



University of North Florida Jacksonville, Florida Waste Reduction

SCHOOL

University of North Florida (UNF), Public, 4-year, 16,368 students (Fall 2011 Enrollment), Jacksonville, Florida.

ABSTRACT

Garbage on the Green (GoG) started in 2007 as a simple waste audit with the goal of better understanding our campus' waste stream. Since that time the event has grown into an annual tradition for students and has taken on a festive atmosphere. In addition to the waste audit, GoG also includes a campus litter cleanup, free food (Organic and/or local when possible), exhibitors showcasing local environmental organizations and live music. While the results from GoG are important for UNF to be able to make informed improvements to our solid waste program, student participation in event is critical to making sustainability part of the campus culture.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

At its core, *Garbage on the Green* is a yearly waste audit aimed at better understanding the university's solid waste stream. The primary goal of the event is to quantify the amount and types of waste generated at UNF and use that data to improve our diversion rate. In addition to providing valuable information for campus operations, another goal of *Garbage on the Green* is to increase student participation in campus recycling. Over the next 2-3 years, we would like to see *Garbage on the Green* expand to include a larger sample of campus waste. Furthermore, we would like to expand education and outreach efforts.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

The primary goal of *Garbage on the Green*, quantifying the amount and types of waste was achieved with great success. Unfortunately, the diversion rate has remained greatly unchanged and hovers around 25 percent.

Over 150 student volunteers helped with *Garbage on the Green* in 2011. In addition to making the event possible, these students came away from the event with a better understanding of just how much waste UNF produces and why it is important to recycle as much as possible. Our campus continually faces challenges with student participation with recycling and littering and student involvement will prove to be the key to success.

Challenges and Responses

Promotion was the biggest challenge encountered with this event. Announcements were limited due to policies in campus publications, so individual contact with departments, centers, professors and students became increasingly necessary. Secondly, having dedicated staff coordinators was vital to retaining exhibitors and volunteers. Therefore, the UNF Environmental Center staff and student assistant committed to working on this program. Lastly, the training program that was developed for volunteers did not translate well from paper to implementation for those without some prior experience in the waste audit. Additional on-the-job training was required on the day of the event, on site.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

Garbage on the Green was originally developed to help improve the solid waste program at UNF, which would eventually lead to a higher diversion rate. Recycling and waste reduction are directly linked to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and according to the Environmental Protection Agency, waste that ends up in the landfill produces methane, a greenhouse gas 21 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Commentary and Reflection

Garbage on the Green has been a huge success on the UNF campus since its inception in 2007 by Stacy Wheeler. The annual waste audit has given university administration reliable yearly data on what UNF is throwing away. The process, which includes a facility walkthrough, record examination and a waste audit, has proven to be valuable through identifying billing errors, contractual problems and increasing student participation. The event is a truly collaborative effort between faculty, staff, and students with the single-minded goal of making UNF a sustainable university.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

While the Environmental Center coordinates overall efforts, we strive to make Garbage on the Green a collaborative effort. A *Garbage on the Green* committee is established prior to the event and includes staff from the Environmental Center and Physical Facilities, as well as other interested faculty, staff and students. Furthermore, the Environmental Center hires a student assistant to help with promotion of event and volunteer recruitment.

Committee Members:

April Moore, Program Director Environmental Center

James Taylor, Administrative Assistant Environmental Center

Radya Pyati, Director Environmental Center

Abdub Jirmo, Student Assistant Environmental Center

Chuck Hubbuch, Assistant Director Physical Facilities

Robert McCracker, Assistant Director Physical Facilities

Leigh Palmer, Assistant Director of Development College of Arts and Sciences

Funding and Resources

Garbage on the Green expenses totaled approximately \$6,000 excluding labor. The costs were offset by donations from Southland Waste and Recycling and CSX. Additionally, the UNF Environmental Center staff time was dedicated and the Center paid for all remaining costs associated with this project. The City of Jacksonville (Florida) Clean It Up/Green It Up program offered additional support in the form of donated garbage bags and plastic gloves to use during the campus clean-up portion of the program.

Education and Community Outreach

A big part of *Garbage on the Green* is student outreach and education. During the weeks leading up to *Garbage on the Green*, Environmental Center staff visited classrooms, hung up educational/informational signs and recruited volunteers at the Student Union. Environmental organizations are invited to exhibit at the event and this proves to be a valuable time for them to spread their message, as well recruit student volunteers. Local media outlets also show interest in the event and generally cover the event.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

The UNF Environmental Center's mission is to establish, develop and support cross-disciplinary education and research related to the environment. The Center fosters programs for students, faculty, and staff to pursue environmental activities through academics, research, and extracurricular activities. The Center conducts and supports campus infrastructural projects involving sustainability and the campus's natural environment. Other projects of the Environmental Center include an annual trash audit named *Garbage on the Green*; an annual Multidisciplinary Transformational Learning Opportunity on the St. Johns River as well as various other programs to promote an environmentally conscious campus community. The Environmental Center website is as follows: <http://www.unf.edu/center/>