

naturejobs

**JOBS OF
THE WEEK**

These days, going green is all the rage. Universities, often the very bastions of green thinking and research, have begun to take a look in the mirror and scrutinize their own practices, including those in their science laboratories. Not surprisingly, most could stand to waste less and get greener. Indeed, responsible scientists should start thinking about how their daily work consumes energy, and what they can do to be more energy-efficient.

This isn't necessarily a simple task. Principal investigators have plenty on their plate already, with research, grant applications, hiring and, in some cases, teaching duties. And now they have to shrink their carbon footprint. What, my little lab?

It turns out, though, that labs waste plenty. A traditional fume hood uses as much energy in a year as three US households, as a recent *Nature* article points out (see *Nature* **445**, 590–591; 2007). The US Department of Energy's Fermilab in Batavia, Illinois spends \$1 million per month on electricity.

Several groups have taken notice. In Britain, a student group called People and Planet ranked the greenest UK campuses and published the list in *The Times Higher Education Supplement* this month. The group rated factors such as a 'green travel plan', an institution's efforts to organize transport initiatives, and their success at retrieving energy from renewable sources. Leeds Metropolitan University came top.

In the United States, a government-sponsored association, Labs21, helps advise scientists on efficient laboratory design and equipment. In December of last year, American university and college presidents announced a Climate Commitment. Institutions that sign up promise to initiate policies to combat climate change. They're expected, for example, to compile, within one year of signing, an inventory of all of their school's greenhouse-gas emissions from electricity, heating, commuting and air travel. The pledge has 280 signatories so far.

Scientists and their laboratories are not the major culprits in un-green practices. But it makes sense that they're part of the solution — which means adding 'getting green' to an already long list of daily tasks.

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