



St. Edward's University Austin, Texas Waste Reduction

SCHOOL

St. Edward's University, Private, 4-year, 5,450, Austin, Texas.

ABSTRACT

In recent years, St. Edward's University has undertaken several paperless initiatives. That which has most directly impacted the entire university community (students, faculty and staff) was spearheaded by Human Resources and the Business Office. These departments have implemented paperless checks, replaced paystubs with email notifications, converted paper timesheets with online timekeeping, and replaced all employee related paper work with online forms and processes, saving 96,000 sheets of paper annually. Initial project costs totaled \$23,100 (timekeeping system software and pay cards), financed through operating cash flow. The success of this project has already prompted other university departments (Marketing, Advancement and Student Financial Services) to go greener. These changes enable everyone on campus to play an active part in sustainable solutions, every day.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

Our goals for Human Resources and the Business Office were as follows:

- Decrease amount of time to process / complete work
- Decrease duplication of effort
- Decrease possibility of errors made through duplication
- Decrease cost to produce outcomes (labor hours)
- Decrease purchase of supplies such as paper, ink, envelopes and folders, and
- Decrease physical storage needs

Our goals for the next 2-3 years are to continue the efforts listed in other university departments.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

The goals above were met and even exceeded, as other university departments were encouraged to go greener following the initial success of Human Resources and the Business Office. When Human Resources and the Business Office went greener:

- \$7,900 annual supply expense dollars were saved, including saving 96,000 annual sheets of paper, and
- 450 annual labor hours in the Business and HR offices were saved, as well as approximately 4,000 annual hours of reduced administrative time across the university.

In addition, the Marketing Office began to implement paper-saving practices in the fall of 2011. Email and social media campaigns are created with online content to supplement or replace paper collateral.

Where printing is necessary, a carbon-neutral paper is used. In 2010, this practice was equivalent to taking 6 cars off the road for one year and planting 4,849 trees. Each year, using this paper also:

- Saves 264,262 gallons of wastewater flow
- Prevents the creation of 29,239 lbs. of solid waste
- Prevents the generation of 57,570 lbs. net of greenhouse gases
- Conserves 440,652,240 BTUs of energy

And because the paper is manufactured with wind power and carbon offsets, 71,282 lbs. ghg emissions are prevented and 76 barrels of fuel oil are saved.

Furthermore, the Faculty Staff Campaign — implemented by the Advancement Office — went paperless in April 2012. This annual fundraising effort now saves labor over three different departments and 3,000 pieces of paper annually.

Finally, the Student Financial Services department has completed a project to go paperless on student refund checks, financial aid status letters, award notices and 1098T forms. In addition, the department implemented online billing. This will eliminate the need to prepare and distribute over 7,000 paper checks annually.

Challenges and Responses

- Resistance to change existing processes
- Training personnel and staff on new online processes

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

This project addressed global climate change through a significant decrease in paper usage, university wide.

In addition, the switch to carbon-neutral paper by the Marketing Office, cited above, prevents the generation of 57,570 lbs. net of greenhouse gases and 71,282 lbs. ghg emissions annually.

Commentary and Reflection

Changing long-established processes and systems can be very challenging. Before making the change, staff must be informed and invited to participate in the decision-making process. This will allow administration to obtain valuable input so that the transition has a stronger acceptance. Getting everyone involved and informed is essential to the success of any initiative.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The paperless initiative at St. Edward's University is a campus-wide collaboration across many departments. Human Resources / Business Office process redesign, for instance, was developed with the assistance of our Information Technology department.

Funding and Resources

Upfront costs:

Timekeeping system software: \$22,000 (one-time expense)
Pay cards \$1.00 per card to setup: \$100 (for 100 cards)

Recurring:

Timekeeping system software: \$1,000 per month

Financing:

Projects were financed through operating cash flow.

Education and Community Outreach

- Staff meetings
- President's Meeting (bi-annual meeting by which the entire university community is informed of accomplishments and undertakings)
- Horizon (daily newsletter for faculty and staff)
- E-news (electronic newsletter)

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Campus Sustainability History

- 2003 Campus Landscape Master Plan
- 2007 Campus Master Plan
- 2011 Campus Master Plan
- Sustainability website: <http://think.stedwards.edu/sustainability/>