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**American University
Washington, D.C.
2006, Energy**

BACKGROUND

Campus Profile

American University (AU) is a four-year, private, liberal arts school, with an enrollment of 11,300 students, 759 facilities, and 1,868 full-time and part-time staff members. AU provides chief majors in international relations and affairs, political science and government, business administration and management, and communication studies.

AU is home to approximately 10,000 students equally divided between graduate and undergraduate students from all 50 states and more than 130 countries. The university offers 51 undergraduate majors and academic programs, including pre-med and pre-law programs. AU emphasizes a liberal arts education, using cutting-edge technology through an interdisciplinary curriculum in the arts and sciences, business, communication, international studies, and public affairs.

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GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goals

The goals were to provide both the student group in the Global Environmental Policy program and the undergraduate group with information regarding renewable energy and to support them in a campaign to educate other students about renewables and about how much renewable energy the school already purchases, as well as a possible campaign to push for more renewable energy purchases by gathering student support. The long-term goal was to purchase more renewable energy, either through savings or through a student campaign. We also had a plan to install energy sub meters on three of AU's residence halls on the main campus. The data gathered from the meters could then be used to argue for more programs by demonstrating the amount of savings that has come from energy efficiency, conservation, and technology.

Accomplishments

Eco-Sense, the student environmental group, ran a Campus Climate Challenge Campaign at AU in spring 2006. The ultimate goal was to hold a referendum at the end of the semester asking students to vote in favor of AU's purchasing 50 percent renewable energy by 2012, meeting the Kyoto Protocol targets, and if necessary, raising money for those efforts through a fee increase of \$10 per student. Of the students who voted, 70 percent was in favor of the referendum. Outreach

to promote the vote included canvassing, tabling, hanging a banner, emailing, using Facebook groups, and announcing the vote in class.

One creative tactic, replicated from a Tufts University campaign, involved a student dressed as a wind turbine and another as a coal smokestack. They staged a mock fight outside the student center to educate people about the campaign. Additionally, because the referendum was also a part of the student government elections, Eco-Sense was able to get the endorsements of several other candidates in student government. A supportive candidate did win the undergraduate student president position, as did the person who will lead the Residence Hall Association next year.

Eco-Sense also held an information session on renewable energy with Josh Tulkin of Chesapeake Climate Action Network. Eco-Sense was the only group to hold a referendum within the past several years. More students turned out to vote in this election than ever before in a student government election. With assistance, students were able to better understand the feasibility of renewable purchases for the university, and several key stakeholders in facilities management were supportive of Eco-Sense's campaign. Those stakeholders really enjoyed that the students took the cost factor into account by asking other students if they would support a fee raise in the vote. But the facilities staff members also felt that raising fees may not be necessary, because of wind and solar presentations they have seen that indicate that it may be cheaper to invest in renewables in the long run.

A conversation is now going on across campus about renewable energy thanks to the students. Because the referendum was successful, renewable energy becomes a priority issue for next year's incoming student government president as well. As for the other goal of having three energy sub meters installed on campus residence halls, their installation has occurred already, and plans exist to meter other buildings as well. The long-term plan is to incorporate visual displays into the dorms that show energy use as well and to combine that strategy with some dorm energy competitions.

Challenges and Responses

We had to educate the students about renewable energy and convince them that we were not building a turbine on campus. Also, a fairly small contingent of students in Eco-Sense did a large portion of the work for the campaign, and so we were stretched very thin, particularly President Claire Roby and the vice president Grenye O'Malley. Although, trying to get others involved in campaigning was quite difficult, such effort was successful in key times when people were needed for dorm canvassing. The solution was to realize that many in the group would not commit more than a couple hours a week to canvassing, and thus we had to find the pivotal events that we needed a lot of people for and to stress their involvement in those events. The other challenge was that the student government board of elections lacked regulations that applied to a campaign for a referendum, because the board had regulations that applied only to individuals running for office, Eco-Sense was subject to spending caps and paper trail requirements that applied to a one-person campaign rather than to a group.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

Eco-Sense was instrumental as the undergraduate student environmental group, as was Riley Neugebauer, who was the Environmental Coordinator and my connection to those in facilities who have knowledge about energy use and about purchasing at the university. As the president of Eco-Sense, Claire Roby was the key person on this campaign, and the vice president of Eco-Sense, Grenye O'Malley, was extremely important in providing additional help to Claire and the club. Additional club members who were really involved were Rose Davis, Jacqueline Christy, and Charles Kilby. The president of the undergraduate student government, Kyle Taylor, and the treasurer of student government, Joe Vidulich, were both extremely supportive as well.

Funding and Resources

The regulations from the student government board of elections limited the cost of the whole campaign to \$250. Savings on paper came from using double-sided paper and quarter-sheet flyers. Eco-Sense also painted signs rather than having copies made and painted t-shirts rather than having them screen-printed. Members obtained donations of paper, copies, and paint to save from paying out of pocket, although we still had to count the value of donations in our spending. Space for meetings was already reserved on campus each week, and additional space was reserved for tabling. Most of the time, input came from our president and vice president.

Community Outreach and Education

Chesapeake Climate Action Network was involved from the community. The Network and Claire plus Riley Neugebauer from Eco-Sense helped to alert the Campus Climate Challenge community about what we were doing. Additionally, during GreenDC Week, we held a youth environmental summit at Busboys and Poets Books in Washington, D.C. so that youth from all the schools in Washington, D.C. could come and talk about campaigns on which they were working. AU students presented information on the energy campaign and made clean energy campaign handouts to give to others in the city. Three students attended the Yale Climate Conference and were able to network with other students there. The AU students informed a local group of high school students about the wind turbine and smokestack costume tactic, and the high school students then staged a similar display in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Climate Change

Our project has directly addressed climate change through education about the importance of clean energy for the human race's future and the future of the planet. It greatly improved the student body's understanding of renewable energy and of the school's opportunity to purchase more clean energy. We, of Eco-Sense, have not reduced the campus emissions through this campaign until we actually purchase the additional renewables (AU already buys 5 percent wind). The strong demand from the students cannot be denied by the AU administration. The subject has already come up at cabinet meetings and now in facilities management, especially as AU awaits proposals on wind and solar power for campus. Facilities administrators feel that AU can reach the 50 percent goal by 2012.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology® Program

The monthly conference calls [climate action teleconference series] were very helpful regarding what other schools are doing. Also, the affiliation of National Wildlife Federation with the Campus Climate Challenge was extremely helpful in making this campaign a reality because of

the strong network and the ability to obtain good ideas from other schools. And so with that, the *Campus Ecology Yearbook* and case studies online were helpful!

CLOSING COMMENT

All students should think about their role on campus and their power to make change. Students should not feel that their campus is obligated to give them the greenest lawn and the perfect temperature in all the buildings, without concern for what kinds of problems that effort creates. Students should expect that an academic institution will make the world a better place through its curriculum and its operations, which includes purchasing renewable energy to address climate change.

Students have a say in the campus policy, and they should use their time at school as an opportunity to understand democracy in action. They should meet with their facilities staff members and learn more about the operations of the school, and work *with* staff members rather than just being angry with the administration, to make the school a better place, build coalitions, and create policy changes. They should use existing networks like NWF's Campus Ecology program, the Campus Climate Challenge, the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, and the Energy Action Coalition. Most of the time, administrators are supportive of good ideas from students but need assistance with research and with building support on campus. And if your school does not have an environmental coordinator, work to get one because he or she can be a strong ally!