

Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Campus Conservation Nationals 2014 Case Study



WHAT TYPE OF COMPETITION DID YOU DO?

Electricity competition

DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN A GROUP COMPETITION?

We participated as an individual school.

SCHOOL

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College is the Flagship institution for the state of Louisiana, and is located in Baton Rouge, LA. LSU is a land, sea, and space-grant institution. LSU is a public, 4- year institution with an annual enrollment of over 30,000 students.

ABSTRACT

LSU's 2014 Unplug Competition yielded a total savings of over 91,000 kWh for a savings of \$8,400. Our 11 campus communities, comprised of 21 buildings, 5,200 students and 40 faculty/ staff members participated in the competition. Our competition brand is "Unplug". We designed a logo that is used every year in the publicity and educational efforts planned for the competition. Attached is a copy of one of the flyers we distributed this year for the competition.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

Our goals for the Unplug competition were:

1. To educate all our students living on campus about sustainable practices and encourage them to change at least one behavior related to sustainability.
2. To reduce energy consumption more than in previous years through a fun and engaging competition.
3. To implement our departmental Sustainability Strategic Direction through training and education of our Resident Assistant staff and students.
4. To engage all of our on campus students and our departmental faculty and staff in sustainable practices.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

Our major accomplishments were:

1. Significant energy consumption reduction for our campus in comparison to previous years. We were named one of the top ten schools in the CCN competition.
2. Effective education of our on-campus students about sustainability, as evidenced in the total energy conservation numbers for the Unplug competition. One of our big successes was that 300 students

took the Pledge to Live Green, where they pledge to change at least one behavior to improve their daily practices to be more sustainable.

Challenges and Responses

Our major challenges are:

1. The Southern United States region is not typically focused on sustainability and it challenging to engage students to understand and appreciate sustainability efforts.
2. Many of our buildings are newly constructed or renovated so energy savings practices are already in place (i.e. occupancy sensors on lights, use of compact fluorescent light bulbs, pre-set thermostats in common spaces, etc.). This makes it harder to reduce energy consumption and to motivate students with impressive reductions because the buildings are already energy efficient. However, this is an opportunity for students to see how their individual actions make an impact, because most energy reduction in those buildings comes from the individual actions of students.
3. Since the Unplug competition takes place in Spring, many of our students move off-campus shortly after the competition ends. Therefore, our department does not see the long term aggregate effects of changes in students' behavior as it relates to sustainable practices. As a result, this year we are starting an intentional sustainability education program in the fall to help students begin forming sustainable habits early on in the year.

Commentary and Reflection

Although we face many challenges because sustainability is not a priority for the population we serve, this is something that our Sustainability Committee and our department believes in and supports. We have invested a lot of time and effort into this initiative, but we believe it is worth it to educate our students and encourage them to reduce their energy consumption. Although we did not have big monetary savings, we hope to educate students on how if they continued living sustainably and conserving energy, the amount of money that would be saved would be significant.

We would like to tell others who are thinking about participating in Campus Conservation National that although the first year may be challenging, after you have set up everything and have a game plan with goals, the competition gets easier. Students and staff really enjoy it and get creative about saving energy so that their community wins. More importantly, you have the ability to teach students habits that will hopefully last them a lifetime.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

All Unplug educational efforts and competition logistics were coordinated by our departmental Sustainability committee that consisted of the Director of Facilities, 4 Residence Life Coordinators, 1 Facilities Coordinator, 1 Associate Director, and 4 Graduate Students. Each committee member helped with one initiative or educational event planned during Unplug.

We also recruited Building Captains for each of our 11 communities. The Building Captains were student leaders who promoted events, read electricity meters, and encouraged students to participate in the competition. These students brought the competition to life and kept the momentum going throughout

the competition. One of our Graduate students was responsible for coordinating and training the Building Captains and recording our weekly meter readings in the BuildingOS system for the competition.

Funding and Resources

We had a \$1,000 budget for Unplug. In the past we had a \$2500 budget, so we had to be very intentional with how we spent the funds we had for the competition. We spent \$550 on promotional items, \$200 on celebration parties for the winning communities, and \$100 on posters. The money was well-spent. Our students loved the promo items and we generated a lot of excitement for the competition through our marketing events in the dining halls where we gave away promo items. The celebrations for winning communities served as an incentive for students to participate, and the winning communities enjoyed their parties.

In terms of volunteer support, we reached out to all members of our department to help with our educational and promotional events. Many staff members volunteered 30 minutes to hand out promo items and encourage students to take the Pledge to Live Green. Because it is one of our departmental strategic directions, our staff were receptive and willing to participate in the educational program and competition.

Education and Community Outreach

Our Unplug competition started with a Kickoff event in our two dining halls. We gave away promotional items, tips for sustainable living, and asked students to take the Pledge to Live Green. The pledge is a quick, 5-question survey that we give students where they can select sustainable practices they will commit to adopting over the next year. Our message to students was to ask them to commit to doing at least one small thing to be more sustainable.

The second educational event took place in our residence halls and apartment complexes. Our custodial staff hosted a Sustainability Trivia game, where students answered questions for candy, and our custodians educated students on the proper way to recycle using the bins and dumpsters provided in our residential communities.

Lastly, we asked our Building Captains to work with their RA peers to create educational bulletin boards and to host a sustainability-related educational program of their choice during the last week of the competition. Some RAs would turn off lights in rooms not in use during duty rounds, lobby lights were not turned on until it was dark outside, and some educational programs were hosted in the dark. The building captains read our meters weekly and submitted the numbers to our Facilities Graduate Assistant who compiled the numbers and submitted them to the CCN BuildingOS dashboard.

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

LSU Residential Life began its sustainability efforts in 2001 by recycling cans in the residential halls. Since then, departmental recycling and energy conservation efforts have increased substantially. In 2011, Sustainability was included as one of four strategic directions in our strategic plan, and led to the assembly of the Sustainability Committee. We will open our first LEED Silver certified hall by Fall 2015. By August 2015, we will be installing electronic meters to more effectively measure our energy consumption in the residence halls.

Our university has a campus sustainability office which collaborates with our department on educational events and Unplug. The Office focuses on promoting recycling and energy reduction through student outreach and education. During home football games, Campus Sustainability passes out recycling bins to tailgaters in an effort to reduce waste. As a result of the efforts of Campus Sustainability, we now have two electric car charging stations on campus. Students are not able to drive through campus during business hours, thus they are encouraged to use bikes and alternative transportation methods that are more sustainable.