



University of North Carolina Charlotte Charlotte, North Carolina Waste Reduction

SCHOOL

UNC Charlotte, Public 4 year University, 26,000 students, Charlotte, North Carolina.

ABSTRACT

In 2011, UNC Charlotte implemented mini trash cans for campus staff and changed housekeeping procedures in order to maintain a high level of service for a growing campus without increasing staff during tough budget times. The mini trash bins have been implemented and widely accepted throughout the university. We are currently saving money by not purchasing trash liners, increased housekeeping efficiency, and decreased waste.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

At UNC Charlotte, we are always looking for ways to reduce waste and increase recycling. One way that we felt that we could accomplish that, was by taking the emphasis off of trash cans and putting them on recycling bins. We felt that reducing the size of the trash can was our best option so we began to research mini bins. During this time, budgets were being trimmed throughout the UNC system and we were tasked from the highest levels to search for savings and “do more with less.”

At UNC Charlotte, the Recycling Department is part of Housekeeping. Our Housekeeping manager, Brian Guns, was searching for ways to continue offering a high level of service for a growing university, without increasing staff. *The answer was to have employees remove their own trash cans and empty them into larger bins located nearby inside their building.* By doing this, the housekeeping department could implement a “once a week” office cleaning policy, and focus more of their time on common areas such as hallways and bathrooms, thus covering more ground.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

The outcomes are still being reported, but we have estimated that we will save approximately \$20,000 on trash liners that we no longer have to purchase, 16,000 trash liners that are no longer being thrown away, increased emphasis on recycling and less on trash, increased efficiency for housekeeping staff, and approximately 15% increase in recycling (in staff buildings). The mini-bin was a replacement for the old trash bin and costs about 60% less than the typical bins. The bins that we replaced will be re-purposed around campus.

Through our education program that took place throughout the summer, we were able to meet with employees face to face and answer their questions about the program and also educate them about our Housekeeping and Recycling Department.

Challenges and Responses

When we began the project, we were faced with implementing the mini-bins and new housekeeping procedures to a large campus that would require approval from the Managers, Chancellor, and ultimately, the Board of Trustees. Getting approval was just one hurdle. Implementing the program, educating the campus community, and gaining buy-in from the staff were other challenges that we faced. With a solid plan and support from the highest levels, we were able to do that.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

We addressed climate change via reduced waste going to the landfill.

Commentary and Reflection

One of the more interesting aspects of implementing the program was the fact that due to the budgetary situation, the leadership was extremely open to new ideas in order to be more efficient with labor, or reduce operating costs. Asking long time and tenured employees to dispose of their own trash was a concern. However, after meeting with them face to face and having backing from the highest levels, the concern was mitigated and we actually drew a lot of positive responses for the program. Everyone participates, including the Chancellor! In order to take this program up to the highest levels, we held a pilot program in our building to examine the reaction of employee's and see what the impacts would be in terms of reduced waste and / or increased recycling. We were able to transition to the new program seamlessly, and after six months, we were collecting about 15% more recyclables.

It's important to have a plan in place and potential benefits that the program would provide. Our biggest selling point was through housekeeping efficiency and cost savings. After getting approval, developing a plan to educate the campus community and the housekeepers is your next hurdle. As mentioned earlier, the housekeepers were now only entering offices once a week, and were being instructed to NOT collect the trash. Educating the employees and campus community was an extremely important part of the program. We did this through face to face interaction, news releases other marketing venues.

The third and final hurdle was to change out more than 3000 bins in a period of two days, and also leave information cards about the program to employees that weren't a part of the information meetings or who were off campus for the summer.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

Housekeeping and Recycling is located within Facilities Management. Administrative employees lead by Brian Guns (Director of Housekeeping), Kathy Boutin'Pasterz, (Recycling Coordinator), Greg Kish (Housekeeping Manager), Devin Hatley (Environmental Educator) and others were instrumental in gaining approval, designing the program, and educating the campus community. Brian approached leadership throughout the university seeking and receiving approval of the program at every level. Everyone participates with no exceptions!

Staff and Faculty do their part by bringing it to central area

- Every faculty/staff member on campus has a desk-side blue recycling bin with a mini trash bin attached to the side.
- They empty and correctly separate the contents of these recycling blue bins into larger departmental bins labeled for news blend and office blend.
- And empty their own trash bins

Recycling Staff collects recyclable materials from the 1500 centrally location bins inside the academic buildings using 90 gallon toters.



Funding and Resources

The only up-front costs associated with the program were the purchase of the mini-bins, which replaced the larger trash cans. The up-front costs were about \$7000. Over time, the trash cans would have been replaced anyway and the mini-bins cost about 40% less than regular sized trash cans.

Education and Community Outreach

We educated the community through campus news releases and informational meetings in each building. We typically held two meetings a day for about a month. The first step was to contact each building manager and set up the informational meeting. The building manager would then send representatives from each department to the seminar where we would go over the changes and answer any questions that they might have. In addition to the educational sessions, we put a card in each new mini-bin describing the program for those that did not receive the information over the summer

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

We receive email blasts and have participated in webinars.

Contact Information

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Case Study submitted by: Devin Hatley

MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

The Office of Waste Reduction and Recycling was started by students in 1992. Originally, they collected aluminum only. Since then, we have grown to 15 staff members that are made up of eleven Recycling Technicians and 4 administrative staff. In 2011-2012, we collected over 2 million pounds of material. We have a small composting program, construction and demolition, and hold events throughout the year. Our sustainability program officially began in 2008. We are currently completing our first Climate Action Plan and the Chancellor has signed on to the Presidents Climate Commitment.

Image Credit: Devin Hatley