



University of North Texas 2020 RecycleMania Case Study

1. Contact info

Department: We Mean Green Fund

School: University of North Texas

Email: wemeangreenfund@unt.edu

Phone: 940.369.8302

Website: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/we-mean-green-fund/programs/recyclemania>

2. Focus of Case study

UNT adopted an education and awareness campaign called “**Eight R's of Reducing Waste**” which featured “**Rethink, Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Refurbish, Repurpose, and Recycle**” as themes.

3. Detailed description of campaign component:

Rather than focusing only on increasing recycling efforts on campus, we identified a strategic order (the “**8 R's of Reducing Waste**”) in which we could replace our waste creation habits with resourceful habits before choosing to toss something into the trash or recycling bin. Each week of RecycleMania featured social media challenges, waste reduction tips, and events themed around the “R” of the week.

During week one, we encouraged UNT to “**Rethink** their choices” through an invitation to a zero waste lunch event challenging everyone to think twice about their assumptions regarding zero waste and identify ways of making it more accessible and attainable.

Week two highlighted ways to “**Refuse** single-use items” and offered a community service event, the UNT Campus Litter Cleanup. The cleanup focused on the fact that many single-use items end up as litter.

To motivate people to “**Reduce** their consumption” and understand where their waste goes after the bin, we hosted three recycling facility tours during week three to teach about correct city and campus recycling procedures.

Week four embodied “**Reuse** what you can” as its theme and we held a UNT Merchandise Swap where the UNT community traded their gently used UNT branded items with each other and departments contributed unused swag for people to take home.

During week five, we hosted a Bike Repair Fair to empower our community to “**Repair** before they replace.”

Week six brought spring break and a social media highlight of “**Refurbishing** old stuff” where we featured examples of how to bring new life to old items so they don’t end up in the landfill.

Events for weeks seven (“**Repurpose** items creatively”) and eight (“**Recycle** Right”) did not occur due to COVID-19. We hoped to launch a #WasteJarUNT Challenge encouraging people to track their trash in a repurposed jar and reflect mindfully on their consumption habits. We also intended to host a public recycling audit to investigate if campus recycling receptacles are used appropriately.

Throughout the competition, we held a Plastic Bag Recycling Competition wherein academic classes, staff, and faculty competed to recycle the most plastic bags weekly at a central drop-off station.

4. Planning steps & timeline to implement:

- OCTOBER
 - Created a RecycleMania Student Planning Committee application form and accepted candidates to serve as ambassadors.
 - Organized ideas for RecycleMania weekly themes and events with student leadership.
- NOVEMBER
 - Reached out to campus and community stakeholders to plan potential event partnerships.
 - Furthered event planning and met with the student committee to discuss social media plans.
- DECEMBER

- Contacted the City of Denton Sustainability Education Coordinator and UNT Facilities Department to set up recycling facility tour times and dates, and arranged a meeting location for attendees; created a map for attendees to know where to meet. Also arranged for a subsequent tour of the Chemical Reuse Store on the premises of the city recycling facility.
- Met with UNT Transportation staff to discuss the Bike Repair Fair idea and arranged the date, time, location, and student point of contact for the event.
- Created a plan for the RecycleMania “Plastic Bag Recycling” Competition and contacted a local grocer to accept our recycled bags weekly after we counted bags.
- JANUARY
 - Reached out to UNT Union representatives to form a facilities partnership to weigh the recycling and trash gathered at the Campus Litter Cleanup event.
 - Partnered with Keep Denton Beautiful to identify litter cleanup routes near campus that needed attention and compiled educational event materials such as a Litter Cleanup Scavenger Hunt Bingo Card.
 - Designed a wall decal and bin decals for the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition station.
 - Purchased reusable participation incentive swag items.
 - Reserved campus rooms and spaces for events.
 - Ordered zero waste catering snacks for events.
 - Presented to classes about RecycleMania and ways to get involved.
 - Began collecting jars for the March repurpose event.
 - Planned recycling audit logistics and educational opportunities.
 - Coordinated guest speaker to talk about proper recycling techniques at the repurpose event.
- FEBRUARY
 - Finalized RecycleMania website and launched digital campus signage.
 - Installed wall decal and collection bin signage in the UNT Union for the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition station.
 - Collected examples of accessible zero waste tools and created a PowerPoint presentation for the Zero Waste Lunch event to facilitate thoughtful discussion.
 - Set up Sign-up Genius volunteer slots for people to reserve their spot on a Campus Litter Cleanup route and corresponded with volunteers about cleanup expectations and supplies.
 - Facilitated check in and supply distribution logistics for Campus Litter Cleanup volunteers.

- Created Sign-Up Genius tour reservations for the two UNT recycling facility tours and the city recycling facility tour.
- Organized merch swap donations from UNT departments and volunteers to prepare for the swap event.
- Awarded participation incentives to social media challenge winners.
- Recognized weekly Plastic Bag Recycling Competition winners on social media.
- MARCH
 - Worked with another UNT department to utilize remaining donated items from the UNT Merch Swap for UNT staff appreciation baskets.
 - Partnered with UNT Transportation Services at the UNT Bike Repair Fair to provide attending students, staff, and faculty with simple bike repairs and offer bike repair kits and “big-wheel” races around the UNT Library Mall.
 - Created social media posts about refurbished projects for spring break.
 - Awarded participation incentives to social media challenge winners.
 - Recognized weekly Plastic Bag Recycling Competition winners on social media.

5. Resources and stakeholders involved

The student-majority We Mean Green Fund Committee approved funding for UNT to participate in the national RecycleMania competition again in the amount of \$1,000.

The budget included funding for: event room reservations, event food and supplies, social media participation incentives (reusable UNT swag items such as totes, mugs, and bottles), digital advertising on campus, and a wall decal and bin labels for the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition drop-off station.

UNT’s RecycleMania campaign is co-hosted by the UNT We Mean Green Fund, UNT Facilities Department, and the RecycleMania Student Planning Committee. Additional partners include the University Union, UNT Transportation Services, the UNT Police Department, various UNT professors, Keep Denton Beautiful Inc., the City of Denton Sustainability Department, local bike shops, and student volunteers.

A student leader on the RecycleMania Student Planning Committee developed the marketing designs for our educational campaign. Campus departments and off-campus partners collaborated with us to host events that were relevant to their mission.

6. Describe the Results of this campaign component

General:

RecycleMania at UNT and the “Eight R’s of Reducing Waste” were featured by a student news station called [NT Daily](#), various student journalists, and the [UNT Division of Student Affairs](#) through web [articles](#) and an InHouse newsletter to share information about upcoming events and encourage campus participation. During the first five weeks of the RecycleMania competition, over 5,500 plastic bags were diverted from the landfill through the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition!

Specific measurable impact figures:

- **Week 1**
 - *Three UNT journalism students, and one student news station, NT Daily, interviewed our RecycleMania graduate assistant following the zero waste event.*
 - *12 participants attended the zero waste event.*
 - *508 plastic bags were recycled through the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition.*
- **Week 2**
 - *58 people volunteered at the Campus Litter Cleanup event.*
 - *87 volunteer hours were contributed collectively.*
 - *94 lbs. of trash and 36.8 lbs. of recycling were picked up from streets surrounding campus, 130.8 lbs. total.*
 - *2045 plastic bags were recycled through the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition.*
- **Week 3**
 - *3 recycling facility tours were hosted.*
 - *42 participants attended the recycling facility tours.*
 - *3 student press interviews were conducted.*
 - *965 plastic bags were recycled through the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition.*
- **Week 4**
 - *1 student press interview was conducted at the UNT Merch Swap.*
 - *350+ participants attended the “UNT Merch Swap” event.*
 - *3851 UNT swag items were donated for rehomeing at the event.*
 - *2384 UNT swag items went to a new home during the event.*
 - *The remaining 1467 UNT swag items (mainly College of Music CDs/DVDs and Division of Student Affairs highlighters) were donated for another use, Staff Appreciation Month.*
 - *831 plastic bags were recycled through the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition.*
- **Week 5**
 - *1 student press interview was conducted by NT Daily about the Bike Repair Fair.*

- *100+ participants attended the Bike Repair Fair.*
- *Two local bike shops attended the event along with UNT PD which offered free bike locks and identity engravings on bikes.*
- *1178 plastic bags were recycled through the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition.*
- **Week 6: SPRING BREAK**
- **Week 7 and 8: CANCELLED DUE TO COVID-19**

7. What would you do differently in the future?

With student engagement at the core of this eight-week campaign, we initiated a RecycleMania Student Planning Committee; in the future, we'll open up applications to recruit student leaders for the committee much earlier in the fall. This will allow for more planning time before the spring semester begins. Having event and marketing materials set in advance will make for a more impactful effort. Creating an event schedule early on will allow student committee members to ensure their calendars can accommodate event set up, implementation, and cleanup duties.

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

Reach out to your local community and campus partners in the fall semester to expand the impact and collaboration potential for events and initiatives. The more groups involved, the greater diversity of engagement you are likely to experience.

During planning stages, create and pre-schedule social media content so that you can keep up with the campaign while it is in action. Our department is incredibly busy with other initiatives throughout the spring and our focus is diverted to many things at once including RecycleMania; we encourage taking photos, developing captions, and creating social media engagement strategies for each of the eight weeks well before RecycleMania begins.

9. Photos and Graphics



Image 1: During RecycleMania, the We Mean Green Fund hosted a Plastic Bag Recycling Competition wherein freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, grad students, and staff/academic competed weekly to recycle the most plastic bags at the drop-off station in the University Union. Photo Credit: UNT University Union. Signage designed by student Kayleigh Kowaleski.



Image 2. The UNT Chemistry Department gets competitive during the Plastic Bag Recycling Competition. Photo credit: UNT Chemistry Department

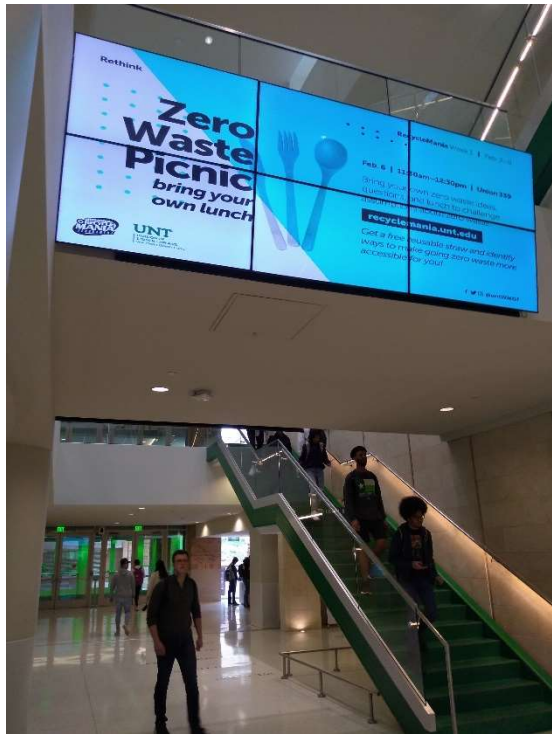


Image 3. RecycleMania event signage displayed digitally in the Student Union. Signage designed by student Kayleigh Kowaleski.

Image 4. Zero Waste Lunch Shindig students, staff, and faculty attend in person event.



Images 5 & 6. UNT student volunteers at the Campus Litter Cleanup event on Valentine's Day.



Reduce

RecycleMania Week 3 | Feb. 16–22

Recycling Tours

UNT and Denton Recycling Facilities



February 18 and 21

Learn how to recycle right and prevent recycling contamination.

Must RSVP: recyclemania.unt.edu

Ever wonder what happens to your recycling after it goes into the blue bin?



f t i @untWMGF

Images 7 & 8. UNT students, staff and faculty attending the UNT recycling facility tour.





Images 9-13: UNT Students, staff and faculty rehome gently used donated UNT swag items at the UNT Merch Swap.



Repair

RecycleMania Week 5 | March 1-7



March 5 | 10:30am-1:30pm | Union Circle

Join UNT Transportation Services, local bike shops, and the UNT Police Department for free bike swag, tips on basic repairs, and other fun activities!

recyclemania.unt.edu

Don't throw away that old bike!



f t i @untWGMF

Images 14 & 15: Student receives a secure bike lock from the UNT Police Department at the RecycleMania Bike Repair Fair.



Repurpose

RecycleMania Week 7 | March 15–21

#Waste JarUNT Challenge



March 16 | 11:00am–12:30pm | Union 339

Join Denton Sustainability Education Coordinator Vanessa Ellison to participate in the UNT Waste Jar Challenge.

recyclemania.unt.edu

Can't make the event? Join the social media challenge by tracking your trash in a jar and posting online with the tag #WasteJarUNT.



f t i @untWMGF

Images 16-18: Digital signage posted on building monitors to advertise upcoming events. Designed by student Kayleigh Kowaleski.

Recycle

RecycleMania Week 8 | March 22–28

Recycle Right on the Library Mall

March 26 | 10:30am–12:00pm | Library Mall

See how waste put in the wrong bin can impact an entire batch of recycled materials and learn how you can prevent recycling contamination.

recyclemania.unt.edu

Ever been confused about what you can and can't recycle? Come find out!



f t i @untWMGF

February 6

Zero Waste Picnic



bring your own lunch

11:30am–12:30pm
Union 339

February 14

Campus Litter Cleanup



with Keep Denton Beautiful

12:00pm–2:00pm
Union Circle

February 18

Denton Recycling Tour



carpooling highly encouraged

12:00pm–1:00pm
Must RSVP; space limited

February 21

UNT Recycling Tour



11:00am–12:00pm
12:30pm–1:30pm

Must RSVP; space limited

February 26

UNT Merch Swap



11:00am–1:00pm
Union 341

Donate today at Union 376

March 5

Bike Repair Fair



10:30am–1:30pm
Union Circle

March 16

#Waste JarUNT Challenge



11:00am–12:30pm
Union 339

March 26

Recycle Right



on the Library Mall
10:30am–12:00pm
Library Mall

recyclemania.unt.edu
f t i @untWMGF



Event Calendar



Plastic Bag Drop-Off
RecycleMania Competition
Union 1st Floor by the Corner Store

UNT DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
THE PEASE GREEN FUND