

# ENERGY EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM BEST PRACTICE AWARDS APPLICATION FORM

**Submission Deadline: March 8, 2013, 6:00 p.m., no exceptions**

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Twelfth Annual CA Higher Education Sustainability Conference - hosted by UC Santa Barbara

## **This form is only for nominations in the Communicating Sustainability category**

New to the conference this year, the "Communicating Sustainability" Best Practice Award was created to highlight the conference theme by recognizing projects that have done an exemplary job in communicating sustainability across departments and disciplines on campus and/or to the broader community. Types of projects that would be eligible for this award include (but are not limited to) campus sustainability maps, sustainability summits and earth day festivals, sustainability outreach and marketing strategies, and sustainability newsletters.

### **I. Contact Information**

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1. Campus Cal Poly State University, San Luis Obispo
2. Department Facility Services
3. Contact name/title Dennis Elliot, Assistant Director of Energy, Utilities, and Sustainability
4. Telephone (805) 756-2090
5. E-mail delliot@calpoly.edu

### **II. Project Information**

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1. Project name Sustainability Educational Outreach
2. Project location Everywhere!
3. Completion date or estimated completion date February 2013
4. Brief narrative of project goals and strategies (200 – 300 words) In an ongoing effort to implement sustainability principles in operations at Cal Poly, it became clear there was a serious need to engage and educate faculty, staff, students, and the larger community to achieve lasting change. As part of a multi-faceted public relations and educational outreach campaign, Cal Poly has implemented the following four initiatives:

First started in 2006, in 2012 Cal Poly published its fourth "Biennial Progress Report on Sustainability for Facilities and Operations"—a full color glossy publication designed to communicate not only to faculty, staff, and students, but peer institutions, the local community, and regional and state leaders. The report highlights progress toward sustainability goals in the areas of policy, energy use, water resources, transportation, recycling,

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greenhouse gas emissions, land use and development, and creating a more sustainable community. The 2012 report can be viewed at:

[http://afd.calpoly.edu/sustainability/docs/Metrics/2012\\_SustainabilityReport.pdf](http://afd.calpoly.edu/sustainability/docs/Metrics/2012_SustainabilityReport.pdf)

Hard copies of the 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2012 reports were sent to Rashmi Sahai via overnight delivery.

Facility Services created and maintains a University wide Sustainability Website encompassing guiding principles, curriculum, research, planning, design and construction, campus operations, student activities, metrics, events, and case studies. The Sustainability website may be viewed at: <http://www.sustainability.calpoly.edu>

Cal Poly is the home of the world's greatest environmental rap superhero, "Mr. Eco", who educates and inspires students of all ages to consider the impact of their actions on the global environment. Mr. Eco (PowerSave Green Campus intern Brett Edwards) has produced a full length music album and over 30 educational outreach videos about energy and water conservation, reusable bags, bottled water, food waste, and recycling. Mr. Eco's videos can be viewed at: [www.mrecomusic.com](http://www.mrecomusic.com), or on his YouTube channel at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/MrEcoOfficial>

Polly the Polar Bear is a new member of the Cal Poly community this year. Information about the effect of global climate change on polar bear habitat and populations was incorporated into outreach materials starting with the 2012 Dorm Energy Competition, and had a significant impact on student participation. In 2013, Polly the Polar Bear became a living, breathing, walking (but not talking) voice for sustainability on campus! PowerSave Green Campus interns play the role of Polly in a full size polar bear suit, often performing alongside Mr. Eco to engage and motivate students to save water and energy in an effort to help her return to the arctic. Polly has received coverage in campus media (see attached article on page 2 of the February PowerSave Green Campus Newsletter) and has her own Facebook page at: <http://www.facebook.com/PollyThePolarBear>

5. **Project budget** Biennial Sustainability Report - \$27,600 (for 2012 edition – includes design and printing), Sustainability Website and Facebook pages - \$18,500 (all in-house staff time), Mr. Eco videos and outreach materials - \$15,000, full size plush polar bear suit \$125.

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6. Describe how many people your message reached and how the message was received. Did the project achieve its goal in communicating sustainability adequately? (500 word limit). Cal Poly's Biennial Sustainability Report is distributed in hard copy form to approximately 2,500 people. This includes direct distribution to executive leadership at the Cal Poly campus, Chancellor's Office, and sister campuses; local and state officials such as mayor's offices, the County Board of Supervisors, and congressional representatives; utility providers and regulatory agencies such as the Air Pollution Control District; and non-profits such as the SLO Land Conservancy and Morro Bay National Estuary Program. In addition, hard copies are shared with visitors to numerous departments on campus, and are distributed at campus, CSU, and state wide sustainability events such as CHESC. Of course, the report reaches thousands more in digital form via download from the University's sustainability website – right at the bottom of the home page: [www.sustainability.calpoly.edu](http://www.sustainability.calpoly.edu)

Mr. Eco has significantly increased Cal Poly's visibility and web presence in regards to sustainability. Not counting numerous performances at Cal Poly, through his performances at elementary schools all over the central coast and central valley, Mr. Eco has directly performed in front of over 16,000 students, all of whom are then deputized as "EcoHeroes" to carry on the message. Mr. Eco's videos have received over 63,000 hits on YouTube, and his Facebook page has over 1,000 followers.

Cal Poly's PowerSave Green Campus Interns and Polly the Polar Bear reach some 4,000 students every year through participation in Open House, SOAR (Summer Orientation and Registration) and WOW (Week of Welcome), and another 1,500 students annually in the Dorm Energy Competition. Polly and Green Campus also have a significant presence on the web, with over 740 active Facebook followers.

Reception of these efforts by the campus, local, and CSU communities have far exceeded Cal Poly's expectations. The Biennial Sustainability Report has been lauded by Associate Vice Chancellor Vy San Juan as an example of communicating sustainability that all campuses should aspire to. The success of Mr. Eco has been staggering, and when Brett Edwards graduates in Spring 2013, he intends to make Mr. Eco into a full time career. Polly the Polar Bear is just getting started, but all indications are that she will play an important role for years to come in Cal Poly's educational outreach regarding sustainability.

7. Describe the way in which your project has engaged stakeholders that are traditionally underrepresented in the higher education sustainability movement (i.e. non-environmental

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science departments on campus, broader community) (400 word limit). These public relations and educational outreach initiatives are able to reach a cross section of the campus community that spans all colleges, departments, majors, ethnicities, backgrounds, regions, faiths, and political beliefs. The dorm energy competition involves six buildings housing 1,500 freshmen, organized into living communities representing all six colleges at the University – Engineering, Architecture, Agriculture, Math and Science, Liberal Arts, and Business. Outreach materials are designed to get students to think about how sustainability applies to their particular discipline and career. Through partnering with Career Services, outreach efforts are integrated into job fairs which attract students from all majors and walks of life. While we have found it can be difficult to get students to care about saving the University money by reducing their energy or water usage, we found that they care deeply about the natural environment and the negative effects of global climate change on eco systems and wildlife. All students seem to have a soft spot in their heart for Polly the Polar Bear, regardless of their knowledge or involvement in sustainability at Cal Poly. This is the “foot in the door” needed to engage them in a dialog that educates them about the importance of energy efficiency and water conservation.

8. **Relevancy to the Best Practice Program – Please provide a detailed narrative of the project, highlighting those project features that qualify it as a best practice readily replicable on other campuses (500 word limit).** The Biennial Report on Sustainability is a perfect example of replicability. Any campus can set its own goals and start tracking metrics to gauge progress in a manner that fits its own particular needs, priorities, and available resources. Cal Poly’s Sustainability website is an outstanding example of what can be accomplished when Facilities staff is allowed to work closely with faculty involved in sustainability – a synergy can be created through the sharing of information and common goals. Mr. Eco and Polly the Polar Bear are great examples of what can happen when students are allowed to let their imaginations run wild and are challenged to be creative. A recent review of a sister campus’ website at San Jose State revealed a new superhero in the CSU – the “Green Ninja” – which appears may have been inspired to some degree by Mr. Eco! Hopefully, students will continue to leverage these successes to create even more.
9. **Design integration – Describe the way in which this project incorporated stakeholders from multiple disciplines into the design process. Describe how collaboration produced sustainable solutions and improved the project’s performance (500 word limit).** All projects initiated by Cal Poly’s PowerSave Green Campus interns (dorm energy competition, Mr. Eco, Polly the Polar Bear) are developed with support from, and in close coordination with the team’s campus stakeholders. These include Facility Services, Facilities Planning, University Housing, Associated

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Students Incorporated, the Cal Poly Corporation, Campus Dining, Career Services, Student Government, Student Life and Leadership, the Empower Poly Coalition, the AFD Sustainability Mentor Program, and faculty from the Academic Senate Sustainability Committee. Involving these campus faculty and staff members in the process provides them a unique opportunity to provide input and feedback, and help mentor and guide these outstanding students.

Projects like Mr. Eco and Polly the Polar Bear are usually developed with some initial brainstorming sessions with staff, and then the best thing to do is get out of the way! Students can be incredibly creative, and when given a kernel of an idea and some general direction, can carry ideas to full fruition. By design, Cal Poly's PowerSave Green Campus team is diverse in student background, academic discipline, and gender. The team usually has a broad mix of majors representing nearly every college. More than one project has successfully incorporated the participation of Cal Poly's new president, Jeffrey Armstrong – show me another campus that got their president to do the “recycle robot” dance for a recycling video!

Creation and publication of the Biennial Sustainability Report brings together campus staff from a wide variety of departments, including Facility Services, Facilities Planning, Environmental Health and Safety, Agricultural Operations, the CAFES Center for Sustainability, Public Affairs, and both campus sustainability committees, which include representation from student government and faculty from all six colleges. With information, content, and many photos provided by Cal Poly staff, the report is designed by local San Luis Obispo public relations firm Barnett Cox & Associates, and printed on 100% recycled paper using soy based inks by local printing firm V3 in Oxnard. Discussions are under way to try printing the next report in house using Cal Poly students in the Graphic Communications department.

This broad based interdisciplinary approach brings richness and diversity to all these initiatives, and serves to strengthen relationships between departments and colleges.

10. If applicable, describe how you collaborated with members of your local or regional (off-campus) community in implementing your project (200 word limit). For the most part, the answer to this question is that once Cal Poly has created educational outreach materials, we work with a wide variety of people and organizations to distribute them as widely as possible. Mr. Eco videos have been shown on the local KSBY evening news numerous times. Initiatives have received wide coverage in campus media such as the Mustang Daily newspaper and Cal Poly Report faculty/staff newsletter. The greatest collaboration with off campus community partners would have to go to Mr. Eco – in his outreach efforts to educate children, Mr. Eco has

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performed for over 16,000 elementary school students at 33 schools on the central coast and in the central valley.

### III. Additional information

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Please provide any additional information necessary to assist the selection committee in understanding and evaluating the project. Visuals are strongly encouraged.

From page 3 of the attached February PowerSave Green Campus newsletter, this is an excerpt from a letter received by Mr. Eco from a parent of an elementary school child who saw Mr. Eco perform at his school. This letter reminds me why I do what I do for a living, and is a testament to the difference that one person can make in this world:

*"He could be your biggest fan. He has been talking about you a lot. Not to mention, he came home today, changed his clothes and proclaimed himself, "Captain Eco". He has a little red cape and he put on shorts and long green soccer socks. He was designing some kind of logo on paper for his shirt. He is so excited about being a super hero and he keeps talking about how awesome you are and how you are his favorite super hero because you are real and he saw you in "real-life". He said, "Too bad he doesn't have real super powers though." I said something like, "Well, he is actually saving the planet." He agreed and we talked about your musical powers to teach the kids, and how you are passing on your powers by teaching kids what to do to save the planet, too. Douglas agreed and then said that his mobile would fly and have solar powered jet packs. Tonight he took a very quick shower. I didn't have to tell him to turn off the water. Usually I have to remind him to finish up and get out and tonight he said he remembered to save water and not stay in too long!!! Because of you! Thank you for empowering him to be green. What you are doing truly is AWESOME! You are making a big difference for the future and you are a fantastic role model. Thank you again!"*

### IV. Speaker bio

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Please submit a brief speaker bio or bios (80 word limit; limit two speakers per project).

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Dennis Elliot is the Assistant Director of Energy, Utilities, and Sustainability at Cal Poly SLO. Dennis holds a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering, is a registered professional engineer, and a certified energy manager. Having worked at Cal Poly for 30 years in a variety of energy related positions, Dennis manages the campus' energy and utilities, leads efforts to incorporate sustainability into operations, planning, construction, and academics, lectures part time in the ME Department, and oversees the PowerSave Green Campus Program.

*Speakers will present at the Sustainability Conference if their project is selected for a best Practice Award. Speaker bios will appear in the conference program.*

*At least one of the speakers listed here must be a student, staff, or faculty member. Co-presenters from non-campus entities (e.g. architecture firms, consultants, etc.) are permitted.*

## **V. Nomination submittal**

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Send completed Nominations to Rashmi Sahai, Sustainability Specialist at the University of California Office of the President (rashmi.sahai@ucop.edu). All submittals must be received by 6:00 p.m. on March 8th, 2013, **no exceptions**.

Answers to frequently asked questions can be found at:

<http://www.cahigheredusustainability.org/cahigheredusustainability/awards/faq.aspx>.

Please direct any other questions to Rashmi Sahai, (510) 587-6225.