



**University of North Florida
Jacksonville, Florida
Waste Reduction**

SCHOOL

University of North Florida (UNF) is a public, 4-year school, currently educating 15,000 students. UNF is located in Jacksonville, Florida.

ABSTRACT

Garbage on the Green was originally conducted to develop baselines for the amount of garbage recycling, to determine any areas for improvement in our university's existing recycling program, and to draw in students, faculty, staff, and members of the general public toward environmental education. Members of our campus community participated in a second waste characterization study to identify and quantify the types and sources of materials in UNF's solid waste stream and to compare to the findings of the first audit to see if we had improved in our recycling behavior. Findings from the study were used to generate new strategies for improving campus waste management and recycling programs. An inviting and almost festive atmosphere was created with food, entertainment, exhibitors, and an art contest where the medium was recycled materials.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

The primary objective of *Garbage on the Green* was to conduct a waste characterization study (to find out how much waste was being diverted from landfill), while simultaneously bringing awareness to our campus community about the amount of garbage and recycling generated on our campus. Additionally, we invited green and sustainability exhibitors to hopefully increase cognizance of green technology, industry, and services.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

The baseline results from the inaugural 2007 *Garbage on the Green* were that 21% of our waste materials were diverted from the landfill. In 2008, 20 months after the first event, approximately 21 percent of our waste materials were still being diverted from the landfill. We accomplished our primary goal, ascertaining a diversion amount. As a result of these findings, increases in the recycling facilities and campus clean-up activities were made. The most important effect on the student body was that a group of students stepped forward to organize and participate in 2009 Recyclemania.

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

Since recycling and waste reduction have a very direct link to the decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and this event advocated recycling, which potentially had an impact on increased recycling on campus, the pounds of paper diverted can be translated into reductions in global warming using greenhouse gas equivalency calculator.

Commentary and Reflection

UNF had a resource as a member of its faculty Stacy Wheeler, co-founder of Recyclemania. Through financial and staff support from the UNF Environmental Center, Ms. Wheeler designed the 2007 *Garbage on the Green* waste audit and recycling awareness event. This was the foundation for UNF's 2008 program. Her infinite knowledge and support were indispensable. In 2008, again the UNF Environmental Center coordinated and organized the audit, exhibitors, and entertainment. This event was truly a collaborative effort between faculty, staff, and students with the single-minded goal of making UNF a greener university.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

A *Garbage on the Green* committee was established five months prior to the event and included the UNF Environmental Center Director (Radha Pyati), Program Manager (April Moore) and student assistant (Colleen Herms); two members of Physical Facilities in charge of recycling (Chuck Hubbuch and Robert McCracken) as well as many members of their staff; Associate Vice President of Administration and Finance (Richard Crosby); and Assistant Director of Development, College of Arts and Sciences (Jill Jackson). This committee oversaw the implementation and funding of *Garbage on the Green*. The student organizations that participated in the actual waste audit were Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), the Nutrition and Vegan Clubs, American Chemical Society (ACS) student chapter, and the 2008 St. Johns River Transformational Learning Opportunity participants – all organizations affiliated with environmental programs. Publicity on the day of the event was arranged by Joanna Norris, Assistant Director of Media Relations.

Funding and Resources

Garbage on the Green expenses were approximately \$6,000 excluding labor. The costs were offset by donations from CSX and Southland Waste and Recycling. These donations were a direct result of the fund raising efforts of Jill Jackson. Additionally, the UNF Environmental Center staff time was dedicated and the Center paid for all remaining costs associated with this project. City of Jacksonville (Florida) Clean It Up/Green It Up program donated garbage bags and plastic gloves to the campus clean-up portion of the program.

Education and Community Outreach

Members of the local community involved in this program were primarily the exhibitors. The educational outreach to faculty, staff, and students stemmed from the demonstrations, activities, and engagement with these exhibitors on sustainability, recycling, and green efforts.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

The online case study database was used and consultation with NWF staff helped in focusing our efforts on student and community engagement. We have additionally moved forward with our greenhouse gas emissions inventory as part of developing UNF's climate action plan. The web conferences have been very valuable in this aspect as well. In applying for a NWF fellowship, we were able to focus our timeline more efficiently and effectively. Lastly, in the hopes of getting a better grade on the National Report Card on Sustainability in Higher Education, UNF has increased in efforts to become a greener university.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

Although UNF does not yet have a sustainability office, the Environmental Center has initiated a sustainability program by hiring a student to conduct an updated greenhouse gas emissions inventory and sustainability awareness programs. Other greening efforts prior to this event included newly constructed buildings being LEED certified, removal of non-indigenous plant species, and designation of Sawmill Slough Preserve, a 300 acre natural area.