



2021 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

Macalester College

1. Contact info (name, department, school, email, phone)

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2. Focus of Case study

To reduce waste and promote equity at Macalester College by creating a free, environmentally friendly and socially responsible clothing and item exchange program for the student body.

3. Detailed description of campaign component:

The Free Swap is a student-led program at Macalester College. It is a gently-used item and clothing exchange on campus, where students, faculty and staff can take anything they want or need and donate items they no longer need or use. This initiative seeks to minimize consumption and waste of store-bought items by providing gently-used alternatives, and promotes equity on campus for students that want or need these items.

The program was launched by the Macalester College Sustainability Office in the fall of 2014. Since then, the program has grown from a small closet space to an entire garage, where students, staff and faculty donate items, like kitchenware, textbooks, and clothing, and students are able to take and reuse these materials.

In the fall of 2020, as the Coronavirus pandemic escalated, many unhoused residents of Minneapolis and Saint Paul were in need of cold weather clothing and sleeping supplies. Macalester students, learning from Mutual Aid initiatives in the Twin Cities, partnered with the People's Protection Coalition, a mutual aid organization that delivers items to folks in need. Macalester student volunteers and workers sorted and packaged cold weather gear from the Free Swap to deliver to unhoused residents in the neighborhood.

Students have also organized Free Swap Clean Out events on campus this year. Over 150 Macalester students attended the outside events, where Sustainability Office students laid out items on Macalester's campus lawn, and students browsed and took home notebooks, shoes, and professional

attire. These events helped reduce Macalester's contribution to the waste stream, and promoted equity on campus.

This summer, students are creating social media accounts for the Free Swap, so Macalester students will be able to see updates for events and new arrivals.

1. Planning steps & timeline to implement:

- September 2020 - Identified key partners on campus. Reached out to various academic departments to see if they needed materials from the Swap.
- September - October 2020 - Planned, promoted and executed the Free Swap Clean Out event, where members of the Sustainability Office promoted the Free Swap to students, faculty and staff and set up the event outside on Macalester's campus lawn. Over 150 Macalester students attended the event.
- October 2020 - Donated 100 pounds of clothing and winter gear to neighborhood encampments for unhoused residents.
- December - January 2021 - Reflected on what went well over the semester and how we could improve our work with the Free Swap the following semester.
- April 2021 - Prepared the Free Swap's second Clean Out event. Coordinated with Macalester's Facility Services, the Sustainability Office, Mailing Services, and Reservations to design the interactive event, where students set up all the Free Swap's items on the campus lawn, and Macalester students could come and take what they wanted and needed.
- May 2021 - Currently creating social media presence for Macalester's Free Swap. Creating Instagram and Facebook accounts, with the goal to attract younger Macalester students and inform them about the Free Swap, so they are able to take advantage of the Swap before purchasing any items for their dorm rooms and school supplies.

4. Resources and stakeholders involved

The Free Swap is organized and maintained by Macalester's Sustainability Office student workers. The initiative also attracts many student volunteers who help to maintain the space and organize donated items.

5. Describe the Results of this campaign component

- a. General results (*ex: attracted attention of campus president, campus paper did a news story on the event, etc.*)

The Free Swap's intentional partnerships with mutual aid organizations across the Twin Cities has increased donations from the student body. Macalester Communications Office published a story on several sustainability and justice initiatives at the college, and included an in-depth analysis of the Free Swap (<https://www.macalester.edu/news/2021/02/reimagining-community-care/>).

- a. Specific measurable impact figures, if applicable (*Ex: Reduced contamination rate 13%, Gathered 316 pledges to recycle more, etc., 250 people engaged, etc.*)

The Macalester Free Swap events have engaged over 350 students this year, and helped these students learn about reusing clothing and items, and reducing our waste. The Free Swap initiative has also donated more than 150 pounds of clothing and other items to mutual aid initiatives in Saint Paul and Minneapolis, and throughout broader Minnesota.

6. What would you do differently in the future?

In the future, we would like to plan several Free Swap-related events during orientation week for arriving Macalester first year students, so they can be made aware of the resource before they buy everything new.

7. What advice would you give to another college that wanted to do a similar effort?

Think about what location would be best to set up a clothing and item exchange on your campus, and where there is a lot of foot traffic by students, faculty and staff. It is important for students to know about the Free Swap and be able to get there easily. It is also important to inform first year students early enough so that they do not have to buy all of their belongings before they know about the Swap.

8. Photos and Graphics

Free Swap Clean Out Event!



Thursday, April 22nd from 11 am - 3
pm

On the Great Lawn (Outside the
Campus Center)

We are hoping to re-home most of the items in the Free Swap, and we need YOUR help! Come take free clothes, kitchen supplies, notebooks, books, and other random stuff!



Please wear a mask and physically distance. Follow one-way signs and staff members' directions to ensure safety.



Promotional poster for Free Swap event, designed by Zella Lobo.