

# Behavior Modification Techniques Employed To Get College Students To Reduce Use of Energy and Water at SMCM

Posted by [TBN](#) On 09/20/2006

St. Mary's College of Maryland dorm resident assistants learn how to get college students to save water and energy in a first-of-its-kind workshop. The College will focus on changing three behaviors: turn off the computer, take shorter showers, and turn off fans and air conditioners when you leave the room. The goal is for the College to become Maryland's first "green college."

It's a parent's dream come true. [Their offspring are turning off lights, taking shorter showers and saving money for college.](#) But the transformation of Gen Y students into conservation-minded adults isn't happening at home, it is happening at St. Mary's College of Maryland in a first-of-its-kind program.

Industrial psychologist Scott Finlinson employs peer pressure to change attitudes, knowledge and social norms. His studies show that while females may use more water and energy, they are more likely to adopt conservation habits than their male counterparts.

Finlinson was hired by the College to train dormitory resident assistants (RAs) on how to motivate college students to reduce their use of water and energy. This is the first time a behavior modification program of this kind has been conducted in Maryland and only the second time on a college campus. In a workshop last Friday in the College's chemistry lecture hall, Finlinson explained what the students need to do to take full advantage of the physical changes made to campus systems.

Since students living on campus are the largest users of water and electricity, the program needs the students' buy-in to be successful. Finlinson thinks that the secret for success is for the groups to focus on these three behaviors: turn off the computer, take shorter showers, and turn off fans and air conditioners when you leave the room. He appealed both to the students' ethics and budgets, saying that conservation is good for the planet, but will also save the College money and control the rising cost of tuition. His program encourages the RAs to first model the behavior, then to persuade and remind the students. Posters, squishy toys and shower signs are also used.

Over the summer, many campus buildings had energy and water-savings overhauls and most of the dorm rooms have been retro-fitted with compact fluorescent lights, low-flow toilets and water-saving shower heads. Contractors installed programmable thermostats, occupancy sensors, boiler replacements, fume hood conversions, upgraded lighting and other items. A 2KW photovoltaic array (solar cells that convert sunlight into direct current electricity and provide supplemental electrical power) will be installed in the library. In Montgomery Hall, a chandelier that is a work of art received new energy saving light-emitting diodes that replaced old light bulbs. The goal is for the College to become Maryland's first "green college."

"We project that the program will result in saving over 2 million kilowatts of electricity, 73,000 gallons of fuel oil and eight million gallons of water," Finlinson said. Finlinson earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State University developing a similar program

Last spring, Finlinson's survey found that 95% of the students wanted to conserve energy. His research also shows that about half of all students leave their computers on all day. "It is a myth tha

---

Copyright © 2020 thebaynet.com. All rights reserved.