

**Contact info:**

Office of Sustainability
Valparaiso University
sustainenergy@valpo.edu

Tyler Kuss
tyler.kuss@valpo.edu
219-333-7553

Focus of Case study:

The Valparaiso University Office of Sustainability rolled out a program to all Residence Halls, giving each room a recycling container.

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

During the spring semester of 2023, a [pilot program](#) was introduced in Brandt Hall (a first year residence hall) that provided students with small recycling containers for their rooms. During this program, there was a 78% increase in the amount of recycling produced within 5 weeks. Due to the success of this program, the Office of Sustainability collaborated with Residential Life to put over 800 recycling containers in all residence halls rooms prior to the 2023-24 school year. This program was highly successful and will continue to be maintained in future years.

Planning steps & timeline to implement:

- Spring 2022- A campus wide waste audit was conducted. One key finding was the extremely low recycling rate in residence halls. Most students only recycled large items that didn't fit in their trash bags, such as cardboard boxes.
- Spring 2023- A pilot program was introduced in Brandt hall, providing students with recycling containers for their rooms upon request.
- Spring/Summer 2023- Due to the success of the pilot program, the Office of Sustainability obtained funding and purchased recycling containers for student rooms
- Summer 2023- The university received the recycling containers. Decals were applied to the containers and they were distributed to residence hall rooms.
- Fall 2023- Students moved in and began using the containers.
- Spring 2024- The Campus Race to Zero Waste Competition begins, the volume of trash/recycling is tracked for 8 weeks.
- Summer 2024- Building Services cleans student rooms and the state of bins are assessed after one year of use.

Resources and stakeholders involved:

- Donors (faculty, staff, and community members), as well as funds from the Sustainability account helped to pay for the recycling containers.
- Residential Life and Building Services helped to distribute the containers. These groups also helped to clean the containers at the end of the year and distribute replacements to any rooms that had a missing or damaged container.

Describe the Results of this campaign component:**General results:**

- The recycling totes/dumpsters at residence halls became much less contaminated, and the recycling rate increased. Before this program, many students would throw their trash bags into any container without sorting.
- Awareness surrounding recycling increased, more students were informed on how to properly recycle. The inclusion of the label on the bins allowed students to see exactly what you can recycle and scan a QR code if they wanted more information.
- Most students did a good job of keeping their containers clean and using them for recyclable items. A \$25 replacement fee served as an incentive for students to take care of their containers. A small amount of containers did need to be replaced, but the replacement fees easily covered this cost.

Specific measurable impact:

- Within 8 weeks during the Campus Race to Zero Waste Competition, there was a 60% increase (from the previous year) in recycling at Guild-Memorial Hall. Other residence halls had different occupancy levels from previous years, and/or shared dumpsters with other buildings, so accurate data could not be obtained. However the Office of Sustainability team visually observed large increases in the recycling rate at all buildings.

What would you do differently in the future?

This year (2024-25) plastic film collection bins will be added in all Residence Hall trash rooms or dumpster areas. This will enable students to empty out any bagged recycling and properly dispose of the bags. These containers will have a QR code which allows students and staff to request a pick-up of plastic film when full.

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

Every campus is different, so try out a program in one building or floor and then expand from there. The most important thing is communicating with students on how to use the containers, what is accepted, etc. If bins are just left in the room with no label or explanation, then many students will just use them as a trash can.

Photos and Graphics:



Recycling containers that were distributed to students.



A typical trash/recycling room setup in a Residence Hall.



A plastic film collection container (being implemented during the 2024-25 school year)



Hall: Room:

A recycling bin is provided in each residence room. Bins must be left in the room at year's end to avoid a replacement fee. \$25 replacement cost, \$20 excessive cleaning



The decal applied to Residence Hall room recycling containers.

RECYCLE	LANDFILL	PLASTIC FILM
Paper & Cardboard Rigid Plastic Containers Cartons & Paper Cups Metal Glass For more information, visit mydisposal.com, or scan here VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY Office of Sustainability	Plastic Bags, Film & Wrappers Food Soiled Paper Straws & Utensils Foam, Black Plastic & Plastic Everything Else That isn't recyclable, reusable, or electronic VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY Office of Sustainability	Shipping Products Food Packaging Product & Pallet Wrap Plastic Bags Drop off plastic film to the Student Mail Center, or leave in campus mail pick up locations. - Please do NOT place plastic film in campus mixed recycling containers. - Plastic film needs to be put into transparent bags (no black trash bags). - Turn bags inside to make sure they are free of receipts, food, etc. - For more info, visit nextrex.com NO FOOD OR LIQUID NO RIGID PLASTICS NO WRAPPERS OR CHIP BAGS

Signage displayed on campus waste receptacles.