



CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS TURN TO PERSONAL COMPUTER USERS

January 30, 2008
By Micheal Peña

A new program has been launched that could cut energy costs by more than half a million dollars across campus and result in rebates from Pacific Gas and Electric Co. (PG&E) that could add up to approximately \$450,000 if every employee and student who uses a PC participates.

The program is part of BigFix, a service that manages the testing and distribution of critical security updates to Windows PCs across campus. So far, BigFix is installed on more than 24,000 of the approximately 30,000 PCs at Stanford. Individual users, or local IT staff who support offices and departmental groups, can download BigFix at <http://www.stanford.edu/services/ess/pc/bigfix.html>.

But now, along with security updates, BigFix has a power-management feature that includes energy-savings settings that can turn off a PC monitor after 10 to 30 minutes of inactivity. Those with BigFix already installed can go to <http://sustainable.stanford.edu/bigfix.html> and click on "Power Management" to download the settings.

In terms of energy costs, individual departments could save up to \$17 per computer per year, according to IT Services specialist Ammy Hill. If each of the more than 30,000 PCs at Stanford runs the energy-efficiency settings in BigFix, cost savings could total up to at least \$510,000 across campus. The power-management program offers different levels of energy-efficiency settings, as well as customizing options.

In addition, PG&E is offering a one-time rebate of \$15 for each computer with the power-management feature enabled. Rebates will be made payable to offices and departments, and the university is strongly encouraging that the money be spent on environmental-sustainability projects. Replacing old CRT (cathode ray tube) monitors with more energy-efficient LCDs (light crystal displays) is one example.

Sustainable IT, a group of information-technology staff across campus that is promoting the power-management program, also estimates that the reduced energy usage by the 24,000 PCs currently on the BigFix system represents 28,000 tons of carbon dioxide that would be kept from entering the atmosphere—equivalent to taking 4,600 cars off the road for one year. The group is working alongside the larger Sustainable Stanford initiative.

After testing the power-management feature in several offices on campus for several months, the program was made available throughout Stanford on Jan. 16—coinciding with the kickoff of the Energy Bowl and Water Derby, a dorm-wide competition in energy and water reduction (<http://sustainability.stanford.edu/projects/energybowl.html>).

If the nearly 7,000 students with BigFix currently on their computers download the power-management feature, rebates could add up to about \$100,000. Any rebates for students who participate will be deposited into the Green Fund, which will support student-run sustainability programs and projects.

For the purposes of applying for the PG&E rebates, IT Services will take a "snapshot" on Feb. 15 to determine how many PCs at Stanford are running the power-management feature.

Hill said that a comparable program for Apple computers is expected to debut this summer. The PG&E rebate will be offered until the end of 2008, according to Hill.