

How-To: Organize and Run a Greek House Energy Savings Competition Guide

Abstract

This guide intends to direct student groups through the process of creating and running energy savings competitions within college or university Greek systems (fraternities and sororities). This guide is based on [Green Cup](#), a Greek energy savings competition created at UC Berkeley by [UC Berkeley PowerSave Campus](#) and [Greening the Greeks](#) in collaboration with [The Green Initiative Fund](#). The competition was first run in Fall 2011 and repeated in Fall 2012.

Overview of energy savings competitions

Energy savings competitions are a successful way to translate a campus community's competitive spirit into realized energy savings. Energy savings competitions can take place both within single buildings (e.g. floors competing against each other) or between two or more buildings. The one requirement of any energy savings competition is the competing entities' energy consumption must be tracked. The winner can be calculated in a few ways depending on the building purpose, size, and occupancy. Green Cup winners were determined based on the biggest per capita reduction in energy consumption compared to a baseline. This allowed for differences in building sizes and occupancies when comparing the competing houses. A prize is normally given to the winners, and pre-competition incentives can be given to participants for generating enthusiasm about participation.

Why have Greek energy savings competitions?

Energy savings competitions are common within college residential halls and can be one of the most successful ways to motivate students to save energy, especially when combined with educational outreach. However, many students do not live in residential halls for the entire duration of their education and when living off-campus may lose that educational incentive to save energy through energy savings competitions. On many campuses, Greek houses make up the next largest organized student housing system, making them ideal candidates for energy savings competitions and for educating large numbers of students. Below are some other characteristics of Greek systems which make them strong candidates for energy savings competitions:

- Organized structure within houses including weekly meetings, email listservs, etc. resulting in strong lines of communication within houses.
- Organized structure uniting the houses (e.g. Panhellenic Council for sororities, Interfraternity Council for fraternities, student life center).
- Competitive nature between houses: houses already compete against each other in many events such as intramural sports and philanthropy events.
- Houses are financially self-sufficient and can benefit greatly from the cost reductions resulting from energy savings.

Step 1: Gain sustainability contacts within the Greek system or create a network of sustainability contacts. Possible contacts include:

- Sustainability chairs within Greek councils: the sustainability chair manages sustainability initiatives and communicates sustainability efforts to each house.

- Sustainability chairs within each fraternity and sorority: these chairs are point contacts for sustainability efforts within each house.
- Greek sustainability organization: a sustainability organization made up of Greek members committed to sustainability and interested in helping with implementation of these efforts.
- If no sustainability efforts currently exist in the Greek system, pilot some smaller projects in order to gain traction within the community before launching a full competition.

Step 2: Plan the details of the competition

- Duration of the competition (studies have shown that at least a month of advised behavior changes are needed in order to develop lasting habits).
 - Green Cup took place over the course of two months.
- Measurement of energy savings (e.g. read meters, collect energy bills).
 - Decide whether electricity consumption (kWh), gas consumption (Therms), or both will be tracked.
- Winner's prize: house with biggest reduction in energy consumption receives a prize to reward its achievement (e.g. catered dinner, ice cream prize, sustainability materials and retrofits).
 - Green Cup awarded \$1500 in the form of an electricity retrofit budget to the winning fraternity and sorority (funded by a grant from UC Berkeley's The Green Initiative Fund [TGIF]).
- Incentive for participation: houses receive an incentive for signing up to compete
 - Green Cup allocated \$200 in the form of a retrofit budget to each competing fraternity and sorority (funded by a grant from UC Berkeley's The Green Initiative Fund [TGIF]).
- Develop a competition name that is memorable and can be publicized.
 - To encourage recognition of the competition, develop a logo or symbol associated with the project and use consistently in posters and communicative materials.

Step 3: Encourage houses to sign-up to compete

- Announce to all houses that the competition is taking place and reveal the incentives for participating in and winning the competition.
- Collect contact information for one point person within each house (preferably the sustainability chair).
 - Compile this in a central document and share with collaborative team, which may include individual sustainability chairs who are especially interested in the project.
- Greek houses can be challenging to motivate if there is not a clear benefit to them – be sure to emphasize the competitive aspect between the houses, the ability to save money through reduced energy consumption, and the prize for the winning house(s).

Step 4: Calculate baselines

- Calculate baseline consumption for each house for the same time period that the competition will take place for the last few years.
 - Reference the last three years' worth of energy data for time periods that correlate with the competition. Meaning, if the competition is to last 6 months from January to June 2013, you should average January-June data for the last three years in that house.
 - If calculating based on reading meters, there are a few options:
 - Measure a baseline for the competition period and have the competition take place in the following year.
 - Compare consumption month to month (doesn't allow for differences in weather).

Step 5: Kick off competition

- Announce via email to houses that the competition has begun.
- Publicize the competition and spread energy savings tips.
 - Announcements at weekly chapter meetings.
 - Weekly email blasts to house contacts to be forwarded to respective members.
 - Tabling on campus, Greek row, and Greek-wide events.
 - Produce giveaway items such as tanks and sunglasses with the competition name.
 - Social media.
 - Flyers posted in each house.

Step 6: Wrap up competition

- Announce to house contacts that the competition has concluded.
- Collect all energy usage data and calculate which houses achieved the largest energy savings.
 - Collect from each house contact the number of occupants living in each house during the competition in order to calculate per capita consumption.
 - If both electricity and gas were measured, savings can be calculated by averaging the percent reduction of both sources.

Step 7: Announce winners and distribute prizes

- Announce the winners of the competition and distribute the prizes to them as quickly as possible.
- Publish a spreadsheet which includes the reduction in energy consumption for each house and the total amount of energy saved.

Step 8: Review successes and challenges to prepare for next year's competition

- Collect feedback from participants and organizers on what was successful in the competition and what could be improved for future competitions.
- Prepare a document with improvements that can be made for future competitions.



Step 8: Publicize success resulting from the competition

- Have articles published in organization newsletters, university sustainability newsletter, and campus newsletter.
- Submit abstracts and applications to speak at relevant sustainability conferences and educate others on sustainability efforts.

For related questions please contact UC Berkeley PowerSave Campus at powersavecal@gmail.com.