

Environmental Management Systems: Continually Improving Performance

The U.S.' roughly 4,000 colleges and universities often resemble small cities and grapple with a wide range of environmental issues to protect the health of their communities and comply with the law. However, unlike typical small cities, most have no central authority coordinating environmental practices. To bring a sense of order to the environmental compliance process and encourage continual improvement in environmental performance, many campuses are establishing Environmental Management Systems (EMSs).

About EMS

- An EMS is a framework that allows colleges and universities to identify then manage their environmental responsibilities in a more systematic way. It does not require that schools become ISO Certified.
- An EMS ensures continual improvement by incorporating ongoing monitoring, reviews, and revisions of environmental procedures.
- An EMS is appropriate for all types and sizes of colleges and universities. However, EMSs need to be tailored to each institution as small, public institutions have different resources and demands than large, private ones.

Note: Many campuses already have components of an EMS in place that they can build upon, such as written and unwritten procedures, practices, and environmental training.

Benefits of EMS

An EMSs' strategic approach to continual improvement results in a wide range of benefits—from compliance benefits to public relations advantages.

- **Compliance Benefits:** Achieve consistent compliance and gain a better understanding of the root causes of noncompliance.
- **Operational Benefits:** Complement and inform academic curriculum with up-to-date industry tools; improve working and living conditions for students, faculty, and employees; and quantify environmental performance and document trends.
- **Cost Benefits:** Avoid fines and expensive corrective actions due to compliance violations; lower costs through reduced energy use and waste disposal; and reduce environmental management costs.
- **Employee Benefits:** Increase employee awareness of environmental issues and improve employee morale.

- **Environmental Benefits:** Adopt long-term, sustainable practices and lower day-to-day impacts on the environment.
- **Public Relations Benefits:** Improve relations with government agencies; enhance your image and reputation; maintain positive community relations; and become eligible for EPA Performance Track.

For More Information

To register your EMS program and/or learn more about EMSs for Colleges and Universities, visit www.CampusEMS.org.

What People are Saying about EMS

“WSU’s EMS provides for continuous improvement of its environmental performance using a plan, do, check, and act model. The EMS documents organizational structure, planning activities, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes and resources for developing, implementing, achieving, reviewing and maintaining environmental programs at WSU.”

—Washington State University

“Our EMS demonstrates adherence to the highest international standards of environmental performance. Our commitment to superior environmental performance and stewardship produce a profound impact by providing a safer environment for patients, students, faculty, staff, and the public.”

—University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center

“UMR’s EMS is dedicated to integrating environmental stewardship into the education, research, administration, and business activities of the university. Our EMS helps to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and campus policies and provides a system for achieving continual improvement of our environmental performance.”

—The University of Missouri-Rolla