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## Climate Culture Employs Social Media to Turn America's Universities Green

March 31st, 2009 | by [Ben Parr](#) 10 Comments



Social media has been a great tool for spreading awareness about environmental and green issues. Most recently, social media was used to spread the word about [Earth Hour](#) and the cost of electricity use. Once again, social media is being used to make an impact on the environment, this time through college campuses across the U.S.


[Climate Culture](#), a green tech startup that helps people manage their energy usage and carbon footprint, and [SmartPower](#), a nonprofit dedicated to promoting efficient and clean energy, have teamed up to officially launch the [America's Greenest Campus](#) contest, which pits college campuses against each other to reduce their carbon footprint.

And how are they promoting this worthy initiative? By having the Obama Girl and Jake of “Jake and Amir” (a College Humor show) star in a new web video that promotes energy-efficient habits and the America's Greenest Campus contest. The video is being produced by [Barely Political](#), the same team that produced the original Obama Girl video.

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## How the America's Greenest Campus Contest Works

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**climate culture**™  
live smarter

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 **George Mason University**









Info    Planet    **Blog**    Members    Events

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**Footprint**

Carbon Footprint	55,810,375 lbs/yr
Reduced	2.74%

---

Popular Actions	Saved
<b>Home</b>	 1581219 lbs of CO <sub>2</sub>
<a href="#">Keep your fridge door closed</a>	 282078 dollars
<a href="#">Lower dishwasher temperature</a>	 9038 gallons of gasoline
<a href="#">Use smartstrips for plugs</a>	 395389 kwh of electricity
<b>Work</b>	 1533609 gallons
<a href="#">Use smartstrips at work</a>	 0 lbs of paper
<a href="#">Shut off your computer at work</a>	 55928 therms of natural gas
<a href="#">Unplug idle chargers at work</a>	 592 gallons of heating oil
<b>Travel</b>	
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<a href="#">Telecommute for work</a>	
<a href="#">Rent a bike when you travel</a>	
<b>Shopping</b>	
<a href="#">Compost food waste</a>	
<a href="#">Become a vegan</a>	
<a href="#">Use reusable food containers</a>	

The contest works by tracking the carbon footprint of each member of a participating university and calculating how much participating students and faculty have reduced their carbon footprint. Activities such as using smartstrips, turning off the lights, and biking instead of driving earn points and reduce the carbon footprint of the school. Climate Control also tracks how much money is saved by these initiatives and suggests ways to reduce CO2 and save money.

The schools that lower their carbon footprint the most can win up to \$20,000 each to promote green initiatives on their campuses. The America's Greenest Campus Contest has already started, but has only been in an early beta with a few participating members. Currently in the red is George Mason University, which has about 800 members and has reduced their carbon footprint by about 2.75%.

You don't even need to be a current student to join the contest - being an alumni (and having a .edu email address) is enough. It's powered by Climate Culture's impressive and clean interface. It's also endorsed by the U.S. Department of Energy, and there is no shortage of well-known figures and organizations involved in this effort.


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## **Social Media for the Environment**

---

The other cool thing about the contest is the way they are launching this thing - by using social media and Web celebrities to spread awareness. Obama Girl 'sings' a song, "Save Your Energy," (actually, [Leah Kauffman](#) sings it just as she sang the original Obama Girl video) that talks about ways to save energy. She is joined by NGO, who interludes with an environmental rap (another note: the rap is actually performed by [Akillis](#)). Regardless, the choreography, lyrics, and music are all well-done.

Social media is clearly at work here in the creation and promotion of this contest. Climate Control is a great example of a green social media technology that depends on community features and spreading the word. The "Save Your Energy" Obama Girl video is a smart and sensible use of a popular web celebrity to get more people to participate in the contest. They even have Russell Simmons on board to spread the word.

Today's the official launch, so if you're interested, you can sign up at the America's Greenest Campus [website](#) and/or Tweet, Facebook , and spread the word to all of your friends. Hopefully I can help get my school (Northwestern) out of the bottom of the rankings.

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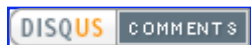
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Anderson [03/31/2009 06:03 AM](#)

Such a huge step backwards, it's amazing. Instead of pushing harder to extract everything we can and have a shot at space travel, we have to slow down and pretend like future generations have a right for what is ours to take.

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Mickey Blue Eyes [03/31/2009 06:05 AM](#)

The cost of being "green" is higher than status quo. With budgets shrinking to dangerous levels, who is going to pay for these very expensive "green" initiatives? Oh sure, putting solar cells on all building roofs will save a few dollars a year -- we here in the Southeast and our tropical summer climate have daily rain showers and clouds -- but the cost of installing the solar cells is too much for any particular budget year.

If these "watermelons" -- "green" on the outside "red" on the inside -- want universities to go "green", they should put their money where their mouth is and fund an endowment to pay for these expensive "green" initiatives.

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- *Gelder* [03/31/2009 06:18 AM](#)

University.....ok!

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- *Rachel Burkot* [03/31/2009 06:26 AM](#)

Since everything about social media is online, it makes sense that, naturally, using this realm to push for environmental awareness makes sense. But the real challenge comes in causing a shift in mindset. People are still concerned about newspapers going out of business, even though news online is a step in the right direction for environmentalists. How do we change minds?

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- *mandy rohan* [03/31/2009 07:26 AM](#)

well, sounds interesting!

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- *Joe* [03/31/2009 07:27 AM](#)

This is a brilliant idea. Utilizing the power of modern social networking to boost awareness is a key factor and driving point for combating climate change.

Also, creating a "competitive" environment enables - no, encourages institutions to move above and beyond the status quo.

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- *MyInternetBusiness* [03/31/2009 07:44 AM](#)

Sound very interesting.

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- *cooltudor* [03/31/2009 10:30 AM](#)

cool... no books (it is made from rainforest woods)  
it's time to party baby!!

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- *Daryl Schultz* [04/02/2009 02:24 AM](#)

The concept is very encouraging especially that we need to be aware of whats happening with our Earth right now. We have to do something.

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- *Daryl Schultz* [04/02/2009 02:26 AM](#)

The concept is very encouraging especially that we need to be aware of whats happening with our Earth right now. We have to do something.

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- *Video Humor - Climate Culture Employs Social Media to Turn America's Universities - Mashable.com & laquo; Video Humor* [03/31/2009 11:24 AM](#)

[...] Climate Culture Employs Social Media to Turn America's Universities - Mashable.com Social media has been a great tool for

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**humanesociety :** 45 dogs and fighting paraphernalia were seized—and two men arrested—in Alabama yesterday: <http://bit.ly/10h9gf>



**etsy :** @loxly On the front page! It's the banner to the right. Here's the link straight to it: <http://bit.ly/H25Rq>



**livestrong :** Wow! I just realized that we are 7 people away from having 20,000 followers! How cool is that! Thanks!



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**6s marketing :** Last night, over \$6000 was raised for Diabetes at the Wine & Jazz for a Cure at @caponesrestaurant. Thanks to everyone who came out!!

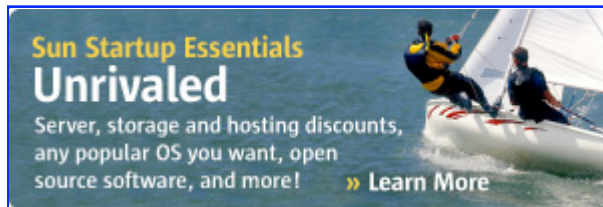
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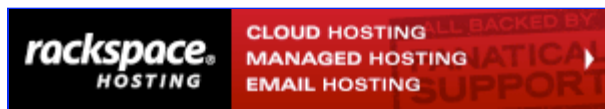


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