

## **New Energy Team's hunt for campus conservation, savings is on**

**by Alex Hummel - Tuesday, October 23, 2012**

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When you think “energy consumption” on a major University campus, your mind logically drifts to computer labs or large residence halls.

But it may come as a surprise to many that the biggest energy-eater at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is Halsey Science Center – home to a fleet of electricity-gulping scientific instruments and refrigeration units. Blackhawk Commons, the campus’s main student dining hall, ranks second on the list.

More efficient refrigerators are a top priority for the University’s new “Energy Team.”

It is just one of the projects and potential cost-cutting solutions the group is going to investigate.

Comprised not just of campus facilities experts but also representatives from an array of academic and auxiliary departments from Chemistry to Residence Life, the team has begun scouring campus for opportunities to conserve energy. Its members are guided by the philosophy that conserving energy is good business and a measure that ensures future financial viability.

Everybody’s at the table.

“Non-administrative and non-revenue-generating departments have to face this,” said Bob Oehler, UW Oshkosh’s new “Energy Manager” in the Facilities Management department.

The energy team effort is based on an industry model which is professionally facilitated. It met Oct. 18 to continue its survey of campus energy-saving opportunities.

The effort involves a partnership similar to those that have developed inside eight or nine private enterprises around Oshkosh, team members said. The groups include representatives from Wisconsin Public Service Corporation and Focus on Energy.

Acting as consultants, both organizations’ representatives’ are helping facilitate the UW Oshkosh team’s review and task list and making suggestions about ways to either reduce or conserve power consumption throughout the 13,450-student, 1,700-employee, more-than 170-acre campus.

The most recent student-life statistics suggest the average residence-hall-dweller uses 18 electronic devices, from iPads to TVs, in his or her room. That makes one of UW Oshkosh's smaller environments prime target for energy-saving solutions.

“Organizations with energy teams and well-run energy programs can achieve a reduction in energy costs by 3 to 10 percent annually,” Oehler said. “It also helps the campus in its efforts to get at some the often

cited 30 percent reductions possible through conservation. Most importantly, all of our efforts create an awareness that allows greater diligence in how we consume energy, which in turn, ensures that our resources are spent on educating our students rather than inefficient buildings.”

“Bottom line is: ‘Use energy more wisely;’ That’s our philosophy at Wisconsin Public Service,” said Scott Hanson, a company account executive serving on the Energy Team.

But wise use of energy is not limited to residence halls and computer labs, the team stresses.

One of the first tasks generating by the group is a holistic review of science lab refrigerators – energy-gobbling machines that, in many cases, are due for an update. The campus’ Chemistry department is also investigating new “ductless fume hoods” in its laboratories.

It’s possible grant assistance could help the University investigate and purchase ENERGY STAR-rated equipment dramatically improving efficiency.

Over the next year the team will serve as the impetus to the development of a UW Oshkosh Utility Master Plan, the first phase of which consists of developing an Energy Saving Strategies Plan that identifies energy conservation strategies and develops efficiency projects.

“We are serious about sustainability at UW Oshkosh,” Oehler said. “As part of this effort, campus leadership understands that energy management is a core business consideration and a strategic asset.”

Learn more:

- [UW Oshkosh Sustainability](#)