

Engaging Students & Cultivating Institutional Support for Zero Waste

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Resource Recovery & Zero Waste at UT Austin

- Branch of Facilities Services
- Responsible for the efficient reuse and redistribution of campus resources and supporting campus in the implementation of programs to achieve UT Austin's Zero Waste Goal.
- Comprised of the Zero Waste program & Surplus Properties
- No direct control of any waste generated on campus other than what is sent to Surplus



UT Austin Stats

- 51,000 students
- 14,000 staff
- 430 acre Main Campus and 475 acre J.J. Pickle Research Campus both located in Austin
- Football stadium seats 100,000



Which level of support has been most influential: top-down or bottom-up?



Top-Down Support

- Institutional Zero Waste goal outlined in Natural Resources Conservation Plan and reaffirmed in Sustainability Master Plan
- Institutional commitment to LEED certification for new buildings
- Support for sustainability from leadership
- General support for best use of state/university resources



Bottom-Up Support

- Students started campus recycling program
- Students don't see recycling as optional
- They are paying attention to things around campus- whether they tell you or not
- UT Austin's Green Fee allows students, staff, and faculty apply for funds to implement sustainability initiatives on campus



How to capitalize on this support

- Identify people essential to program success
- Identify campus sustainability champions
- Identify what motivates people that are resistant and/or hesitant but are essential to program success including fiscal responsibility, hierarchy, students, competition etc.
- Work with and support internal stakeholders rather than implementing programs from the outside
- Learn and communicate using departmental language and motivators
- Be committed to the goal not the process
- Identify ways to maximize resources and be cost effective



Narrowing the gap between top down and bottom up: incorporating students within operations

- Listed departmental needs and gaps
- Identified existing campus internship and student engagement programs
- Designed internship program to intersect the needs of student engagement programs and Resource Recovery
- 2016-2017: 26 students working on 9 projects including: waste audits, outreach, compostable food service packaging, Surplus store, E-Waste, and Lab Equipment.



THANKS!

Any questions?

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