Retro-Commissioning (RCx) UConn began implementing recommended energy conservation measures (ECMs) at a dozen buildings that make up Phase 1 of its ambitious and unprecedented retro-commissioning (RCx) project. Meanwhile, as we continued to evaluate 22 additional Phase 2 and 3 buildings, a Smart Building Smart Grid Workgroup, which is driven by eight School of Engineering (SOE) faculty members, seized on the opportunity to use one of the retro-commissioned buildings – ITEB – as a test bed for research that will also raise campus awareness about enhanced sensors, controls and fault detection for building systems. Featuring a robust collaboration among faculty and several corporate partners with strong UConn ties, the University’s new digital media center, and staff in Facilities and the OEP, the SBSG workgroup applied for and received $150,000 from the SOE’s “Innovations in Emerging Frontiers” grant program. The SBSG workgroup will also leverage this funding to increase its prospects for obtaining larger federal grants that would expand the research to include another campus building and the Town of Mansfield’s senior center.

All told, UConn’s unprecedented RCx project will improve the energy efficiency of 34 campus buildings, encompassing 3.5 million sq. ft., saving $500,000 in energy costs and cutting 3,000 tons of GHG emissions annually.

Turn Off The Lights Campaign

Sometimes, the most effective programs are those whose messages are the simplest. Following on the heels of energy audits conducted by the OEP and informal student assessments, OEP interns are working with ResLife staff to develop the “Turn Off the Lights” campaign. Signs in the dorms next fall will serve as a very basic reminder to students and staff alike: “when you leave a room, turn off the light behind you.”

Jonathan the Husky will remind students to conserve energy.
Renewable Energy Strategic Plan

So how will UConn make the transition from quick payback efficiency projects and energy conservation outreach to large-scale changes, like the use of cleaner fuels and renewable energy sources? The answer is “very strategically.” And the planning for this transition began last semester when the OEP, C2E2 and the SOE kicked-off a Renewable/Sustainable Energy Strategic Plan (RESP). The Plan will include recommended locations for installing up to six different types of clean energy distributed generation projects on campus. The stated goals are to align these installations with specific academic/research activities and to take our Depot Campus (1 mile from the main campus and home to C2E2) off-grid. UConn has contracted with the Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT) to develop the RESP.

The first projects to be considered are: 1) a 400 kW fuel cell that would be located near C2E2 in order to meet electricity and heating needs at the Depot Campus and 2) a solar thermal rooftop installation that would provide hot water for either a dorm or dining hall/kitchen. These projects have moved to the top of the list because of significant state and federal financial incentives available (up to a 75% rebate) if the installations are operating by April 2012.

GREEN TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

While vehicle miles traveled (VMT) commuting to and from, or around, the Storrs campus account for a relatively small percentage of UConn’s total GHG emissions (about 8%), it is an area that holds good potential for improvement. The benefits are not just reducing our carbon footprint, but also decreasing traffic congestion, cutting air pollution and promoting a healthy and more vibrant community.

With a big lift from UConn’s Transportation Services department, several CAP action items designed to reduce VMT are moving forward:

1) Proposals from outside vendors to operate a campus car-sharing program are due back in late-June. The selected vendor must supply cars that “meet or exceed Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle standards.”

2) UConn will soon install its first plug-in electric vehicle (EV) charging station and is pursuing a DOT grant and other low-cost options for adding EVs to our vehicle fleet.

3) After a few false starts, it looks like the bike-sharing program is ready to roll this summer, at least on a trial basis, with 20 bikes that can be borrowed from the Library using your UConn ID card.

RESP FACULTY SURVEY

To facilitate the RESP and its goal of making the campus a living laboratory for sustainable energy projects, UConn needed specifics about faculty research into sustainable energy and clean fuel technologies. In March, we identified and surveyed dozens of faculty members and heard back from 14 representing a wide variety of departments. So far, interests range from osmotic heat technologies to geothermal applications, economic cost-benefit analysis of biogas facilities, and gasification technology. We also know that UConn’s biodiesel and ASTM testing lab are well-established and ready to grow. Other faculty members are interested in demonstration-scale sustainable energy projects for multiple educational purposes. If you’re involved in this kind of research and did not receive the survey, let us know (6-8741)!
Racing for a Greener Campus
On Sunday April 10th, with the sun shining brightly over Horsebarn Hill on an otherwise grey morning in Connecticut, 85 “eco-athletes” came out to run the scenic and challenging HBH course for a green cause. The race raised $900 for the EcoHusky Student Group, which will use the money to fund various environmental initiatives next year. The Natural Resources and Environment Department, led by EPAC members, John Volin and Jack Clausen, won the team competition over the always-competitive EcoHouse team. Karolina Fucikova, a PhD student in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, also an EPAC member and officer in the Green Grads student group, came in first place overall for females with a time of 21:46. Winners in several male and female age-group categories received prizes and gift certificates that were donated by area restaurants and businesses. Our thanks also to 2010-11 corporate donors to UConn’s Campus Sustainability Fund, whose logos were gratefully displayed on the EcoHusky 5K banner at the starting line. We hope to see everyone out for the run again next year!

Mount Sneaker Recycling
Mount Sneaker was successful once again! This year, we collected 3,900 lbs of sneakers—nearly 2 tons! Bins were set up on the UConn main campus in the Student Union, The Library, the Bishop Center, and the Recreation Center, as well as 22 residence locations around campus. The Waterbury, Avery Point, and Stamford campuses also participated, as well as the UConn Health Center and Windham Hospital. This would not have been possible without the help of UConn Facilities, Central Stores, Residential Life and Willimantic Waste, who all offered their time and assistance to make this year successful. Mount Sneaker was displayed at the annual Earth Day Spring Fling (below). All of the sneakers were donated to Nike-Reuse-a-Shoe, where they will be recycled into material to make turf and playground surfacing.

New Recycling Guidelines
The OEP would like to remind you that the University has switched to single stream recycling! While recycling still has to be separated from trash, recyclable materials no longer need to be separated by paper, plastic, glass, cardboard, and metal. All recycling materials can be placed into any recycling bins on campus. Updated posters and fliers will be distributed throughout campus during the summer break, and additional copies can be found on the OEP web site.
Earth Day, H2O Conservation, Udall Scholars

2011 Earth Day Spring Fling

UConn’s annual celebration of Earth Day, once again combined with the Local Routes/Dining Service’s Spring Fling picnic, marked the close of another busy academic year of green campus outreach activities and events. The event was held on Fairfield Way and, with a record number of exhibitors and vendors, sprawled all the way from Gampel Pavilion to the oak leaf seal in front of Babbidge Library. We estimate this year’s event was attended by a few thousand students, local residents, and faculty and staff members, despite the chilly and blustery weather that toppled several displays and sent exhibitors scrambling to retrieve flying brochures and giveaways. In addition to the OEP and Local Routes, event co-sponsors included the EcoHusky student group and the EcoHouse living and learning community. Visitors listened to music, hula-hooped, had their pictures taken with a cow, feasted on organic delicacies, and walked through a traveling wildlife exhibit. They saw model electric cars, learned about biofuels and solar technology, and had the opportunity to meet members of a dozen campus groups promoting environmental messages. First time EDSF exhibitors included the Sierra Club, US Peace Corps, US Fish & Wildlife Service and Town of Mansfield. Even with the storm force winds and cool temperatures of the day, a great time was had by all!

Shower Timers

This past semester, 5-minute hourglass timers were installed in all of the showers at two large residence halls – Shippee and Buckley. The water conservation initiative was developed and led by the Honors Environmental Committee as a way to shave time off of the average student’s shower. After the timers and related informational materials had been in place for awhile, the committee surveyed students and the results are in: Simple reminders DO impact awareness and affect results!

OEP’s 2011 Udall Scholars

A big congratulations to two OEP student interns - Kathy Tsantiris and Ethan Butler - on winning the prestigious and competitive national Udall Scholarship for their environmental achievements (see related UConn Today article). Competition for this scholarship is intense. Ethan and Kathy are only the 3rd and 4th UConn recipients in the history of the award. They’ll each receive a $5000 scholarship and attend a sustainability conference in Arizona this summer as part of their award.
**Campus Sustainability Fund**

We would like to take a moment to remind you about the importance of your donations to the Campus Sustainability Fund. Without the generous support of individual and corporate donors, many of our initiatives would not be possible. These donations, together with a base OEP sustainability budget funded by UConn’s Chief Operating Officer, enable us to hire our sustainability office staff, including a part-time Sustainability Coordinator (currently, Rachael Shenyo, an ARE graduate student) and 5 or 6 undergraduate student interns. The OEP provides interns with quality educational and career-related experience and works with faculty, administrators, staff and students, especially the EcoHusky student group and EcoHouse learning community, on service-oriented projects, outreach activities, and interactive events promoting campus sustainability.

**EPAC Member Notes**

The University’s Environmental Policy Advisory Council (EPAC), which was established in 2003 and is advisory to the President and Provost on environmental sustainability issues, welcomed several new members in April.

Newly appointed by the Provost are: Michael Alfultis, AVP and Director, Avery Point Campus; Mark Boyer, Prof. and Dept. Head, Political Science.; Prabhakar Singh, Prof. and Director, Center for Clean Energy Engineering; Farhed Shah, Assoc. Prof., Agricultural & Resource Economics; and undergraduate EcoHusky student rep Christina Tobitsch. Environmental Science (7th semester). Also, Law School Dean, Jeremy Paul, has added law Prof. Lynn Fountain as his delegate. New operational managers who fill standing EPAC appointments are Bill Wendt, Director of Transportation & Logistical Services, and Ken Egeberg, AVP of Architectural, Engineering & Building Services.

We say so long, thank you and keep in touch to EPAC members whose terms expired: Kristin Schwab, Assoc. Prof., Landscape Architecture, who designed the Hillside Environmental Education Park; Dave Wagner, Professor, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology and former Environmental Literacy Workgroup co-chair; and Jack Clausen, Professor, Natural Resources & Environment, UConn stormwater guru, co-chair of the ENVS program, and one of three original EPAC members.

The University’s place for providing sustainability leadership to our campus, communities, state, and beyond is dependent on your support. We at the OEP say thank you very much for your past, present, and continued support of the efforts we believe are vital to creating a better world, one initiative at a time.

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**Thanks to the 2011 Corporate Donors to UConn’s Campus Sustainability Fund who help make our work possible:**

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