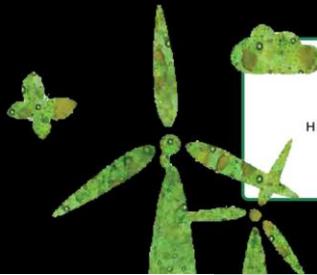




Green Gown Awards 2012

Highly commended case study

Dissemination supported by:



University of Southampton

Student Initiatives and Campaigns

Southampton Blackout: A night out with the lights out

Section 1 About the project

Summary

On the evening of Friday 27th April 2012, 255 students and staff at the University of Southampton successfully completed the first campus-wide energy audit. The aims were to deliver carbon savings from behaviour interventions, empower students and staff in sustainability actions, and raise the profile of sustainability across the University led by the Students' Union.

Project partners

Southampton University Students' Union & University of Southampton

Section 2 The results

The problem

The University of Southampton has committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 20% by 2020 (against 2005/6 levels). To achieve this, it is crucial to engage all staff and students with the impact that their individual behaviour has on energy use. This energy audit provided a mechanism to identify the carbon savings possible through changing office behaviour, and empower students to influence carbon saving behaviour in staff and the wider student community.

The approach

A small team of students and staff launched a major logistical exercise to organise an energy audit of 34 buildings on the main campus during one four-hour period. Named by the students 'Southampton Blackout', the initiative required eight months of planning, with buy-in from the Vice Chancellor, Students' Union, Faculties and Professional Services. The project management team consisted of the Students' Union Ethical and Environmental (E&E) officer, student E&E committee members, and academic and professional support staff. The E&E Officer's committee of 12 student officers was critical to the planning and successful execution of the event. The student officers instigated a social media campaign to recruit sufficient student volunteers. A network of staff sustainability officers was utilised to gain sufficient staff volunteers.

During the Blackout, 41 staff and student teams worked together to audit the office electrical equipment and switch off all equipment and lights unnecessarily left on. In less than four hours and across 34 buildings, student and staff groups audited 5570 computers, plus printers and lights. The volunteers switched off all non-essential office equipment left on for the weekend, including 1741 computers.

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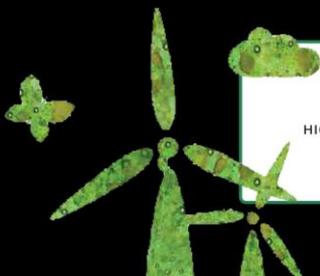
Profile

- HEI
- Over 23,000 students and 5000 staff
- Over 50 buildings on 6 campuses
- Urban



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Our goals

- Establish a high-impact annual student and staff event, gaining University-wide recognition of sustainability
- Provide students with energy audit and professional project management experience
- Audit and turn off all non-essential electrical equipment on campus, benchmarking for future changes
- Publicise the carbon savings possible through small behavioural changes

Obstacles and solutions

Obstacle/challenge	Solution
Recruiting sufficient student volunteers	A social media campaign promoting the array of incentives for students to volunteer, including professional experience, branded clothing and VIP club entrance.
Informing the entire University community about the event	Multiple communications channels (including intranet, e-mail, social media, and posters) were used to disseminate information over the two months prior to the event.

Performance and results

The Blackout weekend achieved savings of 7 tonnes of carbon and over £1,600 in electricity costs compared to a typical term-time weekend. There was a 6% reduction in energy use that weekend relative to comparable weekends. This is believed to be the biggest single student and staff sustainability event of its kind in the HE sector.

The event was oversubscribed, with 250 students expressing interest in taking part and 188 volunteering on the night. The event engaged students not currently motivated by sustainability: over 16% of students did not state carbon or energy reduction as their reason for volunteering.

The Blackout Management Team received a Vice Chancellor's Award for their outstanding contribution to the University. As a result of leading the Blackout project, the E&E Officer won the highest Students' Union award for 'Excellence in Volunteering' against over 80 other nominees.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

The 2012 event came in under budget but post-event analysis and refining of the method highlighted savings that will lead to a more sustainable, lower-cost event for 2013. This includes only providing the most popular incentives and employing the most effective marketing techniques for promoting this volunteering opportunity to students.

Sharing your project

Blackout was disseminated to the University community through the intranet, emails and social media. The event is the second-most read post ever on the University's intranet, with around 3500 individuals reading initial information notices prior to the event, and over 3000 reading the headline results.



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The event's results have been widely publicised to key external stakeholders, such as EAUC, HEA, Southampton City Energy Partnership and international sustainability communities. Information before, during and after the event has been sent out using a variety of media (e-mail, Facebook, Twitter and web postings) in addition to dissemination at national and international sustainability conferences.

What has it meant to your institution to be highly commended at the Green Gown Awards?

Being highly commended at the Green Gown Awards has provided welcome recognition for this innovative approach to empowering students in the sustainability and carbon management agenda of the University.

Further information

For student involvement: Joshua Cox, SUSU Ethical & Environmental Officer (eande@susu.org)

For University involvement: Julia Kendal, Green Academy Programme Assistant (J.Kendal@soton.ac.uk)

Web: http://www.southampton.ac.uk/susdev/our_students/blackout.html

Twitter: @Sustainable_UoS

www.greengownawards.org.uk

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