



UW-Stout Polytechnic

2026 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

Contact Info:

Kadi Wright, Sustainability Manager, UW-Stout Polytechnic (formerly UW-Stout), wrightk@uwstout.edu, (715) 232-5254

Focus of Case Study:

This case study examines how Campus Race to Zero Waste supports sustainability education, waste reduction, and continuous improvement at UW-Stout Polytechnic.

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

UW-Stout Polytechnic uses the Campus Race to Zero Waste competition as a key time to coordinate campus-wide waste reduction efforts and initiatives. The Sustainability Office leads most of these efforts in coordination with the Waste Reduction Work Group and other campus partners. The goal is to engage the campus community and raise awareness of Campus Race to Zero Waste, as well as ongoing waste reduction and sustainability efforts throughout the year.

• Events:

- The Waste-Free Jamboree featured campus partners including University Housing, Surplus, Involvement Center, Safety and Risk Management, Facilities Management, Career Services, Sustainability Office, Sustainability Minor, Packaging Program, Plastics Engineering Program, University Dining Services, and the Waste Reduction Work Group. Through educational materials and interactive activities, attendees learned about campus sustainability initiatives and ways to reduce waste. This event occurred in January as students returned to campus and the competition was just about to kick off.
- During the competition, a faculty and staff training session on waste reduction was held as part of a broader campus education effort. Participants learned about Stout's recycling and composting programs, involvement in Campus Race to Zero Waste, the Waste Reduction Work Group, and ways to support campus sustainability initiatives.

- **Posters:** Four different posters were used throughout this year's competition. Each featured a unique message while directing the campus community back to our webpage to learn more. The designs were displayed across campus to increase visibility and engagement.

- **Display Case:** A display case design was created for the student center outside the ballrooms and Great Hall, which are popular event spaces for both campus and community gatherings. The display helped promote the competition and raise awareness about the university's participation.
- **Social Media:** During the competition, several Instagram posts were shared to promote waste reduction topics, including reusable water bottles, campus PLA initiatives, reusable school supplies, and reducing plastic use during spring break.
- **Newsletter:** We utilized Campus Race to Zero Waste to launch our new Sustainable Stout newsletter, which shares updates, initiatives, achievements, and opportunities to our campus sustainability community. The first edition recapped our Waste-Free Jamboree event while also highlighting our 2025 win and year-round waste reduction efforts across campus.
- **Webpage:** An internal webpage was created to collect educational materials in one place, making it easier to share information and communicate efforts across campus.

Planning steps & timeline to implement

Many of our initiatives were redeveloped and revamped several years ago. Since then, we have continued to build on that foundation each year. For some items, we make only minor updates, while for others, we create entirely new materials with fresh ideas and approaches. We aim to ensure the different items work together cohesively while still remaining unique and visually engaging.

- **Events**

- Waste-Free Jamboree: The Sustainability Office led planning efforts with support from the Waste Reduction Work Group. Planning began about two months before the event, with securing a room and date as the top priority since campus event spaces fill up quickly. After that, both groups worked together to identify campus partners and send invitations. Invites were distributed about a month before the event, followed by reminder communications leading up to the event. Booths at the event and their activities included:
 - University Housing: Residence hall room composting sign up and updated signage
 - Surplus: Information on Surplus Reclaim Days, Surplus Sales, and what Surplus accepts
 - Involvement Center: Waste free pledges and photo booth
 - Safety and Risk Management: Hazardous Waste and Recycling Program
 - Facilities Management: Updated waste signage and waste trivia
 - Career Services: Reducing clothing waste and Blaze's Professional Closet
 - Sustainability Office: General sustainability information and Campus Race to Zero Waste info
 - Sustainability Minor: Recycling System Thinking
 - Packaging Program: Packaging examples and more about the major
 - Plastics Engineering Program: Class research and their findings

- University Dining Services: Green To Go containers, waste reduction in dining facilities, and food rescuing
 - Waste Reduction Work Group: mini trash, recycling, and compost contamination audits
- Faculty and Staff Training Session: The waste reduction faculty and staff training session has been held for many years and is intentionally scheduled during the Campus Race to Zero Waste competition. The session is coordinated through the HR department, and the accompanying PowerPoint is updated annually as needed. This year, a short waste audit and sorting exercise was developed the week before the session to help engage participants and provide a more hands-on learning experience.
- **Posters:** Student employees in the Sustainability Office updated the posters during winter break. If major changes were suggested, students revised the designs and gathered feedback from the entire office before finalizing materials. The posters were then displayed across campus throughout February & March.
- **Display Case:** Student employees in the Sustainability Office designed a display case during winter break, including creating the materials and reserving the space. The display was installed in February and remained up for two weeks in accordance with campus display case reservation policies.
- **Social Media:** Post ideas were discussed within the Sustainability Office, and photos were taken in January. Images were edited as needed and captions were created. Posts were then shared throughout the competition.
- **Newsletter:** Following the well-received Waste-Free Jamboree and UW-Stout Polytechnic's 2025 win, we used this momentum to launch the campus sustainability newsletter. The first edition was created and published in early March.
- **Webpage:** The webpage was created a couple of years ago and is updated annually as new materials are developed, such as posters and events.

Resources and stakeholders involved

Key people involved included the Sustainability Office, the Waste Reduction Work Group, and the partners listed above through the Waste-Free Jamboree event. The planning steps & timeline to implement provides an overview of who assisted in what areas.

Results of this campaign component

- These efforts helped increase awareness of waste reduction initiatives and Stout's participation in Campus Race to Zero Waste across campus. By using a mix of events, trainings, posters, social media, newsletters, and a centralized webpage, we were able to connect with students, faculty, staff, and visitors in a variety of ways throughout the competition.
- The Waste-Free Jamboree and faculty/staff training sessions gave participants the opportunity to learn more about campus sustainability efforts within different departments including academic programs, ask questions, and explore simple ways they could reduce waste in their everyday lives. The Waste-Free

Jamboree engaged around 75 participants, including attendees and campus partners hosting booths and tables.

- Posters and social media posts helped keep the competition visible across campus and encouraged continued engagement throughout the semester.
- The launch of the Sustainable Stout newsletter and the creation of the internal webpage also helped strengthen communication around sustainability efforts beyond the competition itself. Together, these initiatives helped build stronger campus engagement, increased visibility of ongoing waste reduction work, and supported a growing culture of sustainability at Stout.
- University of Wisconsin-Stout Polytechnic was named the 2026 Campus Race to Zero Waste (CR2ZW) winner in the Per Capita Recycling Medium Campus category for the second year in a row!

What would you do differently in the future?

- In the future, we would move the Waste Free Jamboree later in the semester. This year, the event took place during the first week of classes and just before the competition, which was already a very busy time on campus. We believe the timing impacted attendance and limited who was able to participate.
- In future years, we would like to introduce a friendly campus-wide competition to further engage students, faculty, and staff in sustainability efforts. This could help increase participation and make waste reduction initiatives more interactive and visible across campus.

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

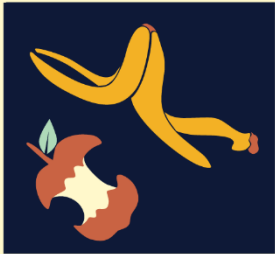
- Waste reduction is a campus-wide effort, involve as many departments, offices, and individuals as possible. The more people engaged in the effort, the more opportunities there are for education, collaboration, and creating a larger campus impact.
- Let students, with guidance from campus stakeholders, lead the creation of marketing and educational materials. They understand what will resonate with their peers and are often the most effective at capturing attention and encouraging engagement. In a world filled with information overload, finding creative ways to stand out and connect with students is essential.
- The Waste-Free Jamboree or similar efforts cannot be a stand-alone effort. Waste reduction is a year-round effort that relies on regular events, ongoing conversations with staff and stakeholders, and routine waste audits to measure progress, identify new opportunities, and address concerns as they arise. Because the waste and recycling industry is constantly changing through shifts in regulations, contamination standards, hauling practices, and market conditions, continuous evaluation and communication are essential for long term success.

Photos and graphics – QR codes have been boxed out as many lead to internal sites.



QR CODE

WASTE-FREE JAMBOREE

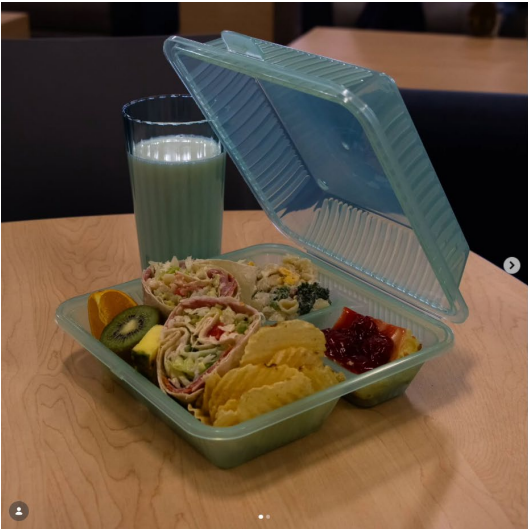


January 27th
10 AM – 2 PM
MSC Great Hall

Questions? Contact the sustainability office at: sustainability@uwstout.edu



Waste-Free Jamboree Event Digital Signage; Designed by Student Sustainability Specialist Naomi O’Brien (Graphic Design and Interactive Media Major)



sustainablestout

sustainablestout Going green for the 17th and all year long with the Green-To-Go Program! 🌱

Living on campus means you’re already part of the Green-To-Go Program!

Just ask for a green-to-go box in the dining halls, enjoy your entrée wherever you like, and then return the box (after a quick rinse) to the dish room when you’re done.

Less waste, same meal price, and a greener campus.

13w

View insights Boost post

👍🗨️🔄🔖

👤👤👤 Liked by uwstoutadmissions and 11 others

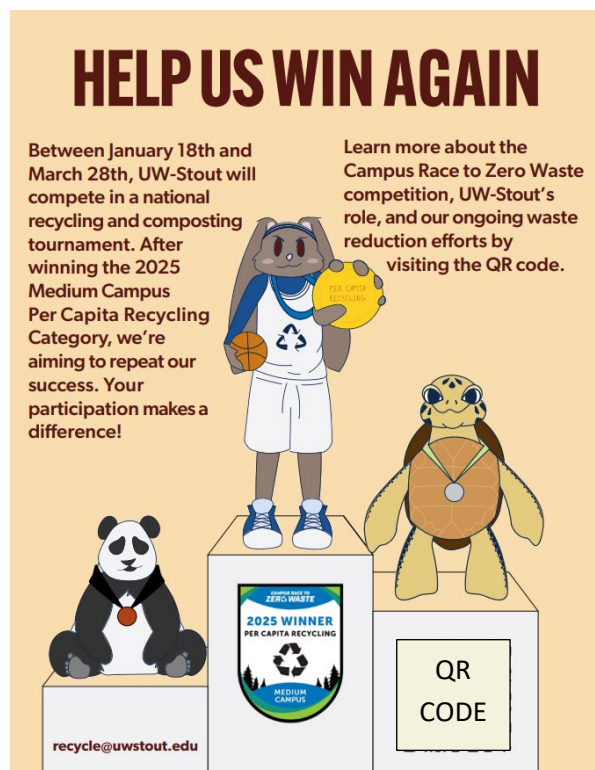
March 17

😊 Add a comment... Post

Green-To-Go Program Social Media Post, photo and caption provided by UW-Stout Polytechnic Dining Services



Slam Dunk Poster; Designed by Student Sustainability Specialist Maxwell Stroup (Environmental Science Major)



Help Us Win Again Poster; Designed by Student Sustainability Specialist Saige Madland (Biochemistry & Molecular Biology Major)