



University of North Florida
Jacksonville, Florida
Waste Reduction - Garbage on the Green

SCHOOL

University of North Florida is a public, 4-year institution with 16,641 students in Jacksonville, Florida.

ABSTRACT

Garbage on the Green is an event promoting recycling and waste reduction as a form of sustainability on campus. We incorporate a public, campus waste audit, litter cleanup, recycled art competition, free organic food, and exhibitors showcasing local environmental organizations. We are currently planning our fourth annual Garbage on the Green event for the fall 2010. Costs hover around \$7,000. By bringing awareness to recycling on campus the long-term increase in recycling will save the university money by lessening their landfill costs. Although we have not seen a significant increase in percent recycled we are able to track, via the waste audit, each year's actual recycling data and potential amount to be recycled. With this data we are able to develop projects to improve the universities recycling efforts.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

The original goals for this event were to quantify the amount and types of waste generated at UNF. Through this categorization we can better understand and address ways to improve recycling and waste reduction on campus. Now that we have completed the third annual Garbage on the Green we will be working towards the Florida governors 75 percent recycling goal by year 2025. The short-term goals will be to engage more groups of students in Garbage on the Green to create awareness of our recycling program and foster a sense of environmental responsibility.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

We successfully collected three years of waste stream data. Since 2007, our results have not shown a significant increase from 21 percent of material diverted from the waste stream by recycling. Although, data collected (during Recyclemania) from the contracted waste hauler demonstrates a 4 percent increase overall in recycled material campus wide. This increase was determined to come from physical facilities efforts in recycling tires and scrap metal. After the initial Garbage on the Green event the number of recycling containers increased on campus indoors and out, as well as, containers labeled for and separating paper and beverage containers. We expect that incorporating more prominent containers for recycling will facilitate increased participation.

Challenges and Responses

A challenge every year is recruiting enough volunteers to complete the waste audit and have a successful campus litter cleanup. In the morning it seems as though we don't have enough help to get the waste audit completed but by the end of the day every bag of trash is catalogued. We have had between 50 and 135 volunteers on different years with everyone offering varying hours to help. Nonetheless, the event garners a lot of attention from passing students who offer a hand. Responses

to the waste audit, which can be smelly and messy, have always been those of enlightenment and interest.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

This event indirectly addresses CO₂ emissions and climate change by focusing on waste reduction as a component of climate change. The event in itself may reduce emissions slightly via the waste audit. As volunteers sort and categorize the waste they dispose of each material type into a designated bin to be recycled (if able) after the event. Most of this waste would have gone straight to the landfill if it didn't run through the waste audit.

Commentary and Reflection

This project is successful and a lot more fun when a large group of volunteers is involved. Convincing the public that sorting through trash can be enjoyable proves difficult but once students get their hands dirty with friends, their perspective about waste changes altogether.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The Environmental Center at UNF is a crucial campus entity involved in coordinating this event. The center serves to offer students, faculty and staff ways to engage in nature and issues concerning the environment. This particular year our sponsor was Southland Waste Systems who gave a sizable donation toward the event. We also involve a Garbage on the Green committee in the decision making process. The committee consists of representatives from administration and finance, physical facilities, public relations, and Environmental Center staff.

Funding and Resources

The project costs approximately \$7,000 each year after the initial start up costs have been spent. Generally, we get half the cost in donations and the rest are in-kind sources such as the Environmental Center. We ask for support from recycling and waste centers in the area that have donated the past 2 years. We work with physical facilities intimately to ensure the logistics run smoothly and the waste audit is a true 24-hour waste stream collection. Fortunately, we have plenty of outdoor green space at UNF to allow us room to hold the event.

Education and Community Outreach

The campus community was notified through student update emails. Personal contact was made with students through short in-class presentations permitted by each professor in support of the event. Volunteers were also recruited by setting up a table in the Student Union courtyard once a week up to the date of the event.

During the Garbage on the Green we have an information booth and factoids on waste and recycling in America, which always surprises readers. The exhibitors involved from the community are always pleased to see our efforts at UNF.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

University of North Florida referenced *ClimateEdu – News for the Green Campus* e-newsletter and the Chill Out national competition and broadcast.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contacts

April Moore, Program Manager, 904-620-2662, april.moore@unf.edu.

Colleen Herms, Program Assistant, 904-620-3881, colleen.herms@unf.edu.

Case study submitted by: Colleen Herms, Program Assistant, colleen.herms@unf.edu.

MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

We are initiating an event called Environmental Exposure Day to connect students and faculty with environmentally proactive organizations to foster relationships such as volunteer opportunities, internships and career options. Through events like this we hope to fill the gap disconnecting students from opportunities within the community. We have also started “Eco-Conscious Wednesdays” during which throughout the semester students, faculty and staff can attend workshops, brown bag lunches or special events that highlight sustainability initiatives on campus. We’ll cover waste reduction and upcycling, organic gardening, and low-impact living. We are the staff at the UNF Environmental Center, www.unf.edu/dept/ecenter.