.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

UIC conducted a commuter survey to determine the modes of transportation used and the distance traveled by faculty, staff and students to get to campus on a daily basis. The data were translated into greenhouse gas emissions utilizing a carbon calculator for campus. Sixteen percent of our GHG emissions (43,221 metric tons CO₂ equivalents) were found to be from commuting, evenly split between faculty/staff and students.

The Office of Sustainability drafted a CAP that sets goals that align with a 2 percent annual reduction through 2050 to accomplish overall reduction of least 80 percent. The current draft of the CAP is available at <http://sustainability.uic.edu>. A draft Energy Policy was developed that is currently under review by top campus administrators and anticipate approval by fall 2009. The policy includes goals and actions UIC will take to reduce its energy consumption including metering buildings, behavioral change, and energy efficiency measures.

Challenges and Responses

The major challenge to completing this project was lack of time. Initial work was completed through committees and committee members were willing to discuss, weigh-in, and review proposed documents. However, the actual implementation of the survey and writing of the CAP was done by the Office of Sustainability (OS) staff. The OS staff also has many demands on its time which means deadlines have to be modified or postponed.

Another major challenge in developing the CAP was lack of concrete data to determine realistic energy efficiency goals as well as the potential for renewable energy on campus. It became apparent that the CAP would have to be an evolving document to refine and update as more information and technology becomes available. It would be useful to have an intern specifically assigned to updating the CAP and then have it reviewed by OS staff and committees.

Lastly, the commuter survey was released late in the fall semester and the response rate was lower than anticipated. This will be corrected by better planning and outreach with a specific deadline for getting the survey out in early October each year.

Commentary

Utilize existing campus resources as much as possible, such as a survey research group for helping to develop a survey and timeline and the sustainability committee for looking at policy proposals. Make it one person's responsibility for adhering to that timeline. Similarly, assigning responsibility to one person, with a clear timeline, will help ensure that the project is accomplished in a timely manner. Developing a CAP is a complex project and takes months, if not years to bring all the information together.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The Energy and Utilities subcommittee of the Chancellor's Committee on Sustainability and Energy (CCSE) organized the initial scope of the work for the development of the CAP. Other subcommittees, such as Recycling & Waste Management, Transportation & Grounds, and Outreach & Marketing provided input. The Associate Chancellor for Sustainability and the Director of Outreach in the Office of Sustainability had the main responsibility for the writing of the CAP. Graduate assistants who work in the OS assisted in developing drafts of various sections, conducting the survey, and completing the GHG inventory.

The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Administrative Services provided review of the draft CAP. The CCSE was provided with a presentation on the CAP and a chance to comment. All the Vice Chancellors were provided an opportunity to give input, particularly with regard to the role of the CCSE in implementing the plan. The Chancellor will give final approval to the plan prior to submission to the ACUPCC.

Funding and Resources

Staff and student time was funded primarily through the Office of Sustainability budget. One graduate student worked exclusively on data collection for the GHG (\$3,400) and the Transit Options Intern

worked on the survey (\$3,000). That position was funded 50% by the Chicago Department of Transportation. Other staff put in various amounts of time. In addition, UIC received \$2,000 through a NWF Campus Ecology Fellowship which was used to pay the Urban Transportation Center for developing the survey, covering costs for outreach, and for graphic design for the CAP. Space was provided by the OS. Cost savings were not realized yet as this is a planning stage.

Community Outreach and Education

Several editorial columns were published by the co-chair of the CCSE in the UIC News campus paper relating to sustainability. In August 2008, the Office of Sustainability launched its website and blog <http://sustainability.uic.edu> and with a massive outreach effort. Numerous events were held throughout the year starting with Sustainability Awareness Week with a different theme each day – transit options, eat local, conserve energy, recycle and reuse.

In spring of 2009, there were several programs to encourage and educate about biking. This April, student groups organized an environmental footprint booth for Earth Month. The OS participated in the Wellness Jam where students were asked to make pledges to conserve and we tried to broadcast the Campus Chillout. The annual student run Ecojamapoolooza fair had great weather and a great turn out.

To engage in the CAP, the OS set up a Wiki on the Office of Sustainability website with the draft of the plan and a blog for comments. Presentations were made in various classes and to staff. The OS also sponsored an event to engage the campus and greater community in the CAP to see how the public thought behavior may be changed. The participants were asked to brainstorm around this central question and related topics. It was a great event and some very useful ideas emerged that will be incorporated into the CAP. The Chicago Department of the Environment is interested to see what UIC's effort is on campus to reduce GHG emissions.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

See above discussion.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

Cynthia Klein-Banai, a doctoral student, received a 2008 NWF Campus Ecology Fellowship. She was later named the Associate Chancellor for Sustainability. The spring workshop she participated in provided a great training ground for developing a lot of the programs related to the CAP. Other NWF resources referenced are *Higher Education in a Warming World*, *Guide to Climate Action Planning*, and the national *Chill Out* competition and awards program.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

Over the past two years there has been a major environmental movement on campus starting with the formation in April 2007 of the UIC Campus Sustainability Task Force. The Task Force recommended that

the Chancellor sign the American College and University President's Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), which challenges colleges and universities to be climate neutral. On September 14, 2007, the Chancellor signed the ACUPCC, making UIC one of the inaugural signatories. Among the final recommendations of the Task Force presented to the Chancellor in December was one that would establish an Office of Sustainability staffed by a full-time sustainability professional and the formation of a Chancellor's committee to continue to address issues of sustainability on campus. In January 2008, Cynthia Klein-Banai became the Interim Associate Chancellor for Sustainability. Over the next few months both the office and the Chancellor's Committee and Sustainability and Energy (CCSE) were established. UIC also signed on to the Illinois Sustainable University Compact which paralleled the ACUPCC and other campus initiatives during 2008 and, finally on Earth Day 2009, UIC's current chancellor, Paula Allen-Meares, signed the Talloires Declaration. The Office's website is <http://sustainability.uic.edu>.