

What's Up With Saint John's Sustainability

November/December 2014

Greenhouse Gas Reductions

The Office of Sustainability at Saint John's University recently completed an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions for fiscal year 2014 as part of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). When SJU became a charter signatory of the ACUPCC agreement in 2007, the university pledged to reduce its carbon emissions by 15 percent by 2015, 50 percent by 2030, and to be carbon neutral by 2035.

The 2014 report indicates that SJU is meeting and exceeding its carbon emission goals.

Emissions have been reduced by over 56 percent since signing the ACUPCC. During fiscal year 2014, campus activities resulted in the emission of 20,106 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents. For comparison, the previous greenhouse gas inventory from 2011 reported emissions of 28,525.1 MT eCO₂.

The reduction of over 8,400 MT since 2011 is largely the result of the university's decision to stop burning coal in the power plant. The use of more accurate data calculation techniques and several energy retrofit projects can also account for much of reduction.

Chiller Study Leads to Efficiency

The OSB/SJU Physical Plant has been taking on various facilities-related projects throughout recent years, many aimed at increasing energy efficiency. Earlier this year, it appeared that the Physical Plant would have to install a fourth steam absorption chiller in order to provide enough chilled water to meet peak demands. The exhaust steam from the plant's generators provides the supply of steam for the chillers.

Before buying and installing a new chiller, however, the Physical Plant staff worked with Sebesta, an engineering and design firm, to conduct a study on the plant's chiller operations. Results from the study showed that the three existing chillers should be able to meet peak demands. The engineers found that efficiency and capacity could both be increased by up to 30 percent by making some changes.

One of the proposed changes was adding an additional cooling tower cell, which was completed over the summer. The Physical Plant is also installing automated chiller controls on two of the existing chillers currently, which will be ready for use in meeting peak demands in 2015. An additional outcome of the study revealed that an increase in steam pressure supply to the chillers would be of significant benefit.

The increased steam pressure can be accomplished by simply operating the electrical generators at a higher exhaust pressure than in the past. This study and subsequent operational improvements made it possible to avoid the capital expense and environmental costs of adding and running another chiller. Efficiency projects like this are critical to the university's sustainability efforts.

Energy Challenge Results

The first-year residence halls at Saint John's competed in a weeklong energy challenge from October 5-11. The challenge was to see which dorm, Mary or Thomas Hall, could reduce their electricity consumption by the greatest percentage. In the end, Tommy Hall won the competition, reducing electricity usage by 6.4 percent. Mary Hall reduced electricity consumption by 1.0 percent. Congrats to all of the participants on a successful event! Just because the competition is over does not mean that you should stop conserving electricity. It is always a good idea. Also, keep an eye out for details about a campus-wide energy challenge in February!

SJU Fellow Attends Conference

The Saint John's sustainability fellow, Jacob Saffert, recently attended the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE) national conference in Portland, Oregon. The four-day conference (Oct. 26-29) attracted more than 2,100 sustainability professionals, university leaders, students, professors, facilities staff, and business people. The event allowed for participants to share ideas, events, strategies, and programming tips aimed at increasing engagement in sustainability initiatives on campuses across the nation. The Sustainability Office hopes to implement some new projects and programs on campus with the ideas learned at the conference.

Seniors: Are you looking for a job?

The Saint John's Office of Sustainability is led by a fellow who serves a one-year term. Fellows are typically a recent CSB/SJU graduate with a passion for sustainability. The job is a full-time, paid position. Duties include organizing campus events, publicizing SJU's sustainability initiatives, completing progress reports, and more. The application for the 2015-2016 fellow position will be posted early this winter on our website. Contact Jacob Saffert, the current fellow, for more information!

Outdoor Nation Update

As of now, the Outdoor Nation Campus Challenge is over halfway finished, but there is still a lot of competing left to do! The CSB/SJU community currently holds a commanding lead. Let's not get complacent, though. The challenge continues until November 22, so keep logging your outdoor activities to show that CSB/SJU is the "most outdoorsy" campus in the nation!

Do you have suggestions for us, ideas for a sustainability project, or any comments? Email us at SJUsustainoffice@csbsju.edu

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