



Client Success story

Western Carolina University Cuts Costs and Energy Usage with Brightly's Energy Manager

Client

Western Carolina University

Location

Cullowhee, North Carolina, United States

Background

When Reid Conway, Director of Energy and Utilities, joined Western Carolina University, the facilities team was still using spreadsheets to track energy usage. Conway, committed to cutting costs by boosting energy efficiency, made it his goal to build a culture of sustainability across the campus.

Vitals

Community college with:

- \$5 million utility budget
- More than 11,000 students
- Campus sprawling over 682 acres

Results

After transitioning to Brightly's Energy Manager, Western Carolina University has been able to:

- Achieve 55% in BTU per square foot reduction, leading the UNC system
- Gain visibility into utility usage by each building or utility meter
- Track monthly energy usage and easily compare with previous months or years
- Make informed decisions about facility usage, repairs and updates to conserve energy and costs

Gaining Visibility

Each month, Western Carolina receives a single invoice from Duke Energy that contains charges for all the power used across campus. In the past, Conway had to blindly trust that the data provided by Duke Energy was accurate. But by using Energy Manager's Allocations feature, he can now easily identify building energy usage and costs for each individual facility.

The Allocations feature has allowed Conway to utilize a single Duke Energy bill to distribute usage and cost to 82 subsidiary accounts within Energy Manager. Though the distribution can be based on fixed percentages, meter readings or a combo of both, Brightly Client Services determined that meter readings were the best fit for Western Carolina University.

With information spilt by subsidiary accounts, Conway can easily see changes in energy usage compared to historical data to quickly address any problems.

Tracking Usage

Western Carolina University also uses Energy Manager to easily and consistently track the energy used across campus. In recent years, the university has replaced some aging buildings with more efficient facilities and regularly works to update aging infrastructure with more efficient components, reflecting positive trends in usage numbers.

Conway submits an annual university energy usage report to the state energy office, which must include:

- Total kilowatt hours of electricity used and the total cost
- Total therms of natural gas used and the total cost
- Total gallons of water and the total cost
- Total facility square feet

With Energy Manager, it's easy for Conway to quickly locate totals to complete reports like this—and to celebrate department wins. "We're at 55% in BTU per square foot reduction, leading the UNC system," he says. "But we still need to track it every month."

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Reid Conway
Director of Energy and Utilities, Western Carolina University

Making Informed Decisions

Conway and his team access the data available through Energy Manager to make informed decisions about facility usage, repairs and updates to help them conserve energy and cut costs. “Being able to compare the energy costs of one building versus another helps us figure out where to put resources,” Conway says.

For example, when special events are held on campus during the summer, Conway can make sure they’re located in the most energy efficient buildings to use the least energy possible.

In addition, by comparing the energy usage among buildings, he can figure out what changes or updates may be needed in less efficient buildings to increase their energy efficiency. When the university recently converted an all-electric building to natural gas to conserve energy and cut costs, Conway used Energy Manager to access historical usage data for the building. He was able to provide accurate data to the natural gas company to ensure that they were installing appropriate access to natural gas to meet the building’s needs.

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Sustainability is important for our campus and our students, and they saw what we could do with Brightly.

