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Pull the plug on energy overuse

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BY AMANDA WOOD ON APRIL 9, 2014

OPINION

Buildings on campus often remain fully lit long after business hours. This makes it easy to think that the University of Miami doesn't care about energy efficiency and its environmental implications.

Despite this lighting issue, the fact of the matter is that the university is working to improve campus energy efficiency. However, the changes won't work without help from students and faculty.

Though the Department of Facilities Management is improving building policies and technology, the upgrades are just one piece of the puzzle. A more significant and equally challenging step is getting the UM community to change its habits.

Large buildings may seem like a greater priority in the quest for energy efficiency, but "user behavior" is the main source of energy use – and waste – at UM. Even with high-tech solutions, the campus will never be energy efficient without the help of students and faculty. With this in mind, we all need to make changes to use less energy.

Facilities Management has already implemented some new technology to reduce the impact of user behavior. One example is the ongoing installation of almost 2,000 occupancy sensors around campus, including in campus dorm rooms.

The occupancy sensors prevent wasted energy that results from individuals leaving lights and air conditioners running while they aren't in the room. Such sensors have already been installed in the Mahoney and Pearson dorms, and have significantly decreased the buildings' energy consumption.

Still, students and faculty can do their part to help limit energy waste. Small changes, like conserving the batteries of personal electronics by keeping them in "sleep mode" when

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Immigration (16%, 75 Votes)

Gun control (11%, 51 Votes)

Environmental concerns (10%, 48 Votes)

Education (7%, 31 Votes)

Total Voters: 469

Polls Archive

not in use, can significantly reduce the university's demand for energy.

This simple switch decreases the high "plug load" in outlets, which is caused by the constant need to charge electronics like laptops and smartphones. Energy will be saved in the long run, and saving energy reduces the need for fossil fuels.

With Earth Day approaching in the coming weeks, now is the perfect time to start thinking about how each of us can be more Earth-friendly. Though it might seem that facilities should be more concerned with large campus buildings, the fact is that changing our own actions makes a greater difference in UM's energy use and improves the school's environmental impact.

Illustrating this is a combined goal of Facilities Management, Green U and ECO board. It's important for students to remember that our actions can make or break the energy efficiency of the university.

So, next time you walk by the library or Wellness Center and blame UM for leaving the lights on, remember that they're taking steps to be more environmentally friendly – then ask yourself if you're doing the same.

Amanda Wood is a junior majoring in ecosystem science and policy.

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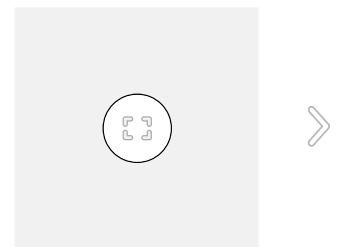
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Every week, on Thursday, TMH will highlight a **Photo(s) of the Week** showcasing the best work from our photography staff.

The Council of International Student Organization performs their organized cheer dance Wednesday night at the Lakeside Patio. Victoria McKaba // Photo Editor

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The Miami Hurricane is the student newspaper of the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Fla. The newspaper is edited and produced by undergraduate students at UM and is published weekly on Thursdays during the regular academic year.