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**Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan
Spring 2008, Waste Reduction**

BACKGROUND

Campus profile

Located in East Lansing, Michigan, three miles east of Michigan's capitol in Lansing, Michigan State University (MSU) is a 5,200-acre campus, with 2,100 acres in existing or planned development, plus an additional 15,000 acres throughout Michigan that are used for agricultural, animal, and forestry research. MSU has 579 buildings, including 85 with instructional space for the more than 200 programs of study offered by 17 degree-granting colleges. MSU has students from all 83 counties in Michigan, all 50 states in the United States, and about 130 other countries. It operates on a semester system.

Known internationally as a major U.S. public university with global reach, MSU has been advancing knowledge and transforming lives through innovative teaching, research and outreach for over 150 years. It is a member of the Association of American Universities, the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and the Big Ten athletic conference.

Student demographics:

- 46,045 total:
 - 36,072 undergraduate and 9,973 graduate and professional
 - 54 percent women, 46 percent men
 - 7.4 percent African American, 5.1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.8 percent Chicano/Other Hispanic, and 0.7 percent Native American
- Freshman class profile (middle 50 percent of class): high school GPA, 3.4–3.8; SAT combined score, 1,020–1,240; ACT composite score, 23–327
- Approximately 4,800 faculty and academic staff
- Approximately 6,100 support staff employees

MSU operates the largest single-campus housing system in the nation. An average of 14,500 residence hall students and 2,000 apartment residents comprise the on-campus population. Dining Services produces 35,000 meals per day in a typical week during the academic year. More than 5,000,000 square feet of space is maintained in 30 buildings for residential living, including student rooms, study lounges, classrooms, labs and academic offices. There are currently 1,180 apartments for students, faculty and staff.

East Lansing, the home of MSU, has a non-student population of 46,000 as of 2006. Lansing, the adjacent city, is the capital of Michigan and has an additional population of 114,000.

Contacts

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GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goals

Pack Up. Pitch In. Help Out. 2008 (PUPI)

Since 1991, MSU has operated a unique move-out program that serves to provide community charitable support as well as promote sustainability and stewardship of resources in university housing by reducing landfill amounts (and subsequent costs). In addition to support from each residence hall, this unique program requires the cooperation and support of MSU Surplus and the Office of Recycling and Waste Management. In 2008, expansion of the program and inclusion of the City of East Lansing broadened collection of items.

PUPI—Help the Community, Help the Environment, Help Your Move Out

- Reduce outputs at move out by providing comprehensive collection.
- Increase capture rates (volumes), thus diverting materials from landfill.
- Provide usable items/materials to local nonprofit agencies.
- Make moving out as easy as moving in.
- Generate MSU Surplus Store sales revenue from useable student items.
- Specifically reduce e-waste from going into the landfill.
- Enhance marketing to include past and current achievements.
- Develop an aggressive all inclusive marketing and promotion plan including branding.
- Engage student groups to participate in marketing and education.
- Identify collection challenges and solutions to minimize labor costs.
- Expand nonprofit agency support and volunteer base.
- Improve security from scavenging a.k.a. “dumpster diving” for MSU Police.
- Enable City of East Lansing to use branded materials to create continuity as students transition from campus to the community.

Accomplishments

An improved communication plan and marketing materials produced a change that was noticeable to faculty, staff and students on campus as well as in East Lansing. A unified marketing campaign with consistent standards for both areas, along with contemporary graphic design and color though using the same logos improved recognition. Signs, banners, flyers, electronic communications, press releases, meetings and word of mouth were all used to create awareness of the program. Capture rates showed measurable increases this year.

Items collected include newspapers, mixed paper, white office paper, No. 1 and No. 2 plastics, loft lumber, clothing, shoes, bicycles, e-waste, household items, carpets, furniture, cardboard, boxboard and books. In addition, MSU furniture from two renovations was captured for resale and/or charitable donation.

Data Sample

The following data were captured for University Housing

- clothing 2007: 12,000 pounds; 2008: 15,000 pounds
- food* 2007: 5500 pounds; 2008: 4937 pounds
- carpet 2007: 17,000 pounds; 2008: 85,000 pounds
- electronics 2007: no measurement; 2008: 2900 pounds
- lumber** 2007: 1340 cubic yards; 2008: 1200 cubic yards
- furniture donations from students were not measured in 2007; 2008: 770 pounds
- newspaper, white paper, mixed paper, cardboard, boxboard, and plastics No. 1 and 2 were not collected in 2007; in 2008: 2500 pounds of low-grade mixed items were captured in move-out containers
- household appliances: 23 appliances were sent to local charities
- metal futon frames: 700 pounds in 2008, the first year for collection.
- bicycles: 13 bikes went to MSU bike project; many more were observed in the collection areas but were not there at the time of pickup

* Although “illegal” on campus, “freecycling” is occurring, and the assumption is that items are being scavenged.

** Lumber was reduced in 2008 as MSU provides raised platform beds, which eliminates the need for lofts.

Challenges and Responses

Challenges include coordinating logistical efforts with all the parties involved; securing bins, containers and barrels; engaging the students to do the right thing at a very busy time; the mammoth task of data collection from multiple areas, agencies and spheres of responsibility; training staff and volunteers on program changes and intent; managing all the materials and keeping the areas tidy; and getting pickups in a timely way.

Responses included: over-communication to ensure clarity; an email final reminder when we noticed people needed information; ongoing communication to get data from sources; a “lessons learned” meeting to discuss logistics and dock-space issues to better solve them in the future; engagement of staff at all levels; engagement of leadership and administrative support; a thank-you breakfast and certificates of appreciation given to staff and volunteers; support and encouragement from MSU President on down; and outreach to the community and engagement of local charities.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

Fred Poston, Vice President for Finance and Operations and Treasurer, MSU

Kathy Lindahl, Assistant Vice President for Finance and Operations, MSU

Vennie Gore, Assistant Vice President of Housing and Food Services

Ruth Daoust, Program Director, MSU Surplus

Michael Mitchner, Office of Recycling and Waste Management

Rachelle Woodbury, Mikell Frey, Dave Smith, and Angela Mayben, City of East Lansing,

Victor Vallejo and staff, Volunteers of America

Rich Waidelich and Tim Sutherland, Teen Challenge

Janette Miller, Red Cross

Tim Potter, MSU Bike Project

And a cast of hundreds in Housing and Food Services, Office of Recycling and Waste Management

Funding and Resources

Funding for Pack Up, Pitch In, Help Out, is provided primarily by Housing and Food Services. The City of East Lansing's role was self-funded. Clearly, the greatest demand is labor. Volunteers who collect the material make this program possible. Internal marketing support is provided at cost with a minimal material expense.

Total costs have not been calculated for 2008; however, typically the cost of the program is offset by a reduction in landfill costs.

Community Outreach and Education

There was a great deal of outreach to local charities, the City of East Lansing, and students and staff to Pack Up, Pitch In and Help Out. We added "Help Out" to the program in 2008 to reinforce the community outreach aspect of the program. In addition, one of the organizations provided informational materials that showed how the collected items are used and how important Michigan State University is to the organization's mission.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

Reduction in the volume of waste materials jettisoned to the landfill at a time when students are in a hurry to move is essential. Prior to this program, students discarded swiftly and unwisely many things that could be captured for further use. Keeping reuse and recycling alternatives in front of them assisted them to do the right thing.

PUPI is part of a comprehensive sustainability program at MSU that focuses on reduction of material inputs, increased recycling both in type and volume of materials, energy reduction, and behavior and cultural change. Please visit www.bespartangreen.com for more information on these principles.

CLOSING COMMENT

PUPI is a unique approach to a problem that is common on many campuses—the big move out. Providing a means to reduce the environmental impact, reduce costs and help various charitable organizations to provide resources and materials for underserved community members is a win-win-win.

Continuing a partnership with East Lansing and using a common marketing communications plan is expected to grow results over time. We believe that students will be exposed to the program while they live on campus and will come to expect it off campus as well.

Transportation costs and efficiencies are going to be greater challenges in the future. Facilitating excellent partnerships as the program expands will also be critical to success as will education to first reduce the amount of materials purchased in the first place. If you are interested in observing the Pack Up, Pitch In, Help Out, program for 2009, feel free to contact us.