

'GREEN' SAVES GREENBACKS

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By ERIN WIGGINS Colorado Daily Staff Writer

Everyone knows the environmental benefits of "green" policies, but now CU is putting a figure on the economic impacts.

The CU-Boulder Environmental Center released its "Green Investment, Green Return" report this week, claiming that campus environmental programs save CU as much as \$5.8 million annually in terms of annual cost avoidance.

"Against the backdrop of the state fiscal crisis, this report suggests that institutions of higher education should be looking closely at their own operations in order to find ways to avoid costs while also improving Colorado's environment," said Environmental Center Director Will Toor. "With prices on the rise for energy, land, and water, the potential savings are just going to grow."

The 88-page report, prepared by Toor and environmental studies graduate student Ric O'Connell, measures the economic and environmental impacts of CU recycling, transportation demand management, energy conservation, water conservation, green energy purchases, the campus printing initiative, the integrated pest management program, green purchasing, green building and composting.

While indicating environmental economic returns are difficult to quantify, the report concludes CU's transportation and energy cost programs allow the university to avoid spending several million dollars per year.

According to the study, that spending would otherwise be required to provide the same level of service to the university community.

According to the study, alternative transportation saves as much as \$4.7 million annually and energy conservation saves as much as \$500,000 per year.

"What is remarkable about this level of cost reduction is that very few of these programs were designed to produce economic benefits," the study said. "They were designed to reduce pollution, get students and faculty to choose alternative transportation, save resources and reduce waste. Economic benefits are an added bonus."

The report also indicates a hope for increased "green building" at CU in the coming years. The new law school, which broke ground Nov. 12, is expected to be one of the most sustainable buildings in the nation and operated on wind power.

In 2003, CU students voted to increase student fees for wind power and Biodiesel on campus, but there weren't enough votes in this fall's student elections to pass an increased solar panel referendum.

Despite the most recent referendum failure and an admitted fallback in the preeminence of CU Recycling -

which is being eclipsed by other national campuses according to a recent interview with CU Recycling Director Jack DeBell - the results of the recent study are still very good for the Environmental Center and the campus.

"The results of 'Green Investment, Green Return' show that environmental programs not only are good for the Earth, but they can be good for the bottom line as well," said O'Connell.

Robin Newsome-Suitts, Assistant to the VCA
Office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration
24 CB, Regent Hall
University of Colorado at Boulder
Boulder, CO 80309
(303) 492-7523
Newsomes@colorado.edu
