



University of California, Irvine 2026 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

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Focus of Case study:

UC Irvine's Move Out Donation Drive diverts over 40,000 pounds of waste, works toward their sustainability goals, and serves the on- and off-campus communities.

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

UC Irvine's Move Out Donation Drive (MODD) is an annual program hosted by UCI Student Housing Sustainability to divert usable goods from landfills, support community partners, and educate students on sustainable practices. When students move out of housing communities, they leave behind thousands of pounds of clothing, household items, and food for various reasons. MODD works to capture and divert items from the landfill, helping meet UCI's zero waste goals by redirecting donations to the local and on-campus community. The Housing Sustainability team has worked to embed this program into the learning goals of the housing department, encouraging long-term sustainability engagement from residents. Consistent communication and mutual support with on- and off-campus stakeholders have ensured the success of this signature program year after year.

Though Move Out takes place in June, coordination begins as early as February; Student Housing Sustainability coordinates with 3 off-campus donation partners, 2 on-campus donation partners, and various units within Student Housing such as residential living, services, and operations teams. In weeks leading up to Move Out, residents of undergraduate on-campus residential communities were encouraged to donate nonperishable food to bins within their halls, and clothing and household goods to large outdoor bins serviced by Goodwill OC and One World. Residents of one specific second-year housing community were able to donate perishables in their

kitchen fridges, as a meal plan is not required for these residents. The location of donation bins in proximity to students' living arrangements and common study spaces was crucial in building awareness and accessibility of the program. A team of seven student staff- six of which are temporary MODD Attendants- set up these bins in 110 buildings, performed daily checks, managed overflow during the collection period, and helped sort and prep items for pickup by donation partners. The student staff also led four tabling events in two residential communities to raise awareness of MODD and educate students on waste diversion.

UCI Students continue to express a need for more accessible donation locations as well as a desire for a more circular donation drive. With this feedback in mind, Student Housing Sustainability expanded the program in June 2026 to provide 5 locations for all campus community members to donate clothing and nonperishable food items. The Sustainability Resource Center was also added as a new donation partner to ensure donated items stay on campus, available to new and continuing UCI students.

Planning steps & timeline to implement:

February:

- Draft or update program Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), schedules, task checklists
- Connect with donation partners: Goodwill OC, One world, UCI Basic Needs Center, UCI Sustainability Resource Center, Mary's Kitchen

March-April:

- Hire additional student staff to be employed during Move Out season (April-June)

May-June:

- Host trainings for student attendants and volunteers and create schedule for daily tasks and shifts
- Order cardboard boxes for nonperishable food and clothing donations and food bags for perishable donations
- Send updated schedule and maps to off-campus partners to communicate bin locations in housing communities
- Create marketing materials including outreach flyers, newsletters, website updates, and bin labels
- May 18-29: outreach tabling events outside dining halls
- 3 Weeks before Move Out:
 - Goodwill and One World drop off outdoor bins in residential communities
 - Student staff deploy donation boxes in individual residential halls and central campus locations
- Student staff perform daily bin checks leading up to Move Out Day, managing potential overflow
- Informational resources and trainings are given to Student Housing professional and student staff to ensure involvement across units

Resident Move Out Day

- Student Attendants and Food Recovery Network volunteers capture and sort perishable food donations and transport nonperishable donation bins to a central location for pickup
- In the following days, the UCI Basic Needs Center picks up nonperishable food donations, FRN volunteers deliver perishable food donations, student staff deliver clothing donations to the Sustainability Resource Center, and Goodwill and OneWorld pick up additional outdoor donation bins.

- Student Housing Sustainability keeps close communication with all donation partners to collect total weight diverted

Resources and stakeholders involved:

Budgeted Needs: hiring additional student staff at an appropriate hourly rate, purchasing donation boxes, bags, supplies such as tape, scissors, box cutters. Providing food for additional shifts after Move Out, providing resources for Move Out Day such as sunscreen, electrolytes, gloves, hand sanitizer, etc.

Staffing Needs: UCI Housing Sustainability's Undergraduate Program Student Coordinator has the responsibility of coordinating MODD, supervised by the Sustainability Program Coordinator. In addition to the six hired MODD staff, volunteers from the student-run Food Recovery Network Chapter manage perishable food donations, assisting with sorting and transporting donations to their partner, Mary's Kitchen Pantry Orange, CA.

On-campus Stakeholders: UCI Student Housing, Sustainability Resource Center, Basic Needs Center, Food Recovery Network, Cross-Cultural Center, Student Center, Division of Career Pathways, School of Business, and the School of Earth System Science.

Off-campus Stakeholders: Goodwill of Orange County, One World Clothing and Shoes, and Mary's Kitchen Pantry Orange, CA.

Results of this campaign component:

General results

- Chosen to present program as a case study at the [WACUHO Annual Conference and Expo](#) in March 2026
- In previous years, program has received recognition and awards from UCI divisions for its impact.

Specific measurable impact figures

Grand total donations pending (Our team received over 45,000 pounds in June 2025, we expect a similar number this year as we wait for off-campus partner totals)

- 3366 lbs of nonperishable food donated to UCI Basic Needs Center
- 650 lbs of perishable food donated to Mary's Kitchen Pantry Orange, CA
- Awaiting Goodwill OC lbs
- Awaiting One World lbs
- Arroyo Vista: 42 buildings with 1,046 residents engaged
- Middle Earth: 26 buildings with 2,424 residents engaged
- Mesa Court: 32 buildings with 3,060 residents engaged

What would you do differently in the future?

1. Throughout the year, our team assesses and looks for ways to improve or expand the program. One point of improvement is streamlining communication with housing staff earlier in the academic year, especially regarding perishable food collection processes in the Arroyo Vista housing community.
2. Our team also plans to assess the benefits and setbacks of food and clothing box locations at centralized campus front desks to ensure we're using time and efforts efficiently leading up to Move Out.

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

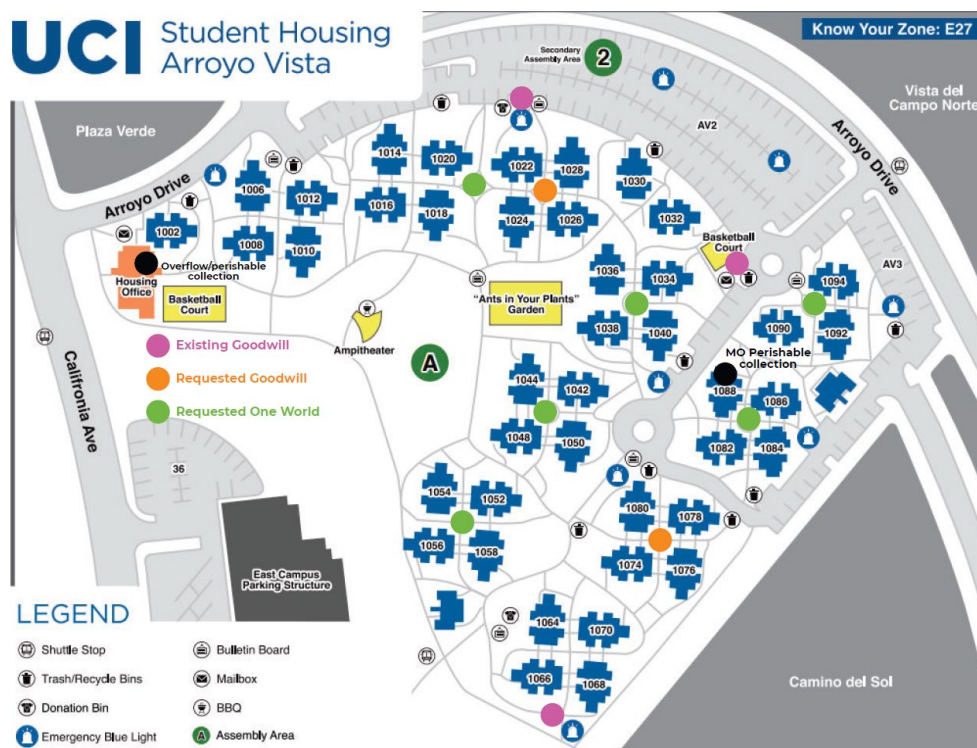
1. Create documents that can be reused yearly to ensure that the program is run similarly each year. Our team drafts and updates a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), work schedule, calendar, task checklists, email templates, marketing templates, and more to ensure that we are checking all of our boxes as we approach Move Out each year.
2. Keep an open line of communication with stakeholders to make collection and laborious tasks easier. This program has become a prominent initiative within the UCI Student Housing department, meaning professional and student staff are knowledgeable about and have a hand in the effort, and MODD attendants' presence and tasks are built into department-wide planning for Move Out Day. This helps to embed the program into general Move Out procedures, as opposed to operating separately.
3. Start small! Depending on the size of your campus and resident populations, consider soft launching a small donation program with one donation partner and small collection team. Assess your collection process and implement improvements the next year. Work to prioritize learning outcomes among your residents as you develop the program.

Photos and graphics

All digital resources created by the UCI Housing Sustainability team.



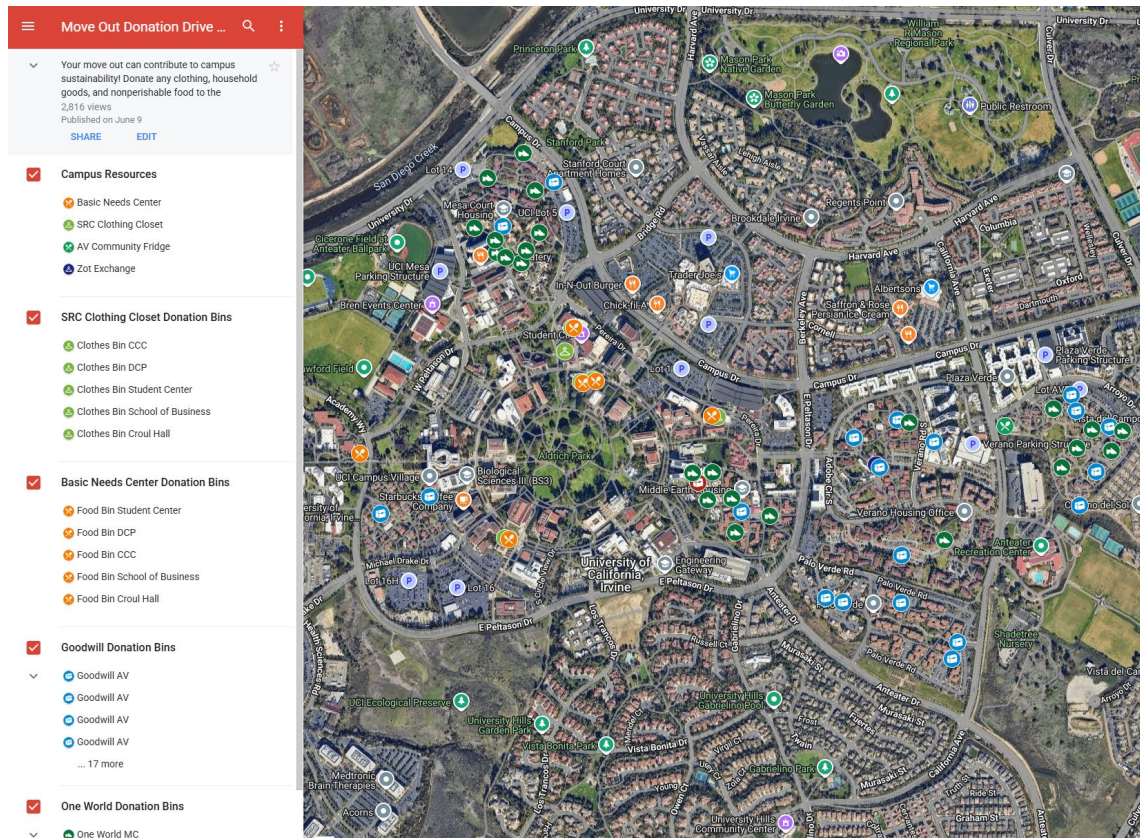
General Move Out Donation Drive Flyer: used at tabling events, posted around campus, and given to on-campus donation partners.



Marked Map: sent to off-campus partners for guidance during outdoor bin drop-offs.



Social Media Post: provides partner-specific donation tips leading up to Move Out.



Interactive Google Map: provides all labeled donation locations across campus with descriptions of accepted items (excluding nonperishable bins in every residential hall).



Students posing with donation bins in and around resident halls.



Full nonperishable food donation bins (left) and student volunteer transporting donated items to a central freezer (right).