

★ Public universities must adopt ISO 14000 standards to govern their office operations. Currently, public universities are profligate wasters of energy and natural resources. This is largely because most campuses ~~do not have any~~ guidelines to efficiently allocate resources to each member of the campus community. ISO 14000 standards are proven guidelines that can reduce resource consumption while limiting administrative, capital, and labor costs associated with environmental regulations.

Public Comments (ISO 14000 Standards)

~~907043597~~
SFSU
Ai Horikiri
Email: aimeeh@sfsu.edu

I am studying Environmental Studies at San Francisco State University and would like to provide some comments regarding the public school system's operations in terms of energy efficiency and overall environmental sustainability.

I am grateful for the opportunity to study in the Bay Area where I can enjoy the abundance of nature. One of the greatest things about San Francisco is that I can enjoy the beach or a park as a day trip. I appreciate the efforts that the government and non-profit organizations have been taking to maintain this balance of nature in our urban surroundings.

Environmental organizations actively engage in improving the environment by calling for public awareness and have been somewhat successful in raising concern. However, the awareness has not gotten to the point where it affects the practical operation of business offices, schools, and other institutions, or individuals' actions. This awareness is just not enough to drive people's actions toward producing a positive effect on the environment. When they have a choice, they still do not take steps to be eco-friendly.

Universities are the best place to understand people's attitudes towards being environmentally conscious because they have many facilities that offer free use of computers and technological devices. The departments that manage these facilities decide what devices to implement, how to or whether to minimize the energy consumption while balancing the inconvenience or extra work that may arise from such effort. Universities have less motivation to become environmentally-friendly in their office operations compared to corporations where environmental consciousness has become a norm as a result of pressure from shareholders, consumers, and from orders and regulations. Eco-friendliness has been a trend as it promotes a cleaner image for companies. With the lack of risk of losing profits by not being environmentally friendly, the universities' approach to the environmentally sustainable school operation has become reliant on the discretion of the individual staff member who manages each department. Therefore, the level of personal consciousness for the environment is more likely to reflect on school business operation.

At SFSU, there are at least several computer labs in most buildings in addition to the full-size library which has many computers in the study space requiring a great deal of consumption of energy and resources for their electricity and paper use and, in turn, emitting enormous amount of greenhouse gas over time. I asked a couple of managers in charge of these facilities if there are guidelines issued by the State or self-implemented policy concerning the environmentally friendly office procedures that they can refer to. They told me there are no such set rules or incentive that encourages them to manage their facilities in an eco-friendly manner. If they want to leave the lights on in a computer room after leaving the office, nothing would prevent them.

As a result, careless acts that neglect to reduce the energy consumption and preserve natural resources are often seen on campus. For example, all computer monitors in a whole computer lab are left on. And all printers available in those labs can print only on one side of a paper, wastefully doubling the paper usage. There may be limits to what they can do to improve such careless operations as they need to consider the factors such as cost, technical availability, operability, and efficiency to realize the office procedures that have less impact on the environment. For instance, the compact-size printers used in the computer labs suit the demand that many students print their papers at the same time. But this type of printers has no capability to print on both sides. However, if they have some sort of guidelines that they can look up to, it will make it easy for them to streamline the office management procedures with regard to being eco-friendly.

As a concerned student, I would like to propose that public schools implement the ISO 14000 standards (ISO 14001) or some equivalent guidelines for their office operations. The ISO 14000 is a set of international standards for environmental management system designed to help organizations establish a framework for their office operations. It will allow universities to focus on the points of improvement, set the goals to achieve the improvement, define the effective policies to translate to their office procedures, and evaluate the results. I am certain that introducing the ISO standards will provide public schools with a basis to commit to comprehensive eco-friendly office operations. These standards can be applied to overall management of the schools to reduce negative effects on the environment. Not only will obtaining the ISO 14000 certification contribute to the improvement of the environmentally efficient operations, it will also enhance the environmental awareness of the students and staff. If this action can successfully get more people in schools involved in the environmental movement, it will produce a significant impact that benefits the larger community.

Thank you for your consideration.