Weber State University: Adapting & Building Support Around Sustainable Waste Management

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Weber State University (WSU)

- **Location:** Ogden, Utah
- **Student Body:** 26,000 students
  - 56% of non-traditional students
  - 96% of students are commuters
- **Affordability**
  - Most affordable university in Utah
Energy & Sustainability Office at WSU

Timeline:
- 2007: ACUPCC signatory
- 2009: Energy Office
- 2010: Energy & Sustainability Office (ESO) was created

Organization of ESO:
- Located within Facilities Management
- Energy & sustainability sections are separated
- 2 full time sustainability staff
  - 1 Americorps volunteer
  - 3 student interns
Local Recycling Program

- Single Stream Recycling
  - Separate glass recycling
- Sorted at local MRF - Recycled Earth
- Changes in the global market:
  - Increased costs
  - Decreased services
  - High rates of contamination
- Local government have considered removing recycling all together
Decreased Service & Increased Costs

- Reduction in items that are accepted
  - No glossy paper
  - Only plastics #1 & 2
- Increased processing costs
  - Local recycler has to be diligent of sorting items
  - 50% contamination rate
Weber State’s Reaction

- Massive reduction in items that could be recycled
- Used to educate “When in doubt recycle it”
- Our office went through the 5 stages of grief
Denial
Depression
Acceptance aka Adaptation

- Reduce contamination and waste reduction through education
  - Hands on
  - Direct
  - Indirect
- Set zero-waste goals
Hands On Education

- Training Sessions:
  - Upcycling Activities
- Working with the custodial crew
- Tabling & playing educational games with students
Direct Education

- Training Sessions: Let’s Talk Trash
- **Goal:** Empowerment
Indirect Education

- Policy statement in syllabus
- Recycling video
- New recycling signs
- Recycling guides
Waste Reduction

- Created a Zero-Waste Advisory Committee
- Zero-waste plan for the university
How to Create Change from the Bottom Up

“The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.” - Herbert Spencer

- Green Department Certification Program
Success Story: Tiny Trash

- Office could opt into having a tiny trash cans
- Now it is a campus standard in new buildings
- Promotes waste reduction & eliminates plastic liners
Questions

“An individual action, multiplied by millions, creates global change”