

“The Green Room” Marketing & Communication Plan

By:

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In conjunction with:

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Project Background

Client/History:

UC Davis (UCD) is an exemplary campus for sustainability and energy initiatives. The Facilities Management team is a department that works to promote the efficient and innovative usage of campus resources. Their team has been working on creating a centralized place to display UC Davis' on-site energy and sustainability innovations. Due to the large quantity of content that needs to be organized, a plan has not yet been created. UC Davis administrators, along with Facilities Management, researchers, students, and developers, found it crucial to implement this project to give UCD a competitive edge. The Path to Zero Net Energy class (ABT 212), was assigned a project of creating a marketing strategy to help develop this plan, specifically, under the supervision of senior engineer David Trombley. They worked to compile innovations, review existing practices, and communicate innovations to a variety of audiences.

UC Davis is home to a robust array of energy initiatives that very few people know about. According to UC Davis Finance, Operations, & Administration, the main campus is powered by 75% by renewable energy which includes on-site and off-site solar farms, hydroelectric power and emission offset purchases. UC Davis plans to cover 10-15% of campus gas requirements with projects involving biogas development and landfill gas utilization. UC Davis is also planning to complete a steam to hot water conversion for campus heating and cooling beginning in the fall of 2019. Alongside these monumental physical innovations, UC Davis has an extensive digital presence with websites such as TherMOOstat, which allows students and faculty to report when campus buildings are running too hot or too cold. They also have a "Campus Energy Education Dashboard" (CEED), which allows anyone to see real-time energy usage of buildings on campus.

Problem Description:

While UC Davis has become one of the leading green universities, it fails to appear on top college ranking websites. Along with that, facilities management continues to receive repetitive project proposals for previously accomplished tasks. When considering the marketing strategy, these facts were taken into consideration. Research was directed towards other universities' sustainability showcases that would exemplify UCD's centralized building goal. Through this process, we discovered that not many schools are exploring the idea of showcasing their energy and sustainability innovations in the way that UC Davis hopes to. We explored a variety of avenues for showcasing campus innovations including a more comprehensive website, campus tours geared specifically towards showcasing physical campus innovations, and the possibility of a physical space where the innovations could be displayed. In response to these explorations, we propose that UC Davis could work to update their Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System (STARS) profile. UCD currently has a profile, but it expired in 2013. From there, campus entities would have to monitor traffic on the updated website, monitor visits to the physical location, note the number of inquiries about projects, and monitor the proposal of redundant innovative projects and initiatives.

Relevant prior art/literature:

After researching existing marketing strategies for "innovation hubs", it became clear that many universities have developed spaces for students and faculty to innovate and collaborate. However, there is very little evidence that other schools have tried to create an energy and sustainability showcase such as the goal of this project. Museums on the other hand, are showcases in themselves, so observing how places like this are marketing turned into a key

strategy. According to a book of Museum Experience Design, the museum experience is quickly moving from fully physical to a far reaching digitized experience. The use of crowdsourcing strategies have shown to “enrich interpretive layers for museum collections, they strengthen relationships between museums and their publics and they make audiences feel more connected, more empowered and closer to culture and the arts.” (Vermeeren et al.) Using this type of interactive display in an innovation showcase would hopefully have the same effects and allow the campus community to feel better connected to their innovative university. By observing how museums use technology as well as physical space to showcase their art, we can better understand how UC Davis can combine these strategies to successfully showcase their innovations. When researching successful marketing strategies we were able to compile many interesting tips to work off of. According to research on best practices in experiential learning, it was discovered that this method commonly allows students to step out of their comfort zone, understand the bigger picture and multidisciplinary concepts, better connect with the material, and to realign their values with what was learned in their experience (Shwartz).

Methodology

Major Considerations:

The “Green Room” communication plan contains 3 main parts. This includes defining the target audience, implementing an advertisement and promotional plan, and using the AASHE STARS to advance the campus’ sustainability rankings. The target audience for this project included current UCD community members (students and faculty), prospective community members, and other universities. This reflects the goals of UC Davis, which is to grow it’s campus community and increase awareness of their sustainability and energy initiatives to others. Our promotional plan targets all of these groups. Promoting the Green Room via campus

tours and signs will advertise to current UCD students and faculty. The signs can display key points, designs, and construction dates of the Green Room. An informational sign can also be displayed on the construction site itself. The campus is large, but it is not uncommon for signs to market for clubs and projects on campus. Some students have acknowledged that the only way they found out about “TherMOOstat” was through a sign they saw across from their lecture hall. Signs are cheap and would cost very little to print and place.

A physical location will allow for UC Davis to be among the first universities to implement an energy and sustainability innovation showcase. It will become commonplace for current students and faculty to peruse, as well as an effective selling point on campus tours for prospective students and faculty. Although a physical location would entail high costs, there are existing buildings that can provide an opportunity to reinvigorate a space on campus such as the library.

Having a web based/mobile phone app showcasing the energy innovations has several distinct benefits. Firstly, it allows UC Davis to reach a much larger external audience than the physical location alone. By having a web based component in addition to the physical location, Davis can showcase it’s innovations to prospective students who are doing research on institutions as well as reaching other universities that are looking to start energy innovations of their own. Another benefit is that the web based component can be up and running garnering attention and generating attention while the physical location is being set-up.

Equipment and Procedure:

A survey was sent out to a number of UCD community members and received 37 responses to gauge interest and awareness about current UCD energy and sustainability programs. The survey divided these programs into:

1. *Initiatives:* Carbon Neutrality; Zero Waste Goal; Million LED Challenge; Smart Lighting Initiatives; Water Savings Goal; Sustainable Campus, Sustainable Cities Initiative.
2. *Websites:* TherMOOstat; Trim the Waste; Campus Education Energy Dashboard (CEED); Water Dashboard; Energy Story Dashboard; Campus Comfort
3. *Projects:* On and off site solar farms; Campus biodigester; steam to hot water conversion; Jackson Sustainable Winery; Campus Reclaimed Water Use; Landscape Conversion to Drought Tolerant; Energy efficiency improvements in buildings; Green Building certification process; Primate Gravel Wash

Students were then asked to rank their care and awareness by:

1. Familiar
2. Familiar but interested in knowing more
3. Unfamiliar but interested in knowing more
4. Unfamiliar and interested in knowing more.

Additionally, they were asked to rate energy efficiency/innovation on campus on a scale of 1-5 (5 being very important), as well as where they would like to see this location:

1. Physical Medium (newspaper, pamphlet)
2. Email
3. Mobile App
4. Website
5. Building
 - a. Shields Library
 - b. Welcome Center
 - c. Student Housing

- d. Memorial Union (MU)
- e. Energy Conservation Office (ECO)

6. Tours

They were finally asked to state their relationship to UC Davis (student, faculty, staff, or other) and their age.

For additional research on the promotional plan, students researched literature on sustainability galleries on other university campuses, effectiveness of tours & multimedia advertisement, and how to boost rankings of schools & attract others to the campus. For campus rankings, students discovered AASHE as an effective method of raising not only the ratings, but also the sustainability scores of a campus. Many “Green College” reports, including “The Princeton Review” and “Best Colleges” utilize a sustainable ranking and survey system to score different universities (Princeton Review, 2019).

Results and Discussions:

The major results shown below display that most of the innovations/projects on campus are not well known but people are interested in knowing more about them (Figures 1-3). This is a promising result as the Green Room’s purpose is to showcase UC Davis’s energy innovations and projects. Having a lot of interest and not much prior knowledge should translate to high traffic of both the web based platform and physical location.

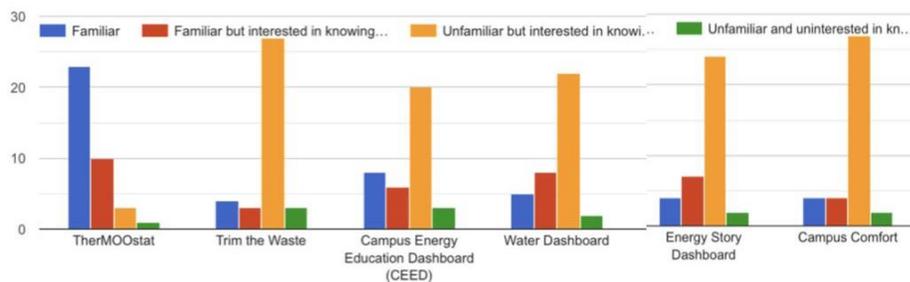


Figure 1. Results showing familiarity with UCD energy websites.

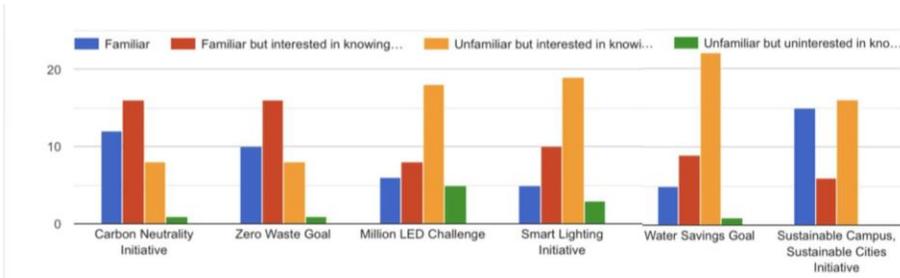


Figure 2. Results displaying familiarity with UCD energy and sustainability initiatives.

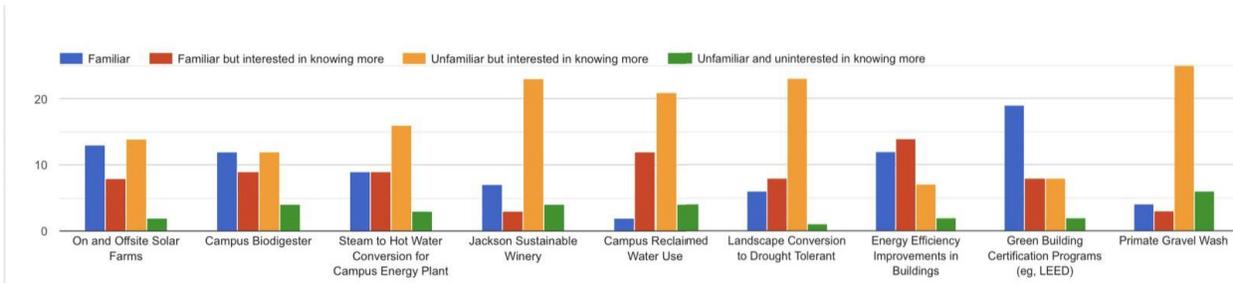


Figure 3. Results showing familiarity with UCD energy and sustainability projects.

The website was the most preferred platform to centralize information, even over mobile apps and email which were the second most preferred (Figure 4). This result counters prior research, which shows that apps (given the age for most of the students on campus) are the most preferred method of virtual information. 92% of millennials own a smartphone and follow brands through social media according to the Pew Research Center.

If all of the energy efficiency information was in one central location, where would you prefer? Rank your preference. (1 = most favorable)

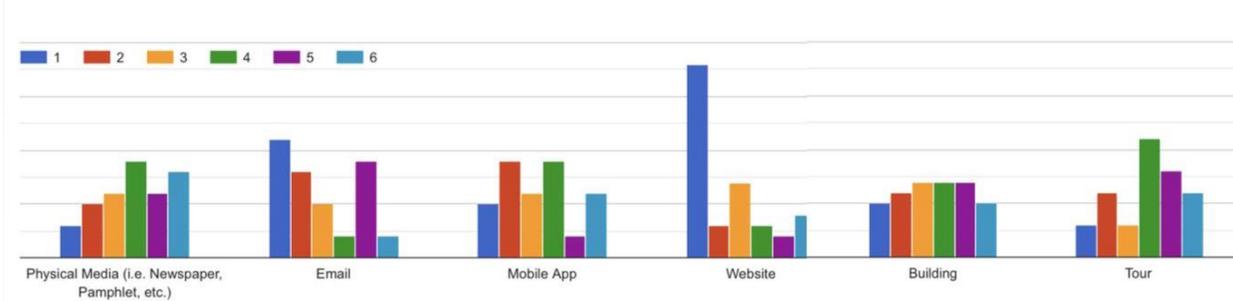


Figure 4. Rankings for information dissemination. The numbers connected to the colors above (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) correlate with the ranking preference (first, second, third...). The more people who ranked a method similarly, the higher the bar will be for that area (i.e.: the website has the largest amount of “1” ranking, and therefore is the most preferred method).

Another key finding from the survey was that The Memorial Union and Shields Library were the top two choices for physical locations of the “Green Room” (Figure 3). This result was expected, as these are places are heavily utilized by students and would be convenient for them to tour.

If all of the energy efficiency information was in one physical location, which location would you prefer? Rank your preference. (1= most favorable)

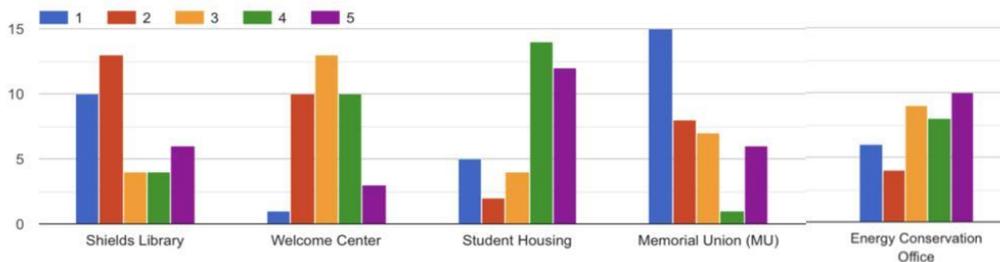


Figure 5. Rankings for Green Room physical location. The numbers connected to the colors above (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) correlate with the ranking preference (first, second, third...). The more people who ranked a method similarly, the higher the bar will be for that area (i.e.: the Memorial Union has the largest amount of “1” ranking, and therefore is the most preferred method).

Our research and SWOT analyses led us to define criteria to assess the success of the Green Room after its implementation. These criteria are as follows: increased campus awareness & reduced energy projects replication, actual “Green Room” visits, website traffic, increased inquiries to Sustainability Office, and increased rankings for UC Davis via platforms like

AASHE STAR. A follow-up survey and campus literature review to assess the increase in knowledge of energy innovations should be conducted. Green Room foot traffic would be monitored through a sign in system, where students and staff can swipe their ID's to be logged as visitors. Visitors without an ID can sign in on a computer system. Website traffic can easily be monitored as well as UC Davis's sustainability rankings. Lastly, data sharing and planning coordination between Sustainability Office, ECO, Facilities Management, and other offices could help monitor success and continue a centralized planning system.

Main Results Relevant to Scope:

Signs advertising for the Green Room are crucial to connecting prospective students. 60% of students make a decision to attend a university based on their college tours. Of that, 95% of students make the decision based on buildings and facilities that appeal to them (Hesel). As a nationally ranked university with numerous STEM and environmental majors, it wouldn't be uncommon for eco-friendly prospective students to tour through Davis. Survey data suggests that students are interested in energy and sustainability initiatives happening on campus, but that they are unaware of its existence. The survey indicated that The Memorial Union and Shields Library were the most effective way to disseminate information, while the ECO/Sustainability Office would also work for some of the campus community that frequents those areas. Therefore, signs should be posted there while building planning is underway. This is a passive marketing approach that requires little work to implement. However, it is not as strong as other strategies because it is the least preferred method of communication supported by the survey and will only target current UCD community members who walk by the signage.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Although our study is based on a small portion of the total UC Davis population, the results are promising in guiding the direction of the creation and success of a centralized location showcasing the on-campus energy and sustainability initiatives. Through our background research, we found very few campuses that are implementing practices like these, allowing the “Green Room” to act as a standard and inspiration for other campus’ innovations, but more importantly will help set UC Davis apart. These results, in conjunction with the marketing plan and previous work, should act as a first step toward moving the Green Room out of the planning stages and into a functioning innovation showcase.

Recommendations for future work include expanding upon the initial survey results by distributing it more widely over campus and to more departments. After gathering more survey results, we suggest assessing the feasibility of the most highly rated options using the survey results to guide decision making processes. This can be done in a variety of ways such as a cost-benefit analysis or expansion of the SWOT analysis contained in this market plan. Finally, there should be further collaboration to determine a name that makes this innovation showcase stand out. The name should reflect what it is (a showcase for green efforts of campus), and should be tied into the UCD aggie theme.

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