

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 8, 2019

The University of Illinois Wins the International Freezer Challenge for the Second Straight Year

CHAMPAIGN, IL – For the second straight year, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is the best at implementing cold-storage best management practices, including reducing the energy required for laboratory cold storage. Campus efforts in more than 70 laboratories across 15 buildings earned back-to-back first place awards in the International Laboratory Freezer Challenge’s Academic category.

The total energy usage in these spaces decreased by an estimated 438 kWh/day or a combined annual total equivalent of 13.5 homes energy for 1 year. The reductions were achieved due to the dedication and creativity of researchers across campus in implementing best practices for cold storage management. They received points for taking actions such as properly maintaining freezers and refrigerators, discarding old samples, and retiring unneeded units.

Freezer Challenge winners will be recognized at the International Institute for Sustainable Laboratories (I2SL) Annual Conference and Technology Fair in Denver this October. The university is second to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as the only organization to achieve 1st place honors twice.

Dr. Mohamed Attalla, executive director of Facilities & Services (F&S), said, “It is an honor to place first among world-class researchers and peer institutions who join us in leading sustainable laboratory practices. The growth and success of the program are because of our talented and dedicated faculty, graduate students and lab managers who want to contribute and make a difference.”

The university’s participation in the Freezer Challenge is a collaboration between the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research, Division of Research Safety; the Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment (iSEE); the Student Sustainability Committee (SSC); Eco-Olympics Student Organization; and F&S.

The continued development and sharing of effective cold storage routines on the Urbana campus will benefit researchers by increasing laboratory efficiency, extending equipment life, and maximizing space utilization. Since signing the Climate Leadership Commitments, the [Illinois Climate Action Plan \(iCAP\)](#) has included an intention to work directly with research labs to conserve energy.

The university has reduced overall energy consumption per square foot by 37 percent over the last decade, ahead of iCAP goals and approaching a 52 percent reduction target by 2050.

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This significant decrease is due to occupant action and centrally managed energy conservation initiatives, such as retrocommissioning, energy performance contracting, deferred maintenance capital improvement projects, and through investments in digital control systems, occupancy sensors, LEDs, and emerging technologies.

More information on the challenge is available at <https://www.freezerchallenge.org/> and <https://go.fs.illinois.edu/freezerchallenge>. The program is jointly run by My Green Lab and I2SL.

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Facilities & Services (F&S), at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, provides all physical plant, operational, and essential services for sustaining an environment that fosters research, teaching, and public engagement activities. F&S supports the university's education, research, and outreach missions by improving the physical condition of the facilities and grounds through construction and building maintenance activities, providing utilities production and distribution, implementing energy conservation initiatives, and increasing customer satisfaction by delivering quality services in a responsive, reliable, and customer-focused manner. www.fs.illinois.edu