

Bard College, EcoReps, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

Campus Conservation Nationals 2014 Case Study



WHAT TYPE OF COMPETITION DID YOU DO?

Electricity

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN A GROUP COMPETITION?

If yes, please list your group name and the participating campuses.

ABSTRACT

Bard College was able to reduce its electrical consumption by 19%, saving 5,768 kWh and \$923. We had 12 buildings, 389 students and roughly 20 faculty and staff participating in the competition. Our competition was conducted under the name, Bard CON(-serves) with the tagline, “compete to reduce.” It was within our competition that focused on four areas: 1) Change It (changing from incandescent to CFLs), 2) Unplug It (unplugging electronics when not in use), 3) Reduce It (reducing thermostats when you are not in the room), and 4) Conserve It (conserve water when using the bathroom).

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

The ultimate goal for our competition was have a sizeable decrease in our energy consumption across our campus. Qualitatively we hoped that our students would adopt energy-conscious that would be reflected quantitatively in electrical meter readings. Although we did not place a numerical value on how much to reduce in comparison to our previous years’ performance, we did wanted to empower and show students how easily they can make a change in their utility bill by changing a few simple habits.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

Based on student responses to our online surveys and visits to the student center table, we felt that we were able to effectively educate the campus on energy and water conservation. While water conservation was not apart of our goal, we did include that within our programming to help stress the importance of offsetting our carbon emissions. We are confident that the majority if not all, all of our participants adopted healthy, green practices from this competition. We had all participants sign an online agreement to themselves and the earth that they will adopt one of the green practices promoted in the competition. Our campus was able to save 5,768 kWh of electricity between all competing dorms.

Challenges and Responses

One of the major challenges encountered during this competing was uniting all our campus stakeholders around a common table to brainstorm ideas for the competition. Their lack of interest made much of the work fall onto our student organizers and became much more of a student endeavor rather than campus. We responded by this challenge by proceeding with our competition but always making a point to send out weekly emails to our stakeholders and planning team on competition happenings. This allowed for our stakeholders to still be connected and informed about what was going on with the competition. In the future, I would change the level of engagement and responsibility on part of our stakeholders and find a more unique and innovative way to incorporate them within the competition.

This could happen by tasking each stakeholder with doing something to promote and further the competition.

Commentary and Reflection

In hindsight, I would encourage other participants in Campus Conservation Nationals to hold this competition in conjunction with another large on-campus event. By doing so, it could gain more traction with students and campus stakeholders to incorporate CCN programming within that event. This would also allow CCN competition organizers to utilize the publicity of that event and allow for expenses and energy to be divested to other areas of the competition such as peer education.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

Our organizing team was comprised of a student competition director who led the project planning and logistics of the competition. The competition director was also in charge of the budgeting and serving as the liaison between all competition stakeholders and CCN. Each competing dorm also had a building coordinator assigned to them to aide in event planning, advertising, and educating residents about the competitions' objective. It was the responsibility of the building coordinator for work the residential life staff to promote in-dorm programming. Indirectly, the Bard Office of Sustainability's Sustainability Manager and Energy Efficiency Coordinator were instrumental in acquiring meter readings providing guidance in competition programming.

Funding and Resources

The working budget for hosting CCN on campus capped at \$400, of which we spent \$374.90 on poster printing, a banner, merchandise branding, and food treats. Considering how we had a remanding budget of \$25.10, our money was well spent. Next time we would spend differently when it came towards branding because we will be able to reuse the materials from this years' competition. By using the same competition name, we will be able to allocate more money towards advertising and treats to incentivize behavior. Internally, stakeholders from various departments including Residential Life, Building & Grounds, and Campus Life supported our competition. For example, Peer Counselors (Residential Assistants) were helpful in promoting energy conscious practices within the dorms and holding outdoor movie screenings to power down the dorm. Within the Campus Life department, Bard Student Activities was very compliant on allowing us to reserve space for indoor power installations and promotional materials. Most of our volunteers were from our Bard EcoReps program and from interested students at our tabling events.

Education and Community Outreach

The key messages to our campaign were Change It, Unplug It, Reduce It, and Conserve It. The tag line of the competition was "Compete to Reduce" which was used to emphasis the race to reduce our electrical consumptions across campus and especially within the designated dorms for CCN. We used a range of incentives including cookies to attract to students to our table in the campus center and fill out our online survey and agreement. We had a number of pen styluses that bore our competition logo that served as type of memento to remind students to power down their touch-screen devices when not in use. We also had a series of stickers printed with our key images and supporting images for our students to place on their water bottles, notebooks, and around the dorm to spread BardCON's message. Our tabling effort within the student center was our way of hosting an educational event on campus. Unfortunately, we did not engage the local community in any way.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

Bard College's Office of Sustainability (BoS) coordinates several campus conservation programs such as Recyclemania where we held the spot of 1st place in Food Organics for 2 years and top placement for 4 years. More recently, Bard was accredited with a Gold certification for the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS). In addition, the Office of Sustainability runs a comprehensive in-dorm recycling, FreeUse, and Eco program where we recycle e-waste, plastic bags, incandescent light bulbs, and alkaline batteries. You can find more information about our campus sustainability efforts at: <http://www.bard.edu/bos/>