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Universities Feeling the Pinch on Computing Energy Costs

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In some ways, it's the oldest story in the green IT book: rapid growth and a divide between who runs up the utility bills and who pays the bills leads to spiraling IT costs; and when that waste comes to light, steps are taken to bring costs back down through any number of means.

But when these problems arise in a university setting, especially among some of the country's biggest and most IT-intensive universities, many of these problems are compounded with institutional issues, even if the solutions for public-sector IT departments are much the same as in the private-sector.

That finding is the gist of a new article by Josh Keller in the latest issue of [the Chronicle of Higher Education](#). In the article, "Energy Drain by Computers Stifles Efforts at Cost Control," Keller looks at some of the problems faced by Stanford University researchers and IT managers, and offers some ideas for how to overcome those problems.

In these economically strapped times, all organizations are looking for ways to cut costs; but universities have so far been less likely than other public-sector groups to look to green IT as a way to achieve those goals.

But just as with private companies that are seeing their data needs -- both computing and storage -- growing quickly, university officials at Stanford are seeing "plans for every new major building includ[e] requests for major computing facilities inside of them," according to the Chronicle article. And at the same time, the incentives to consolidate data facilities or purchase more energy efficient equipment are not as obvious, because the folks running the data center are not in charge of paying the bills for those data centers.

If this all sounds familiar to you, then you're clearly ahead of the curve on the green IT front. But Keller cites a handful of tried-and-true strategies that universities are getting on board with for cutting costs for institutional computing.

In addition to establishing a working group to chart energy usage by department and conducting that all-important energy audit, Keller notes how the University of California system is working on consolidating their data centers into two regional facilities instead of decentralized centers on each campus. And Stanford University is building a major new data center to power not only the school's entire research-computing needs, but also to handle half the load of its Linear Accelerator Center; the new facility will include green features that could save the school over \$3 million per year in energy costs in the coming decades.

Read the full article on data center management at universities on [Chronicle.com](#).

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[1] <http://chronicle.com/free/v55/i18/18a00103.htm>