



**Davidson College**  
Davidson, North Carolina  
Environmental Outreach

**School**

Davidson College, Private, 4-year, 2000 students, Davidson, NC

**Abstract**

The Green Ball is a Davidson tradition currently entering its 8<sup>th</sup> year. It combines contra dance, local food, and an auction to raise money for the Davidson Lands Conservancy (DLC). The DLC is a land-trust organization that works to protect land in and around Davidson, and last year received \$2,300 from 125 participants in the Green Ball. The Green Ball ties Davidson students to their community as the campus Environmental Action Coalition works with local businesses and charities to improve the regional environment, and ties Davidson (both town and college) to the global by situating the activism of the Green Ball as a conscious attempt to counter worldwide climate change by guarding green spaces in our community.

**GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

Our goals were as follows:

- To incorporate an educational aspect into the night's program
- To diversify our auction items to appeal to both community members and students
- To have more participants than previous years (goal of >125)
- To raise more money than previous years (goal of >\$2100)

Our goals were all achieved:

- A short expository speech was inserted into the program to teach participants about where their money was going, and the DLC had an informational table at the dance
- Though not all auction items were auctioned off, many of them were fiercely competed over. We found that a blend of chance and silent auction raised more money than just a chance auction. The auction also featured more items than ever.
- We had exactly 125 participants this year. Student turnout was better than we expected, but the Charlotte Contra Dance Club did not bring as many individuals as they have in the past. We aim to continue to focus on improving student turnout.
- We did indeed raise more money than ever, settling in around \$2300. This came from both ticket sales and auction sales.



The environmental impact of the Green Ball is apparent to any student who ventures out of campus, especially down Davidson-Concord Road. Davidson remains very green and forested, in large part thanks to the work of the Davidson Lands Conservancy. One such green space students often take advantage of for mountain biking and picnicking is Fisher Farms, a protected green space only ten minutes away.

### **Challenges and Responses**

One challenge is getting students out to ask for donations for the auction. It can be a bit awkward and intimidating if you have never done anything similar. To combat this discomfort, we provided step-by-step instructions and offered to come with students on their first trip to ask for donations. Another challenge is that we often receive donations that are actually too nice—for example, one group donated a weekend at their lake cabin, but asked for \$500 minimum bid. Students won't bid on something like that, but we don't want to miss out on the potential gains that such a donation represents. Therefore we need to increase the population of "deep pockets" present at the Ball. This represents a distinct challenge for Green Ball in the future; as we are dedicated towards maintaining low ticket prices (compared to other charity events, Green Ball is cheap, at \$7-15/ticket), auctions and increased ticket sales represent our only avenues of growth.

### **Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint**

While it isn't possible to directly convert our event's impact into units of tons CO<sub>2</sub> saved, there is no doubt we have had a positive impact in addressing global climate change. Deforestation accounts for x% (FIND) of global GHG emissions. The Davidson Lands Conservancy (which is directly supported by our event) works to put a stop to deforestation in Mecklenburg County.

### **Commentary and Reflection**

The Green Ball is a big event. That said, it's not incredibly difficult. It's also a very flexible model. We hold a contra dance, but that doesn't mean similar events couldn't be held that were more traditional dinner-dance events. Booking a band, sound crew, and event space can be tough, but as long as you start early you'll be fine. You'll be surprised how many local businesses will be willing to support you if it's for charity, especially if you guarantee them a measure of advertising to go along with their donation. Finding an organization should be easy, and can be voted on amongst your members. The hardest thing is getting warm bodies there, and how to do that varies between schools. For us, at a small school, personal invitations combined with mass publicity make the Green Ball an "event" for the student body. Moreover, we are able to take advantage of a rule at our school that the social calendar must be blacked out during a charity event, so that we theoretically don't have any formal competition.

## **ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT**

### **Leaders and Supporters**

The Green Ball is a project of the Environmental Action Coalition. The Environmental Action Coalition is a student organization with an active membership of about twenty-five students from all backgrounds. Each year, two co-project managers are chosen to lead the Green Ball effort. Last year these students were Hayden Higgins '12 and Taylor Riley '13. The Davidson Lands Conservancy is a nonprofit organization with a headquarters on Main Street in Davidson across from the college. Information on the DLC can be found on the World Wide Web.

### **Funding and Resources**

Last year due to some unforeseen circumstances we were able to save a great deal on band and sound costs, and the cost of operating the Green Ball was only \$875. \$1,200 is budgeted for next year. We have been reducing operating costs every year from a high of \$2,000. The money comes from our college's Activities Tax Council, which grants student organizations a budget based on their demonstrated merit and historical performance. The ATC's money comes from an Activities Tax on every student. All project support was on volunteer basis by Davidson students/Environmental Action Coalition members.

### **Education and Community Outreach**

To go with the Green Ball we also held a luncheon event on campus featuring a presentation by a DLC member on some of their current projects. This outreach even was mildly successful—it was really only EAC members who showed up, but that was valuable because it showed our members that their work has real worth. The local community definitely showed interest—they are the ones who are the direct beneficiaries of the Davidson Lands Conservancy's work! That is why they were so willing to donate items for the auction. In the future, education may be extended to elementary schools in the community. Davidson College has a strong connection with local schools that could be used for education about the DLC and preserving green spaces.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

#### **Contacts**

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**Image credit:** Davidson College's Environmental Action Coalition