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Around the Columns

New system allows students to track energy use

Psychologists use biofeedback to help anxious patients slow their heart rates. Now, new technology in Schurz Hall is giving students “eco-feedback.”

It’s called Building Dashboard, an interdisciplinary project that couples energy-measuring devices in MU residence halls with software that displays the students’ electrical consumption in real time.



Students living in Schurz Hall can monitor their energy usage, in real time, on their computers. Photo by Nicholas Benner

Ben Datema, recipient of a \$25,000 student grant from the MU Interdisciplinary Innovations Fund, has installed the system in the residence hall to increase awareness and reduce Mizzou dorm-dwellers’ energy use.

The system, created by Lucid Design Group of Oakland, Calif., will eventually go into Hatch and College Avenue residence halls as well. Plans are under way to stage competitions among the halls for most energy saved.

“The data are sent to California and translated into graphs that people can see in real time on their computers,” says Datema.

Former president of the environmental group Sustain Mizzou, Datema has worked across disciplines with energy management, information technology and residential life to bring the project to fruition.

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