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# Students rally for environment in D.C.

**By: Jeremy Jacob**

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Forty Brown students associated with emPOWER drove down to Washington, D.C., this past weekend, joining 12,000 college students from around the country in support of the "Power Shift '09" conference.

The conference's main objective is to use the power of the youth to push for new energy legislation, said David Schwartz '09.5, a member of the Sustainable Food Initiative who attended Power Shift.

Power Shift's goal is to "hold our elected officials accountable for rebuilding our economy and reclaiming our future through bold climate and clean energy policy," according to the conference's Web site.

The group of Brown students - which includes members of emPOWER, the Sustainable Food Initiative and Project 20/20 - left for Washington Feb. 27 and is set to return today. Schwartz said the group has been networking with other students from around the country and attending workshops, "identity caucuses" and keynote speeches.

The identity caucuses, which focused on the specific issues of gender and ethnicity as they relate to climate and energy justice issues, were part of the conference's increased emphasis on justice over last year's Power Shift, Schwartz said.

"This is not just about climate change - this is about a whole range of justice issues. What good does it do if we have clean energy if people can't benefit from it? What good is it that you have good drinking water if it's not in some communities?" he said. "There's definitely a broadening of focus this year."

Schwartz, who gave a presentation on sustainable food to an audience of 150, said the conference was more than meetings and workshops. Power Shift also featured musical performances from Santigold and The Roots, as well as screenings of films about the environment.

Tara Prendergast '12, who also attended Power Shift, said she first got involved in emPOWER when she signed up at an activities fair. She said she decided to attend the conference because she believes this is a "watershed" moment in the environmental and energy movement.

Prendergast attended several workshops over the weekend, including one about regulating corporate carbon emission. She said the workshop discussed different cap and trade ideas and considered the pros and cons of each idea.

"There was a debate about which one we should be supporting, particularly between cap and dividend and cap and invest models," Prendergast said.

Demonstrating and rallying are also a major part of Power Shift. On Saturday night, 600 people gathered outside the White House to demonstrate, and there is a large rally planned for today in front of the Capitol, Prendergast said.

She said lobbying was also a large aspect of the conference. More than 5,000 students are slated to lobby senators and representatives from their states and districts. The lobbying effort would not only be the biggest in environmental lobbying history, Prendergast said, but also the biggest general lobbying day in history.

Prendergast, who is from Colorado, will meet with the staff of Colorado representatives. She and fellow Brown students will also meet directly with Rhode Island representatives.

The group will lobby for a set of goals laid out by Power Shift and ask for the representatives' support, she said.

One of the major aspects of the conference, stressed by both Schwartz and Prendergast, was the chance to network with other students and organizers involved in pushing for changes in energy and sustainability policy.

"A lot of it was just hanging out and having fun and networking and meeting people," Schwartz said.

Schwartz and Prendergast agreed that at least some of the goals of the conference have been met already.

"It's an incredible symbol" to have "5,000 people lobbying," Prendergast said. "It's very visible and really brings that message home that this is an issue that we really care about, and that we really need strong measures."

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