

The Green Initiative Fund

University of California, Berkeley

2008-2009 Final Report

Office of Sustainability

Talking Louder about Sustainability, a boisterous communication campaign

Project Lead: Kira Stoll, Sustainability Specialist, Office of Sustainability

Project Summary:

a. Goals of the project

UC Berkeley is *Talking Louder about Sustainability*. Through a boisterous communications campaign, a student communications team working with the Office of Sustainability has raised awareness and engaged thousands of faculty, staff, and students in efforts to reduce campus environmental impacts – including those related to electricity and water use, transportation choices, waste and recycling, food, and purchasing.

Expanding the culture of sustainability at UC Berkeley – a goal of the Office of Sustainability (Office) - requires improving access to information on an on-going basis, educating a broad range of community members, and empowering people to take positive action. With this in mind, the students and the Office embarked on a year-long intensive communications effort to talk louder about sustainability – launched in June 2009, funded in part by a campus TGIF grant (The Green Initiative Fund) and implemented primarily by a team of student associates, to:

- Make campus sustainability information **easily available**
- **Educate** the UC Berkeley community about what steps they can take, why they work, as well as what efforts are less effective.
- **Empower** the UC Berkeley community to apply sustainability principles at work/school and home
- Increase the number of people and groups who are **sharing** their sustainability lessons learned, best practices, and tools with others
- Expand the roster of **champions & partners** who are involved in sustainability.

b. Meet the Team

- **Student Communication Associates:** Nicole Campbell, Vickie Ly, and Joanna Young (lead)
- **Student Webmaster:** Oscar Zisman
- **Student Marketing & Planning Analyst:** Karen L. Salvini
- **Office of Sustainability Staff:** Lisa McNeilly and Kira Stoll

c. Project Implementation Efforts

With a comprehensive marketing-communication plan developed by a MBA graduate student, a student webmaster redesigning websites, and three outreach associates taking the message out far and wide, the campaign has:

- Produced a comprehensive marketing-communication plan that not only outlines activities but provides a toolkit to capture and track metrics, consistently brand the campaign effort, and evaluate the level of impacts.
- Expanded the coverage, frequency, and readership of Bright Green News – the campus sustainability newsletter. The newsletter, now published monthly, covers a broad range of campus sustainability activities, accomplishments, and opportunities.
- Completed an extensive redesign of the main campus sustainability website, and its companion sites, which now serves as a gateway to UC Berkeley’s sustainability resources and operational practices.
- Created a Facebook page to interactively engage the campus on sustainability and provide a forum for fans to share information on activities and events.
- Offered two student sustainability forums each semester creating a place for new and returning students to hear from the various environmental student groups and figure out which ones they wanted to get involved with.
- Included outreach at large events providing opportunities to share energy and water conservation information to a broad range of stakeholders while encouraging continued engagement through signing up of the Bright Green News and the Office Facebook page.
- Reached visitors and those new to campus by providing campus sustainability tours and creating a new on-line tour and map.
- Through meetings and small group presentations, built a stronger network of department, organization, and student group partners. The Office now has enhanced the collaborations with the housing, dining, transportation, and fleet departments as well as with student environmental groups and staff organizations.

But how is this campaign different from what is happening on many campuses’ nation-wide? The answer is perhaps more philosophical than it is quantifiable. The UC Berkeley campus already had a significant level of awareness about sustainability and previous educational efforts had tapped the low-hanging fruit. The challenge for the Talking Louder project was to address instead the “unripe”

fruit in regards to the culture of sustainability on campus: how to identify and recognize new sustainability champions? How to ensure permanent behavioral changes? How to help institutionalize the work of student groups on campus? How to raise the profile of UC Berkeley's work? How to build lasting partnerships between departments and organizations that ensure continuing sustainability improvement?

Success in these areas is harder to pin down, except through anecdotal evidence. And, this less quantifiable evidence continues to show itself. Not only has the sustainability buzz spread more widely on campus but is being heard nationally and even internationally –website hits are coming in from all over the world and a Bright Green Newsletter article on a campus on-line re-use service caught the attention of the "Greening the Capitol" office in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The *Talking Louder about Sustainability* campaign continues to turn up the volume, to engage more people in environmental improvements, and to build a culture of sustainability at UC Berkeley.

d. Project Design, Collaboration, and Impacts

The *Talking Louder about Sustainability* campaign needed to incorporate multiple disciplines and stakeholders because it was a communications effort designed to reach the entire campus community- students, staff, faculty, and even alumni.

- Some aspects of the campaign were about students reaching students; for example, the Student Sustainability Forum was marketed and organized by student interns and hosted for the student body, while on-going meetings with the student residential sustainability coordinators provided opportunities for joint outreach efforts.
- Another aspect of the campaign was about reaching staff and faculty; for example, the promotion of the Green Certification programs where departments or events can be given a special designation as being "green," helped introduce more sustainability strategies in the daily work habits among UC Berkeley employees.
- The improvement of the sustainability's online presence through enhanced websites and an up-to-date Facebook page provided better information about UC Berkeley sustainability for anyone who was curious, whether it be an alumni or someone from another school.

There was on-going collaboration for The *Talking Louder about Sustainability* campaign and every time an organization partnered with the Office, more people were reached and on-going partnerships developed.

- For the Green Department certification program, the Office worked closely with student group Green Campus to lower the energy usages of the eight certified departments.
- To promote public transportation, the Office worked together with UC Berkeley Parking and Transportation (P&T), helping P&T reach out to students.
- Because the campaign was funded by The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF) – a student funded grant program - the campaign promotional materials increased the visibility of TGIF as well, potentially leading to a greater number of sustainability grant applicants.

The *Talking Louder about Sustainability* campaign brought these quantitative results:

- Expanded the coverage, frequency, and readership of Bright Green News – the campus sustainability newsletter.
 - The number of articles per issue has more than doubled from approximately five to over 10. The newsletter went from a bi-monthly to monthly publication. The combination of these two expansion efforts increased the amount of news coverage four-fold.
 - Bright Green News went from a subscription base of 400 to 1,400 as a result of the campaign, representing a 250% increase in readership.
- Completed an extensive redesign of the main campus sustainability website, and its companion sites.
 - Visits to <http://sustainability.berkeley.edu> increased by almost 20%.
- Green Certified 30 Events and 9 Departments.
- Created a Facebook page to interactively engage the campus on sustainability.
 - Friends of the page grew from 1 to 200 in a matter of months
- Offered two student sustainability forums each semester.
 - Attendance at student forums grew over 400% (from 20 to 100 attendees)
 - The number of student groups presenting also doubled from last year
- Through face to face contact by attending events, holding forums, providing campus sustainability tours, tabling at residence halls, and presenting to staff groups
 - Several thousand students and hundreds of employees learned more about campus sustainability

e. **A Few Lessons Learned**

While Talking Louder accomplished what is set out do, a few challenges and lessons emerged.

- As the project relied on students with many obligations – most importantly academics – sometimes students did not have availability to provide the coverage when it was needed. Having a team of students working on the project helped to bridge gaps.
- With the expanded coverage and frequency of Bright Green News - a re-design of the newsletter format may be warranted in order to better accommodate multiple contributors and to make publishing easier.
- As communications expand and more interactive content is required to reach audiences, the more need there is for technical support and consultation. This type of support is not readily available on campus and when it can be found – mostly through happenstance - it comes at a price that is not affordable on an on-going basis. This project has been fortunate to have found a student with the time and the skills to provide this during the Talking Louder effort, but the student webmaster has graduated and it is uncertain whether a replacement with this level of skill will be found.

f. View Some Accomplishments

- **View the redesigned main sustainability website:**
<http://sustainability.berkeley.edu>
- **See a recent Bright Green News:**
http://sustainability.berkeley.edu/os/pages/newsletter/docs/BrightGreenNewsV15_0429.pdf
- **See an article about green certification geared to campus staff:**
<http://administration.berkeley.edu/forms/newsletter/spring-10-about.htm>
- **Learn more about our student sustainability forums:**
<http://sustainability.berkeley.edu/os/pages/projects/forum.shtml>
- **Join our facebook page:**
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Berkeley-CA/UC-Berkeley-Office-of-Sustainability/62295986103>
- **See the project poster displayed at the 7th Annual Sustainability Summit:**
http://sustainability.berkeley.edu/os/pages/talkinglouder/docs/UCB_TalkingLouder_Poster.pdf
- **Read the Marketing Communications Plan:**
http://sustainability.berkeley.edu/os/pages/talkinglouder/docs/communication_plan_0910.pdf

g. Talking Louder as a Best Practice and Applicability to Other Institutions

The *Talking Louder about Sustainability* campaign represents a successful collaborative outreach effort by a campus department and a team of students that reaches a diverse audience through a variety of mediums. The campaign is made up of numerous small and effective projects and methods that could be mixed, matched, and replicated by other organizations.

In addition to the campaign activities mentioned above best practice highlights include:

Setting clear goals. Tasked with building a culture of sustainability on campus, The Office of Sustainability defined communications priorities, target markets, and required outcomes and secured grant funding to conduct a comprehensive student led outreach effort.

Planning up-front. Using the professional skills of an MBA graduate student, the project included the preparation of a comprehensive marketing communications plan and toolkit to guide the work of the implementation team. The Plan is designed both to be expanded on and to offer opportunity to for creative expression – making it a living document beyond the one-year campaign. The Plan is posted on-line for others to use.

Creating a diverse and motivated implementation team. The undergraduate communications associates each brought with them a unique set of experiences and interests that added depth and breadth to the effort. With the technical and aesthetic sensibilities of the webmaster, the creativity and community organizing prowess of the lead communications associate, and the journalism skills and topical interests of the other associates, the campaign has reached diverse audiences through a variety of methods.

Personalizing sustainability. Through face to face contact by attending events, holding forums, providing campus sustainability tours, tabling at residence halls, presenting to staff groups, and networking with other environmentally focused groups, the visibility and accessibility of sustainability has been brought to the local level – providing people more tangible ways to engage in sustainability.

Making sustainability newsworthy. Originally sent out to 400 people at the beginning of the campaign, Bright Green News, the campus sustainability newsletter is now sent out to over 1,400 students, staff, faculty, and the larger community. Through communication associates contributions and encouraging story submittals from other groups and organizations, the Office is able to publish more extensive, informative newsletters to a broader audience. Stories highlighted in the newsletter are now being picked up by other sustainability communication networks and listserves.

Getting feedback from your audience. The Office Facebook page is a tool for getting the word out quickly and getting real-time feedback to postings. Growing from one fan to 200 fans in just months, this communication tool is especially important for reaching students and provides an outlet to announce events and items of interest that may not fit into more traditional outlets.

Keeping substantive information current and readily available. Through a carefully crafted redesign of the campus sustainability website, the most requested background information, plans, resources, and data are readily available to the casual browser as well as the in-depth researcher seeking detail on sustainability initiatives and trends. Through the main page of this site – which is updated frequently - the most current sustainability information is shared through both announcement and media sections.

Planning for future efforts. By tracking the outcomes and metrics of the *Talking Louder about Sustainability* campaign, future communication initiatives and opportunities will be easier to plan and execute. To the extent possible, these metrics also quantify the environmental benefits of the campaign efforts.

h. Next Steps

Overall the Talking Louder about Sustainability project will be completed by the end of the fiscal year under budget. Through the TGIF budget re-allocation process the Office of Sustainability has been approved to extend the project for four more months – through October 31, 2010 – to again offer an extensive fall outreach effort to new and returning students. By using the remaining funds in this way, the Office will be able to sponsor more activities than would otherwise be possible. The Office will also provide a new short-term incentive to green events to encourage more composting.

It is anticipated that the four month extension of the project will further expand Talking Louder campaign impacts. The Office intends to meet or exceed the success of last fall's outreach that offered opportunities for us to talk with over 600 new students and sign them up for our listserve, and to provide a Fall Student Forum with over 100 attendees. By covering the cost an event's composting, the green event composting incentive will provide broader exposure to campus composting services, while helping the Office to promote green event certification during the new school year.

At the end of the four-month extension, the Office will submit a supplemental final report to TGIF.

i. Final Thoughts

The Talking Louder campaign built a strong foundation from which the Office will continue to work and has helped in the effort to build a culture of sustainability as UC Berkeley. Many of the efforts of this year's Talking Louder about Sustainability campaign will be continued into the future – particularly those that were found to have the most impact and can be expanded to meet the demands of an ever increasingly sophisticated audience.

Through a new TGIF grant recently secured by the Office, the work of institutionalizing sustainability will continue by focusing on training and career enhancement and adding multi-media communications to the cadre of efforts.

j. Budget Summary

The following budget summarizes expenses from May 2009 through May 2010 and anticipated expenses through the end of the project (October 2010). A final budget will be submitted at the end of the project, along with general ledger supporting documentation.

Talking Louder Budget & Expenses			
Item	Revised Budget	Expenditures through May 31, 2010*	Anticipated Expenditures by October 31, 2010
Outreach Materials	\$1,500	\$1,240	\$1,500
Marketing for Green Dept., Green Event, Give-Aways, etc.	\$1,000	\$126	\$1,000
Green Department & Event Incentives	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
Technical Web Assistance	\$1,500	\$0	\$1,500
Forum Refreshments	\$400	\$210	\$400
Advertising	\$0	\$0	\$0
Event Fees	\$0	\$0	\$0
Student Employees (wages & related expenses)	\$12,850	\$9,568	\$12,850
Total	\$18,250	\$11,144	\$18,250

*** Expense Detail**

TGIF Grant Talking Louder About Sustainability			Total Remaining (as of June 1, 2010)	
Total Grant	\$	18,250.00	\$	7,105.95
STARTING BALANCE	\$	18,250.00		
June Salary Expenses				
Salvini wages	\$	1,480.00	(estimate based on 80 hours; os paying 50% of salary)	
July Salary Expenses				
Salvini wages	\$	1,480.00	(estimate based on 80 hours; os paying 50% of salary)	
Young wages	\$	250.00		
Hua wages	\$	100.00		
August Salary Expenses				
Salvini wages	\$	740.00	(estimate based on 40 hours; os paying 50% of salary)	
Young wages	\$	650.00		
Campbell wages	\$	252.00		
Ly wages	\$	66.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
September Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	448.50		
Campbell wages	\$	162.00		
Ly wages	\$	96.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
October Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	260.00		
Campbell wages	\$	108.00		
Ly wages	\$	72.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
November Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	474.50		
Campbell wages	\$	126.00		
Ly wages	\$	132.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
December Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	130.00		
Campbell wages	\$	60.00		
Ly wages	\$	48.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
January 2010 Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	195.00		
Campbell wages	\$	48.00		
Ly wages	\$	36.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
February 2010 Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	403.00		
Campbell wages	\$	84.00		
Ly wages	\$	84.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
March 2010 Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	533.00		
Campbell wages	\$	54.00		
Ly wages	\$	42.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
April 2010 Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	741.00		
Campbell wages	\$	156.00		
Ly wages	\$	57.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
May 2010 Salary Expenses				
Young wages	\$	-		
Campbell wages	\$	-		
Ly wages	\$	42.00	(work study paying 50% of salary)	
Zisman wages	\$	950.00		
Salary Subtotal	\$	9,568.00		
Materials				
July	\$	291.00	(banner, crickets, presenter software)	
August	\$	926.00	(conservation postcard printing; gift baskets)	
September	\$	94.50	(forum food)	
Decemeber	\$	16.23	(forum food)	
February	\$	77.46	(Forum Food; Playgreen Giveaway)	
March	\$	111.99	(photo software; card reader)	
April	\$	58.87	(forum food; forum giveaway)	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$	11,144.05		