

## Embedding a conservation campaign into a degree program in Ireland



I think the assignment was a valuable learning experience for all of us..... it was great to be connected to the bigger EU project, and for the students to have gained some practical experience on environmental management in an organisation.

Kevin Healion, Programme Specialist, Rural Development Department, Tipperary Institute.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- 390 students involved campus wide.
- Initial survey showed an attitude behaviour gap.
- Students targeted both staff and the entire student body with customised awareness material.
- Surveys identified the main drivers for behaviour change.
- Significant behaviour change resulted in 4% saving on paper use.
- Students recommended future paper and energy conservation improvements.



### SUMMARY

Students at the Tipperary Institute (TI) raised energy awareness on campus and reduced paper consumption by 4%. The student campaign was delivered as part of a conservation assignment for second year degree students on Environmental and Natural Resource Management under the Student Power scheme. The Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA) delivered six Energy Management lectures to students and energy conservation is now embedded in course material for the benefit of future students.

### About Student Power

Student Power is an innovative scheme designed to facilitate students to provide practical support to organisations running energy awareness campaigns, including energy saving campaigns within their own universities or colleges. The aim is for students to work with their own university, local businesses or organisations on energy awareness campaigns.

### Background

Tipperary Institute is a dynamic higher education, development and research centre established by the Government of Ireland in 1999. The Institute is unique in Europe in its integration of higher education with rural community and business development programmes and now has some 800 students located on two sites.

### The situation

In the Thurles campus the Second year Environmental and Natural Resource Management degree students were identified as an appropriate student group to collaborate within Student Power. It was decided to

embed an energy awareness campaign into coursework in June 2009 ready for the 2009/2010 academic year.

Kevin Healion of TI collaborated with TEA to develop the approach for embedding such a campaign into coursework.

### Important Features

In order that the students 'own' the campaign it was decided that they should identify their own conservation campaign. In doing so, one half of the class decided to launch a paper conservation campaign while the other half focussed on reducing or eliminating standby in PCs and VDUs.

Though the students have academic achievement as their

main priority this ownership enabled strong campaigns to develop campus wide.



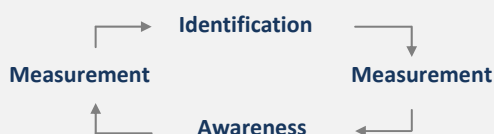
Communication and recognition of the campaigns was enabled through gaining the backing of college staff. Various members of TI management signed a support pledge which was framed and displayed in the main collection area of the college, so that all college users were aware of the significance of the campaign. The students successfully set about consolidating participation from college management.

## Actions taken

The students carried out a baseline behavioural evaluation survey. This was accompanied by a baseline paper use evaluation. Effectively the above evaluation was repeated following a paper and energy conservation week. Lecturers were asked to inform all students of the campaign.



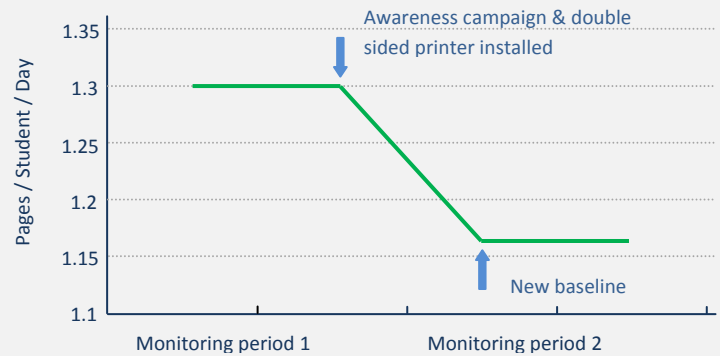
A double sided printer was installed in the library and instructions were made available. The printing cost structure was modified to make it beneficial for double sided copying and printing. Campaign material was circulated and posted. A notice board, near the main canteen, reminded college users of the project, its aims and its impacts. The students aspired to complete their campaign by means of feedback mechanisms and the following mutually reinforcing components:



## Results

The paper conservation team measured their impacts by analysing invoices in the resource procurement office, while the energy saving team monitored the closing down of PCs and VDUs once daily, and found that 25% and 50% of VDU's and PC's were left on respectively.

### Paper use reduction



The paper conservation team reduced paper use in the college by 4%. For a short campaign, this is a significant reduction and will be built upon in the next academic year by the incoming students.

For the energy saving campaign, the group was not successful overall in motivating other college goers to turn off VDU's or PC's, although one of the computer rooms showed an improvement from before to after. However, the students made further proposals to achieve better results in the future. Nevertheless, the campaign got a positive reaction from staff and students, environmental awareness was raised, and a worthwhile learning experience was achieved.

## Lessons learned

The main lessons learned were:

- The project provided an opportunity for undergraduates to put theory into practice by giving support on energy awareness/saving and contribute to a globally important issue.
- The provision of applied research and a thesis style project delivery for undergraduates was a significant learning experience.
- Such initiatives provide continual means of generating new annual campaigns with fresh ideas as new students get involved each year.
- The energy saving group felt that a broader and prolonged awareness campaign was needed.

### For further information contact

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