

# Director of ESSM works to help make campus sustainable, energy efficient



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April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Nathan Prior has been working in Energy Systems and Sustainability Management for 17 years.

By [Danielle Bertolini](#), Staff Writer  
12 months ago

All of the lighting in the campus parking garages were in desperate need of an upgrade last year. So, the Energy Systems and Sustainability Management replaced the old lighting with LEDs.

This implementation helped the university save 50 percent of its energy usage in that area, decreasing carbon emissions.

Nathan Prior is the director of ESSM and has been working in ESSM for 17 years, originally starting in the organization's 24-hour offices. As the director, he oversees all of the programs and helps tie everything together with the greater campus facilities division.

"The university is trying to be as energy conscious and sustainable as possible," Prior said. "It's looking toward the future."

ESSM is broken up into divisions — energy management, systems management, sustainability management and the Steam Station — and strives to sustain and improve the campus through efforts in line with the university's climate action plan. According to its website, ESSM "works throughout the entire University community to efficiently create and maintain comfortable, sustainable and high performance campus environments."

"We look at different projects that will bring return value to the university not just on the energy side but also from the carbon emissions side," Prior said.

ESSM has recently worked with professors to apply for a grant on the university's behalf. The million dollar award would be used to improve ESSM's infrastructure on campus, implementing advanced analytics and developing new course offerings for students. Prior emphasizes the university's dedication to the academic side of sustainability and the need to keep students involved.

Prior has seen both the campus and its technology change dramatically since he first started working with ESSM. Many of these changes have innovated the way ESSM implements its initiatives.

One of these improvements is the implementation of solar-thermal panels on South Campus — Prior's favorite project. The panels provide hot water to some of the South Campus three-bedroom apartments.

"We try to fit in energy conservation measures, different energy grants, even the design of the facilities," Prior said. "It's a kind of evolution."