

2018 RecycleMania Case Study Competition

Education & Awareness Campaign

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

Sam Hunt
Recycling Student Team Leader
University of Virginia
Office for Sustainability
P.O. Box 400726 | 575 Alderman Road
Charlottesville, VA 22904
sustainability@virginia.edu
(434) 297-7964

2. Focus of Case study

Educate UVA community about importance of reducing all food-associated waste by avoiding single-use plastics, composting uneaten food, and promoting use of reusable bags and containers.

3. Detailed description of campaign component:

This campaign was an educational effort to help students understand food waste and ways to reduce their food waste at UVA. The goal was to normalize reusable container use through visual imagery via social media, educational events, and positive incentives such as contests. In order to encourage members of the University community to ditch the convenience of single-use plastics, we focused on the environmental consequences and waste minimization results.

Prior to the start of the campaign, the Recycling Team at UVA's Office for Sustainability sent emails to various student groups to spread awareness about the upcoming events for Recyclemania. We kicked off the campaign with pledging events for students to pick one food waste related behavior to change. On Valentine's Day we handed out notes with a green pickup line and a green eating tip, plus Hershey kisses to educate that aluminum foil is recyclable. We focused on waste minimization and composting at the Basketball GameDay Recycling Challenge. For two days we held a plastic-bag take back where we collected single-use bags to recycle, gave out reusable grocery bags, and entered those who participated into a raffle. We collaborated with a different green club for #skipthestraw pledging and gave out reusable straws too. Our last event was a zero waste celebration where we spoke with a UVA Alumnus to hear about the start of composting at UVA and recapped the zero waste efforts throughout the year, as well as looking to the future of zero waste at UVA. We asked all attendees to bring their own containers and utensils to limit waste. For all events, we made Facebook events and Instagram posts to educate students through visual platforms, using #dontbetrashy to brand and unite all of our programming. We also handed out "Don't Be Trashy" stickers (see graphic in section 9) at all events to increase UVA awareness of our Recyclemania goal.

4. Planning steps & timeline to implement:

-The Recycling Team wrote a plan for the campaign including our goal, target audiences for each event, the promotion plan, measurement method and a tentative timeline.

- We researched various facts about food related waste, including single-use plastics, packaging, and food scraps.
- We made social media graphics to illustrate the negative environmental consequences of single-use food items.
- We coordinated with a popular green club on campus to engage a wider student audience via straw pledging.
- We reserved a table and a tabling space in diverse locations around grounds for 8 weeks.
- We focused on useful giveaways, opting to enter students into a raffle (which we created a document for) for a set of reusable food items rather than giving away a lot of plastics that would not be used in the long run.
- We created multiple Facebook events to advertise our food-waste events like tabling, pledging, take backs, and celebrations, and occasionally posted facts about food-related waste.

5. Resources and stakeholders involved

This was a low-budget campaign. Our only purchases were one 25-dollar prize from the UVA Bookstore was awarded to the plastic bag-takeback raffle winner and the “Don’t be Trashy” stickers we handed out at events. Food was donated from UVA Green Dining for our Zero Waste Celebration.

McIntire Recycling Center was instrumental in our Plastic Bag Take-Back; we took all the plastic bags we gathered from students to their baling facility, and they were then shipped to a processing plant in Winchester to be made into TREX deck boards. Throughout Recyclemania we engaged with UVA students at large through the UVA Office for Sustainability and in particular with the traditionally “green” student group the Sustainability Advocates.

A number of stakeholders were involved in GameDay Recycling Challenge. UVA Recycling set up bins in the stadium and manually sorted through all the waste generated at the basketball game on the next day to ensure that as many compostables and recyclables as possible were recovered and dealt with properly. The Prichard Staff that works with UVA Athletics was also involved with sweeping the bowl and recovering recyclables after the game ended, so we were able to educate them about waste diversion. Through GameDay Challenge we were also able to engage with the broader Charlottesville community and other UVA sports fans to raise their awareness about food waste.

6. Describe the Results of this campaign component

General Results: Throughout Recyclemania we focused on educating UVA students and the Charlottesville Community about how to reduce their personal waste. Our goal was to serve not only the students already interested in sustainability but also to reach beyond this community. We accomplished this by hosting a variety of events each tailored to specific audiences. These ten events consisted of three tabling sessions for RecycleMania pledges, one Valentine’s Day tabling session, GameDay Recycling Challenge, a Zero Waste Celebration and three Plastic Bag Take-Backs. For RecycleMania we tabled in multiple high traffic areas. If students had trouble determining what they wanted to pledge we had a variety of suggestions. These suggestions included things such as recycling your plastic water bottle or buying a reusable water bottle. In the end, we had over over 40 pledges. For the Valentine’s Day tabling event we handed out over 200 “green tip” valentines printed on recycled and scrap paper. At GameDay Recycling Challenge UVA diverted 87% of the waste with the help of 70 student volunteers. The Zero Waste Celebration was attended by thirty students. At our Plastic Bag Take-Back over 35 students brought in plastic bags. With their participation we were able to recycle over 5,000 plastic bags. Ultimately, we recognize that everyone is at a different place in their sustainability journey. Through focused educational events and engagement opportunities we helped show fellow students that we each have a way that we can contribute and become more sustainable no matter where you are in your personal sustainability journey.

7. What would you do differently in the future?

Although our communication and planning improved this year - two goals after UVA's 2017 Recyclemania campaign - we still have room for improvement. Our social media campaign was effective in promoting events but was not used as an additional educational tool. For example, at our Plastic Bag Take-Back the majority of students heard about the event through facebook, but we did not include any information about the importance of reducing our plastic bag usage. Additionally, there is an opportunity on instagram, facebook and snapchat to post brief, yet informative videos. These videos could have included a zero waste life hack or an instructional video about how to properly break down a coffee cup. For next year's campaign it will be important to utilize social media as a medium for education and raising awareness.

An improvement of this year's campaign was having a unifying brand of "Don't Be Trashy." Having this unifying brand was an important step but looking into next year there are opportunities to improve our branding. Although we passed out 200 "Don't Be Trashy" stickers to students around Grounds, the tabling events were still advertised as standalone events. Proper planning at the beginning of the semester could help improve this. This year we planned and added events throughout the eight weeks. If the schedule of events was set at the beginning of Recyclemania we could promote a calendar of Recyclemania events where the dates, times and descriptions of events are all available in one place under the unified brand. Overall using social media to our advantage to educate students and promoting Recyclemania events underneath the unified brand will help broaden our impact.

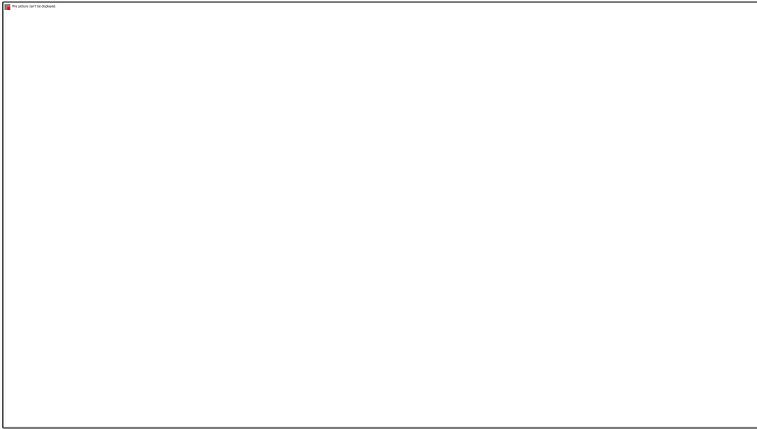
8. What advice would you give to another college that wanted to do a similar effort?

We would first of all advise other college students to start brainstorming their ideas for a behavior change campaign in the fall semester. Our team set aside an hour in the middle of the falls semester to simply brainstorm our ideas for RecycleMania and this proved very helpful. After this initial meeting, we would suggest to start planning details for events in the fall and winter before the spring semester begins.

We would also recommend narrowing their focus of the campaign. Although we felt we had narrowed our campaign enough by just focusing on waste associated with purchasing, preparing, and storing food, we felt that our campaign did not have a clear image. We had many great events that educated UVA students about many aspects of waste reduction, but we felt students might not have seen the connection between our separate events. This also made our campaign slightly more difficult to measure. Better results might be obtained if we had focused on one aspect of waste associated with food, for example plastic sandwich bags or grocery bags.

We would also advise students to more frequently share results with the public. For example, we did not frequently post on social media about how many giveaways we had done or how many pledges we had obtained. It has been proved that people are more likely to engage in a behavior if they hear that many others are also doing it.

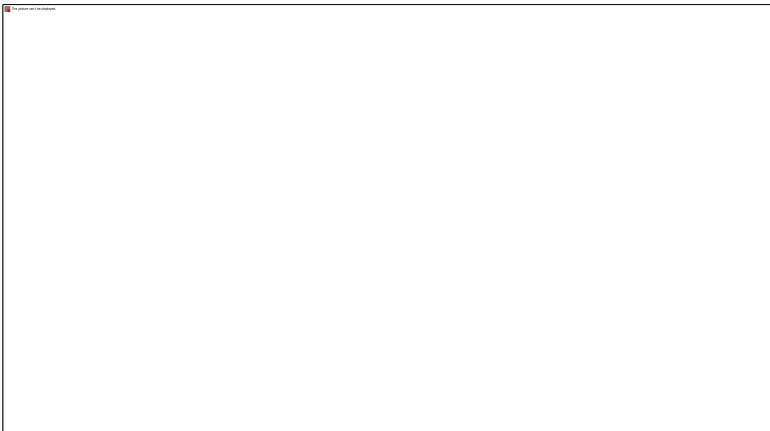
9. Photos and Graphics



Facebook Banner for the Plastic Bag Take Back



UVA Student Employees working the Plastic Bag Take Back



Facebook Banner for the Zero Waste Celebration



UVA Students enjoying the Zero Waste Celebration



UVA student with her new glass straw!!