

# Case study: Northwestern University

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July 2020

Northwestern University, located in Evanston, Illinois, is a private institution with more than 21,000 full-time students and nearly 9,000 faculty and staff members occupying 222 buildings. The institution has partnered with ENERGY STAR since 2015, and achieved Partner of the Year for Energy Management distinction in 2018 and 2019. In 2020, Northwestern became the first university to receive the ENERGY STAR Sustained Excellence Award. Several stakeholder engagement and energy management activities led to Northwestern achieving this award, including energy use reduction through LED lighting upgrades, residence hall engagement programs resulting in decreased electricity and water consumption, a Green Office Certification program engaging more than 12 offices and 900 employees around energy and resource conservation, and an annual steam trap survey program.

## A Comprehensive Energy Management Approach

The university's sustainability program, sustainNU, utilizes a [Strategic Sustainability Plan](#) that was developed in collaboration with students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders from across campus. The Built Environment Working Group and Energy Efficiency Committee work to identify and implement ambitious energy conservation initiatives that align with the institution's goals of reducing energy use intensity by 20 percent by the end of fiscal year 2020 compared to a 2010 baseline and reducing its Scope 1 and 2 greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030 compared to a 2012 baseline. Northwestern also relies on ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager® to benchmark and assess the energy performance of its entire portfolio of campus buildings. Using Portfolio Manager enables the institution to streamline data collection and auditing and to track energy reduction and improved ENERGY STAR



scores. It can also serve as a platform for providing students with hands-on experience in real world data collection and benchmarking. The university has also led ENERGY STAR Treasure Hunts, taking them as opportunities to revisit energy assessments and audit reports to reprioritize projects, create further energy savings, and free up funding for additional investments in energy efficiency.

## Engaging the Campus Community in Energy Efficiency

Northwestern communicates the value of ENERGY STAR and engages stakeholders in energy efficiency efforts, on campus and beyond, through multiple communication channels, including website content, email newsletters, social media, signage and materials, and events. This multi-channel approach is critical to fostering relationships with students, faculty, staff, and the broader community, all while promoting Northwestern's sustainability leadership and energy management successes across campus. The university has held efficiency and sustainability-focused events including Earth Hour, an ENERGY STAR photo booth during Earth Week, and an EPA Game Day Challenge.

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Additionally, Northwestern hosts an annual Green Cup competition to reduce energy and water use in residence halls and Greek houses. The team has leveraged ENERGY STAR's 90% brand recognition among the American public by co-branding campus events with ENERGY STAR and using the ENERGY STAR logo and resources as a conversation starter with target audiences.

## Demonstrated Energy Savings

As a result of the comprehensive energy management and campus engagement efforts described above, Northwestern University has achieved significant improvements in energy efficiency in recent years, including 14% reduction in building energy use intensity from a 2010 baseline through 2019.



The school also has an updated fleet of twenty-six all-electric vehicles, further reducing the university's greenhouse gas emissions.

The University has taken significant strides toward reducing the impact of its buildings. For example, Northwestern installed a 254-panel solar array on the roof of Kresge Centennial Hall, which generates 81 kilowatts of electricity, and the Kellogg Global Hub utilizes a geothermal energy system for efficient heating and cooling.

Is your college or university taking action to improve energy efficiency on campus? Earn recognition from EPA for your efforts by pursuing [ENERGY STAR certifications](#) for eligible campus buildings or applying for an [ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year award!](#) Visit the [ENERGY STAR Higher Education webpage](#) for more information.



In 2015, the institution received the EPA's Green Power Leadership Award, which recognizes organizations that distinguish themselves through their green power use and impact on the green power market, and consistently ranks in the top 20 of the Green Power Partnership Top 30 College & University list. Northwestern purchases Renewable Energy Certificates to cover approximately 40% of the University's annual electricity consumption, equivalent to offsetting the emissions of 15,275 passenger vehicles driven for one year.

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