



North Seattle Community College Seattle, Washington Environmental Education and Outreach

SCHOOL

North Seattle Community College at 9600 College Way North, Seattle, Washington 98103.

ABSTRACT

North Seattle Community College aims to improve the financial and institutional sustainability of environmental sustainability programs, beyond the life of grant funding, by advancing the prominence of environmental sustainability principals in the institutionally sanctioned framework of training offerings. NSCC already offers certificate programs in Green Real Estate and Green Healthcare, and the College is working to develop a Green Business certificate program. Through this proposal, NSCC hopes to develop a certificate training in sustainability principals that would be applicable within multiple career pathways.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

Our goal was to raise awareness but at a big school like BU, it's hard to get noticed among all the other student events. We didn't have goals the first year, but got 200 people to sign up for events (though not all followed through with the competition). The next year, we hoped for more students but got slightly fewer. This past year, we focused our attention on our own 2-year program, so that first-year students would excite next year's first year students about it and this was marginally successful; we got about 30 committed students. The present incarnation of the program is highly dependent on the faculty organizer – we were hoping students would take it and run with it, but that hasn't happened.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

Overall the project has been a mixed success. Students are unconvinced that individual action adds up to anything and despite Facebook, Twitter, classroom announcements, posters and cool prizes, we weren't able to generate much buzz. Several items would help in the future: committed organizers with well-defined roles (this is tricky because if you have too many organizational meetings, you lose potential organizers and fewer people have to do more work), academic credit for organizers and extra credit for participants. We had hoped that prizes would be enough incentive for participants but were told (by students) that more motivation is needed. Our prizes included an Ecosphere (self-contained ecosystem), gift certificates to restaurants that served local food, fair trade chocolate, DVDs of Planet Earth and museum passes.

We needed greater academic incentives to attract more participants. How do you do this when you also want students outside your own course or program?

Challenges and Responses

The major problem was apathy. It was a constant battle to make students care that they could make a difference. Perhaps “awareness” was too vague of a goal, but we brought in films like “Crude,” “Home” and “Call of Life” that had strong messages. We served pizza at the films but that wasn’t a big enough draw. In the future, I would nominate students to host films and get them to get groups together.

Campus Climate Action: Your School’s Carbon Footprint

We didn’t directly address BU’s carbon footprint. We had events that reduced energy use like taking the stairs instead of the elevator, unplugging unused computers, turning off lights and so on, but we couldn’t measure these in a tangible way.

Commentary and Reflection

Start early. Be prepared to throw everything you’ve got at it. It’s probably better to have a tangible goal like a volunteer clean-up event or educational event like learning how to compost than simply “raising awareness.” Advertising is key – how will you get the word out to students? Posters take time to get made and get seen. Get as much help in this department as possible. Think also about edu-fun – events like scavenger hunts where there’s some educational payoff will do better than seminars.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The key organization was by faculty Daniel Hudon who was assisted by a rotating group of students from one year to the next. The third year, the program was run as part of our class, Biodiversity: Causes and Consequences. Additional organizational faculty included Mark Jonas, who helped update our point system, and Alex Coverdill. Jillian Ferraro led our student organizers. We had key administrative support from Zachary Bos who helped us create a webpage, a blog and a poster.

Funding and Resources

This project cost approximately \$750 to \$1000. We applied for an internal grant to fund t-shirts and prizes.

Education and Community Outreach

There was an interview on the campus radio station and an article was published in BU Today and our events were posted on Sustainability@BU’s poster for the week.

National Wildlife Federation’s Campus Ecology Program

We used the NWF Campus Ecology online case study database as a resource.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

Boston University has various green clubs and Sustainability@BU has a full-time director as well as several interns. <http://www.bu.edu/sustainability/>