

Dominican University

Brings Modern Sustainability to
100-Year-Old Campus



Energy
Efficiency
Program



Rebates/incentives:
\$440,219



Estimated annual energy savings:
543,143 therms

The Challenge

Dominican University's campus includes buildings dating back to the 1920s, which poses unique challenges for maintenance staff managing their HVAC systems. The Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program was able to work with their team to identify key energy-saving opportunities.

The Solution

Since 2013, Dominican has completed numerous projects through the Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program including:

- Assessments
- Pipe insulation
- Boiler and steam trap replacements
- Upgraded radiators
- High-efficiency showerheads and faucet aerators

The Nicor Gas team was able to plan these projects to assist with maximizing the university's incentive opportunities.

The Story

In 2022, the Dominican campus celebrated its 100th anniversary at its River Forest, Illinois location. While the school celebrated this milestone, administrators also realized that the aging campus buildings were in need of energy efficiency upgrades. The oldest building on campus dates back to a century ago, with others being nearly as old, and they are utilizing a steam system from 1930. School administrators challenged their building and grounds team with identifying and resolving inefficiencies throughout the campus. They also needed to craft a long-term sustainability plan.

This was not an easy task, as it would be necessary to optimize a building-and-system maintenance mix of old and new technology while ensuring students, faculty and staff were provided a comfortable learning environment. As they had done in the past, the team sought out solutions through the Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program's Strategic Energy Management (SEM) offering.



Equipment replacements and process improvements resulting from Dominican's SEM program participation have yielded significant energy savings and a long-term sustainability plan.

Making It Happen

Dominican University was an early adopter of the Nicor Gas Energy Efficiency Program, participating in offerings like free energy assessments, rebates and custom incentives. In 2016, they joined the SEM program, a year-long series of workshops and one-on-one coaching sessions that can help businesses and public organizations reduce energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. SEM enables cohort members to learn from each other and receive utility support to make lasting behavioral changes to meet their sustainability goals.

Thanks to the knowledge gained through the SEM program, the building and grounds team not only resolved the building-and-system maintenance challenges of a 100-year-old campus, but they also created a 10-year plan of potential projects to improve overall efficiency.

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Mike Balla, Chief Engineer
Dominican University

The Experience

"The Energy Efficiency team has been great," said Mike Balla, Dominican's chief engineer. "I do a thousand things every day, and I'll see the email that some money is coming our way, and it's awesome that we did all that stuff." Balla believes that other organizations can benefit from SEM as well. "I'd recommend to just get involved. You're going to save yourself some money or improve your business," he said.

In the short term, Dominican has saved significantly on natural gas costs. With the added energy efficiency resource of a long-term sustainability plan, Dominican can continue to save money and energy. These savings will be reinvested in future campus efficiency projects. As for environmental impacts, the university decreased its carbon footprint per square foot by 5% in 2021 alone.

Dominican University

River Forest, Illinois

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