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CUSP Submission Turns Labs into Models of Conservation [1]

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At CU-Boulder, Kathryn Ann Ramirez-Aguilar remembers being struck by the stickers on laboratory light switches – the stickers that urged occupants to turn off the lights when leaving the room. Why, she wondered, were there no comparable efforts to turn off lab equipment when not in use?

Thus was launched the initiative that became the CU Green Labs Program and ultimately positioned Kathryn as its Program Manager. The program aims to be a resource for campus labs, to raise awareness, to utilize the expertise of scientists to identify ideas, and to look for opportunities that are a win for conservation and a win for research. A key component of the program is engaging lab members to be Eco-Leaders, individuals who take action for conservation.

CU-Boulder has approximately 400 labs occupying over 2 million square feet of lab space. Labs have been identified as one of the largest energy consumers on campus. Green Labs brings to campus energy savings, water savings, hazardous waste reductions, and solid waste diversion.

Between the program's creation in the summer of 2009 and the end of the 2014 calendar year, it is estimated that the program has implemented or helped to implement efforts resulting in a cumulative impact of $79,000/year in electricity savings, $34,000/year in water savings, and $50,000/year or more in heating and cooling savings. In addition, the program has prompted the recycling of 28,000 pounds of foam, pipette tip boxes, & plastic film … and 500 gallons of solvents.

You can learn how it all came about by reading Kathryn's submission [3] to the 2015 CUSP Program.

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