



NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD CASE STUDY

University of Albany - *Honored for demonstrating leadership and ingenuity by implementing a comprehensive, low-cost energy conservation program through empowerment of students and faculty*

SUMMARY

The University at Albany (UAlbany) was honored in 2011 for the “You’ve Got the Power to Conserve” Program. This comprehensive, low-cost energy conservation program includes a wide variety of activities to educate students and faculty and transform the entire campus community to be environmentally responsible. In conjunction with its education efforts, UAlbany implemented several energy conservation initiatives that resulted in measureable decreases in energy usage and carbon emissions along with significant utility costs savings.

BENEFITS

UAlbany began implementing an Intersession Energy Initiative that involves lowering building temperatures, shutting off air handlers, limiting hot water, and having a Temperature Set Point Policy. The university’s award-winning project also includes efforts to determine the occupancy schedule for academic buildings. A mechanical system schedule is developed based on building occupancy hours and is shared with all building managers for review and approval. These efforts reduced CO₂ emissions by 11%, reduced electricity use by over 5 million KWh, reduced heating use by 7.5%, and saved 1 million gallons of water. UAlbany is also realizing an economic benefit. From the inception of the program, it has achieved annual savings of approximately \$700,000.

KEY METRICS

- 11% reduction of CO₂ emissions
- 5 million KWh of electricity savings
- 7.5% heat reduction
- 1 million gallons of water saved
- \$700,000 annual savings

ABOUT UALBANY

- 17,300 students
- 1,000 faculty and staff
- 7,800 student residents

NYS Environmental Excellence Award: Annual recognition of outstanding innovative and sustainable projects or programs and unique partnerships that are improving and protecting New York State's environmental resources and contributing to a stronger economy

A MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

- Instituted a facility shutdown procedure
- Established temperature set points for building heating and cooling
- Developed and expanded the energy conservation program to reduce electricity use
- Established a light bulb exchange program
- Created a real-time energy monitoring system
- Synchronized mechanical systems with class schedules and room occupancy
- Created a billing system for fake electric bills so students could see their usage and cost
- Established a procedure to solicit bids for purchase of renewable energy credits and carbon offsets
- Developed educational material to foster a culture of sustainability awareness and energy conservation

HIGHLIGHTS

UAlbany committed to achieving carbon neutrality through energy conservation, education, behavioral changes, energy efficiency projects and renewable energy. Rather than creating individual programs, it sought to combine many conservation and education initiatives in one comprehensive plan. These policies, programs, and procedures are designed to complement and reinforce each other to garner a larger reduction in energy use and carbon emissions.

Wide-ranging initiatives were developed as part of the energy conservation efforts known as the “You’ve Got the Power to Conserve” Project. These initiatives span the entire academic year, focusing on both the uptown and downtown campuses located on Washington Avenue and Western Avenue in Albany, NY. Activities work in concert to educate and encourage environmental responsibility, with the ultimate goal of reducing UAlbany’s carbon footprint and creating a cleaner and more sustainable New York State.

FUNDING

The initiatives of the “You’ve Got the Power to Conserve” Project came at the relatively low cost of \$10,000 to the university and are funded through a variety of sources. Labor costs were funded by the Offices of Facilities Management and Environmental Sustainability. Assistance for obtaining the necessary educational supplies came from numerous resources, including a \$750 yearly grant from University Auxiliary Services, a one-time cost of \$955 for the “lights off” reminder notes and energy tickets from the Office of Environmental Sustainability, a yearly cost of \$300, also from the Office of Environmental Sustainability, to prepare and print the bills, and a \$2,000 grant from the Office of Student Success for the “green apartment” demonstration. The CFL exchange program was funded through a \$5,000 grant from National Grid and was used for three years. At an average cost of \$5,000 per year and depending on market prices, renewable energy credits and carbon offsets for University Hall are funded through the Office of Financial Management and Budget. The remaining initiatives involved policy changes which did not incur a financial cost but required the strong support of senior administration to implement.