

University Hall's power usage leads to competition

By JEREMY MIKULA

The residents of University Hall have been under surveillance for about a year, but not in the traditional sense.

The environmental science program is monitoring the electrical power usage of U-Hall's residents.

During the fall of 2008, U-Hall was equipped with 12 power monitors, which measure the amount of power usage during the week. Each power monitor measures one three-phase electrical panel. There are three electrical panels on each of the dormitory's four floors.

The monitors are hooked up to the internet, enabling readings to be done "in just about real time," according to Dr. Mark Potosnak, a professor in the environmental sciences program. The readings, done about every 15 minutes, are measured in kilowatts per hour and are updated about every hour online with graphs that measure the amount of power usage during the week compared with the average of the previous two weeks. These readings can be found online at <http://condor.depaul.edu/~mpotosna/UHall.html>.

The site also features numerical data that updates the total current weekly power savings of floors two, three and four.

"We excluded the first floor because half of the floor is where the residential director lives, so it's not balanced," said Potosnak.

The environmental science program held a trial run power saving competition from Nov. 2-8. The winning floor received a pizza party.

"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," said Marian Vernon, the organizer of the event, in the competition proposal. "Many college students express interest in environmental issues, yet lack incentives to change lifestyle practices."

These lifestyle practices include the amount of personal electronics many students use on a day-to-day basis.

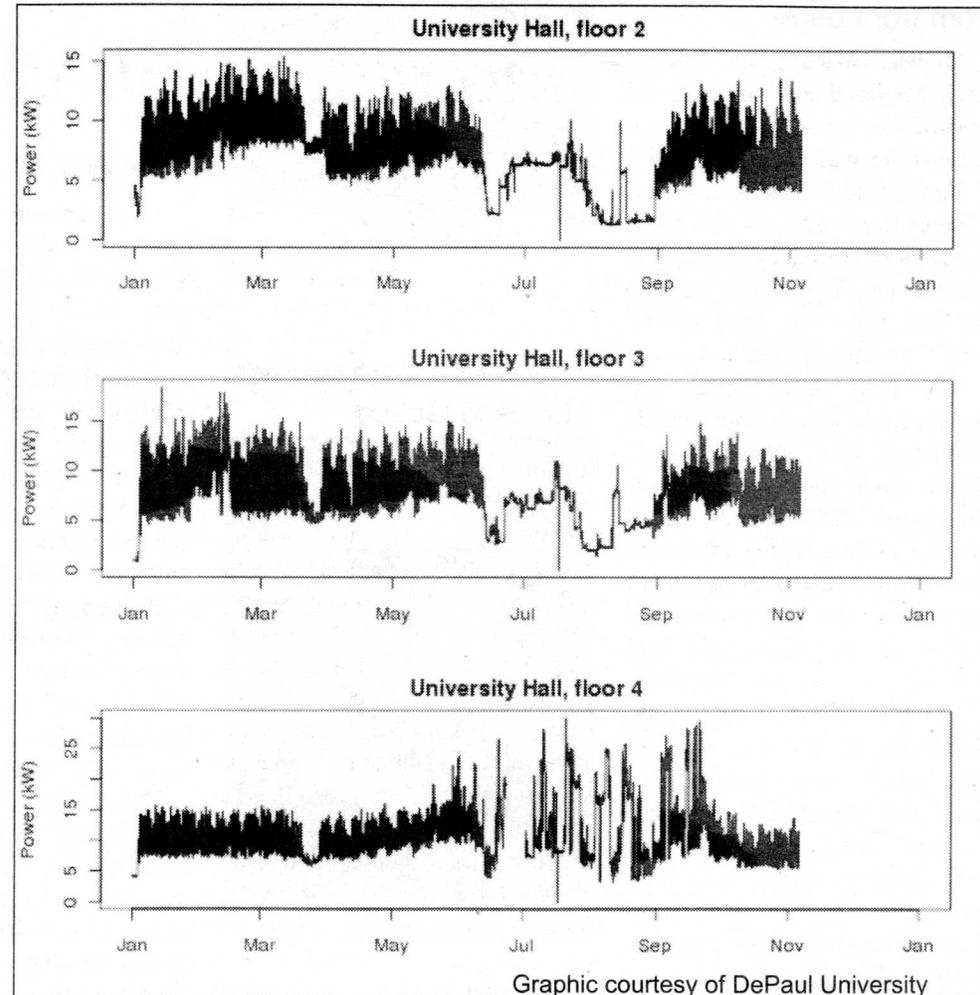
"Students have TVs, Xbox systems, computers and cell phone chargers plugged in all the time," said Potosnak. "One thing is that a lot of electronics and appliances, even when they're turned off, still draw a decent amount of power. It's not that much for each individual thing, but if you add it up, it gets to be quite a draw."

To combat this continual energy draw, Vernon suggests students to be more conscious of their environment.

"When I was walking around the floors, I noticed that a lot of people left their lamps on even when they weren't using them," said Vernon. "If it's during the day, you should open the blinds. If its night and you have to study, go to the library because that way you don't have to leave your lights on. Plus, your roommate will probably appreciate it."

With the data collected from the trial competition, Vernon plans on tweaking some of the specifics for the next power saving competition which is planned for spring quarter.

Nothing is set just yet, but Vernon wants to get the RAs more involved. "We basically just told the students about the



Residents of University Hall have had their power usage measured over the past year. To view more data visit <http://condor.depaul.edu/~mpotosna/UHall.html>.

competition the day before," Vernon said. "I think if we start talking about it more at the beginning of quarters and get the RAs to talk more about it as well as giving

out pamphlets, posting information, and improving our website, we can start to make a difference for the environment."