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# University of Michigan Creates Culture of Sustainability

Launched in June 2007, the Climate Savers Computing Initiative (CSCI) is a nonprofit organization working to reduce energy consumption by computers. Larry Page, co-founder of Google, which is part of CSCI, and a University of Michigan alumnus, got involved and led to the development of an internal program at the University.

CSCI at University of Michigan's main goal is to make energy conservation the norm on campus and graduate students with a sustainability mind-set. The most important idea was to change the behavior and culture surrounding energy consumption — to make green a natural choice.

"One of the most simple and straightforward things we're trying to do is get the best practices out to people," explained Bill Wroblewski, director of Technical Infrastructure Operations for the University of Michigan's Administrative Information Services. Other projects in the initiative include a team looking for ways to reduce data center power usage and a certification program for departments that follow certain practices.

CSCI at University of Michigan's efforts involve encouraging the use of sleep mode on computers and setting printers to print on both sides of paper. They are also working with campus IT staff to employ some software solutions that will help implement power-utilization settings on computer equipment.

At an event last year where local businesses, nonprofits, and employees could bring used computer equipment for recycling, they received 145 tons of used electronics.

"We wanted to get information out and make them aware of this issue," said Wroblewski, "but then also give them some concrete things they can do."

The main workforce is volunteer-based.

"We have various volunteers from all over campus working with their departments to make behavior changes," remarked Joan Witte, director of Communications, Administrative Information Services. Building a volunteer team has been successful because of the number of motivated people on campus.

As evidenced by the cross-campus volunteer workforce, the feedback from CSCI at University of Michigan has been incredibly positive. "Everyone at every level has been excited and interested. When we set up our kick-off meeting to look for volunteers, we ended up with about 120 people just coming out on their own time to sit through our presentation," Wroblewski said.

Witte agreed, "Our students are really stepping up to the plate. We have a competition that is part of Climate Savers. Forty students got together to talk about how they could energize campus."

At the beginning, the program was proposed as a two-year effort. "The original target for the Climate Savers national organization was to reduce power consumption in computers by 50 percent by 2010," explained Wroblewski. They built Michigan's program to target that goal, but they also hope that a number of their projects will be sustained naturally without a special team to maintain them. Ideas have also surfaced during the course of the initiative that could become part of a second phase.

Wroblewski stated that their original goal was to reduce IT consumption by 10 percent. "We looked at the overall power utilization of the University and what percentage of that was the IT piece. We didn't want to over-promise because it is too easy to say, 'Oh yeah, we're going to reduce these things gigantically.'" Certain savings are also hard to measure.

With the goal of a 10-percent reduction in mind, CSCI at University of Michigan has seen some significant results through energy analyses of buildings. In one review, "we identified a computer room, a small room, where a department housed their servers," Wroblewski recounted. Five or six servers were stacked up in the room, causing it to heat up very quickly. Of course, to keep the room cool, the air conditioning had to be run. "It turns out the chiller for that entire building was being driven 24/7 in order to keep that room cold." Getting rid of the room saved the University \$90,000 to \$100,000 a year in power.

For other colleges and universities looking to set up a similar program, Wroblewski suggested that while a team of volunteers has been essential, you also need a small, core team of dedicated people working on the project. A group of full- and part-time workers enables other volunteers on the campus who can devote only so much time.

Witte also noted that collaboration is important. "It really makes you stronger if you reach out and you socialize with all the sustainability groups on campus. Working together has really helped us tremendously."

In the end, Wroblewski noted that there isn't one simple solution. "We're trying to build a wider program that has a lot of efforts. It's not that we have one thing that's going to save a ton of money," he explained. "It's a lot of little things, and the sum of these little activities is where the win is."

For more information on the University of Michigan's sustainability and energy conservation initiatives, visit [www.climatesavers.umich.edu](http://www.climatesavers.umich.edu).

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