

# Changing Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors of College Dormitory Residents

By Marian Vernon

## ABSTRACT

One of the most important and recognizable issues of today's world is the issue of environmental conservation and global warming due to resource consumption. Many college students express interest in environmental issues, yet lack incentives to change their lifestyle practices. Using research gathered from a variety of different sources aimed at exploring the success of different techniques in changing environmental behaviors, I have designed and implemented a weeklong energy-saving competition among the residents of DePaul's University Hall dormitory. Many researchers disagree on the most successful methods for changing environmental attitudes, which I took into account when planning how I would like to market and run the competition. The research methods I studied included the use of feedback and incentives to reduce consumption, educating people about environmental issues, and using complementary injunctive and descriptive norms to influence people's environmental perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes. Two of the four floors were exposed to environmental education messages, which described some environmental issues in the Chicagoland area, and the other two floors were exposed to complementary injunctive and descriptive normative messages, which emphasized that the majority of people participate in environmental conservation behaviors and is therefore a socially popular practice. I found that environmental education was more successful in changing environmental behaviors among college dormitory residents, and concluded that normative messages are not successful when presented to groups of individuals that have strong friendships and interact with one another on a daily basis.