

**University of Colorado Student Government**

**Legislative Council**

**November 29, 2014 82 LCR 01 – Evaporative Coolers**

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**A Resolution in Support of the Sustainability Think Tank Effort to Incorporate Evaporative Coolers in Existing and Future Campus Buildings**

**Resolution History**

Fossil fuels are a major contributor to climate change[[1]](#footnote-1). CUSG has recognized this, and on May 2, 2013, the student legislative council passed 78LCR06, a resolution urging CU to decrease and to eventually cease its investments in the fossil fuel industry. CU’s commitment to reducing its environmental impact extends beyond this resolution. In 2007, CU signed the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC)[[2]](#footnote-2). The ACUPCC acknowledges that “ACUPCC institutions have agreed to take immediate steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions”. In 2010, CU named Moe Tabrizi the first director of campus sustainability in order to further CU’s goal of a more sustainable campus[[3]](#footnote-3).

CU Boulder uses the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) as a way to assess its sustainability performance, and in 2014, STARS awarded CU Boulder a Gold ranking with a score of 72.45 out of 100 possible points[[4]](#footnote-4). Achieving a Platinum rating - a national first for a major University - would reinforce CU’s sustainability reputation. We have the opportunity to improve our rating by raising our Operation score; this will be done partially through reducing the CU Boulder campus use of fossil fuels. CUSG’s Sustainability Think Tank has identified central air conditioning systems as a major type of cooling used in campus buildings[[5]](#footnote-5). Central air conditioning uses a high amount of energy when compared to other cooling systems, and the primary energy source for campus cooling is natural gas[[6]](#footnote-6). The Sustainability Think Tank has further identified evaporative coolers as a viable cooling alternative to other campus cooling systems because evaporative coolers function especially well in Colorado’s dry climate, and are a cost-effective and energy efficient cooling source[[7]](#footnote-7)

Evaporative coolers are a commonly used alternative cooling source, and they have already been installed in many major buildings on the CU Boulder campus, including the Center for Community[[8]](#footnote-8), the new Recreation Center completed in 2014[[9]](#footnote-9), the Space Science Data Center, the Roser ATLAS Building, Wolf Law, and the Athletics Practice Facility. Introducing them into more campus buildings and including a student presence in their installment plans would help CU Boulder to decrease its energy use further. This would not only improve the campus Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) evaluation in the Operations category, it would support CU’s larger goals of a more sustainable campus, greater student engagement, and increased transparency in the University system.

**Resolution Summary**

This resolution seeks CUSG’s full support for ongoing Sustainability Think Tank efforts to reduce the energy use of cooling systems by introducing evaporative coolers in viable existing and future buildings on campus, and CUSG’s full support of the Think Tank’s ongoing efforts to raise awareness of evaporative cooling and its use on campus among students and the greater community.

**Whereas**, CU’s Campus Environmental Policy and Campus Sustainability Plan supports decisions that reduce the administration’s environmental impact[[10]](#footnote-10);

**Whereas**, the ACUPCC supports decisions that reduce the administration’s environmental impact[[11]](#footnote-11);

**Whereas**, the STARS evaluation has identified the amount of energy used in CU’s building operations as higher than necessary[[12]](#footnote-12);

**Whereas**, the Sustainability Think Tank has identified the campus dependence on central air conditioning as environmentally concerning;

**Whereas**, evaporative coolers can be just as effective at cooling in dry climates as central air conditioners[[13]](#footnote-13);

**Whereas**, Colorado in particular has been identified as a good environment for evaporative coolers[[14]](#footnote-14);

**Whereas**, evaporative coolers can effectively cool large, multi-storied structures[[15]](#footnote-15);

**Whereas**, evaporative coolers use as much as 75% less electricity than central air conditioning[[16]](#footnote-16);

**Whereas**, evaporative coolers usually cost less than central air conditioning to purchase and to install[[17]](#footnote-17);

**Whereas**, Home Energy reports the operation costs of evaporative coolers as 4 to 10 times less than that of central air conditioning[[18]](#footnote-18);

**Whereas**, CUSG has a distinguished legacy of leading initiatives and practices that reduce the use of energy on campus;

**Whereas**, central air conditioning uses an inefficient amount of energy that contributes to CU’s environmental footprint;

**Whereas**, CUSG and the Sustainability Think Tank believe that more sustainable alternatives to central air conditioning should be implemented in a greater number of campus buildings;

**Whereas,** CUSG and the Sustainability Think Tank believe that student and community awareness of evaporative cooling and its use on campus should be increased;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislative Council of the University of Colorado Student Government, that:**

**Section 1:** CUSG fully supports the Sustainability Think Tank’s ongoing effort to implement evaporative coolers in all viable buildings on campus. This resolution includes current buildings and future buildings.

**Section 2:** Upon passage of this resolution, the Sustainability Think Tank will begin the development of a significant, long-lasting partnership with Facilities Management directed toward the continued installation of evaporative coolers in viable buildings on the CU Boulder campus. This Think Tank - Facilities partnership will seek to maximize energy efficiency while considering and accounting for the unique challenges presented by each building. This will include drafting financial projections for installation costs versus energy savings and looking at other pre-existing large university models. The partnership will also seek to maximize student and community awareness of the campus use of evaporative cooling so that people are meaningfully involved in campus development, and so that the campus will exist as a model of energy efficiency for the greater community and for other campuses.

**Section 3:** Upon passage, this resolution will be distributed to the UMC, the Recreation Center, CUSG executive staff, CUSG Sustainability Think Tank, The Environmental Center, Residence Hall Association, Housing and Dining, CU Athletics, and media sources.

**Section 4:** The bill shall take effect upon final passage in Legislative Council and upon either obtaining the signature of two Tri-Executives and the Legislative Council President or the lapse of six days without action by the Tri-Executives.

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**Vote Count**

**12/4/14 Approved on 1st Reading Acclamation**

**12/11/14 Amended to add sponsor, wording changes and Sec. 4 Acclamation**

**12/11/14 Approved on 2nd Reading Acclamation**

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Rachel Leonard Juedon Kebede

Legislative Council President Tri-Executive

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Lora Roberts Chelsea Canada

Tri-Executive Tri-Executive

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2. Climate Action Plan for University of Colorado at Boulder. (2009, October 15). American College & University President’s Climate Commitment . Retrieved from <http://rs.acupcc.org/cap/100/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. CU-Boulder Names Moe Tabrizi Its First Director of Campus Sustainability. (2010, December 22). Retrieved from<http://www.colorado.edu/news/releases/2010/12/22/cu-boulder-names-moe-tabrizi-its-first-director-campus-sustainability> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System: University of Colorado Boulder. (2014, September 22). AASHE. Retrieved from<https://stars.aashe.org/institutions/university-of-colorado-at-boulder-co/report/2014-09-22/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Master Plan: Land and Facilities Plan. *University of Colorado at Boulder*, 96. Retrieved from<http://www.colorado.edu/masterplan/plan/documents/SectionV_000.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
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7. Evaporative Cooling. (2014). Retrieved from<http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/residential/heating_cooling/evaporative.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. CU’s Center for Community building earns LEED platinum rating - See more at: http://www.colorado.edu/news/releases/2012/04/27/cu%E2%80%99s-center-community-building-earns-leed-platinum-rating#sthash.zBEDXrKz.dpuf. (2012, April 27). Retrieved from<http://www.colorado.edu/news/releases/2012/04/27/cu%E2%80%99s-center-community-building-earns-leed-platinum-rating> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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10. Director of Environmental Health & Safety. (2004, August 18). Environmental Policy. Retrieved November 9, 2014, from <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/environmental-policy> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Climate Action Plan for University of Colorado at Boulder. (2009, October 15). American College & University President’s Climate Commitment . Retrieved from <http://rs.acupcc.org/cap/100/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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14. Kinney, L. (n.d.) *Evaporative Cooling Policy and Program Options: Promising Peak Shaving in Growing Southwest* (Prepared for U.S. Department of Energy & Building America Program). Boulder, Colorado: Midwest Research Institute & National Renewable Energy Laboratory Division. Retrievedfrom <http://www.swenergy.org/publications/documents/evaporative_cooling_policy_options.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Evaporative Coolers. (2012, July 1). Retrieved from <http://energy.gov/energysaver/articles/evaporative-coolers> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Consumer Energy Center: California Energy Commission. (2014). Evaporative Cooling . Retrieved from <http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/residential/heating_cooling/evaporative.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Evaporative Cooling. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.consumerenergycenter.org/residential/heating_cooling/evaporative.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Cooling and Air Conditioning. (2014). Installing and Maintaining Evaporative Coolers. Retrieved from <http://www.homeenergy.org/show/article/id/1211> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)