



2021 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study Competition

University of Michigan

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

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2. Focus of Case study

Engaging staff and students working and studying both on campus and remotely using weekly feedback, themes, challenges, and activities throughout the competition to encourage waste reducing behaviors.

3. Detailed description of campaign or effort:

The Office of Campus Sustainability (OCS) engages students, faculty, and staff during Campus Race to Zero Waste each year by holding an intra-campus "U-M Edition" building competition in tandem with the national competition. Building representatives register to compete with other campus buildings and receive weekly standings comparing building diversion rates. With many students and staff studying and working remotely this year, we needed additional ways for these campus community members to participate in the competition, even if they were not on campus. We developed a different waste reduction theme for each of the eight weeks of the competition, with corresponding waste reduction resources, suggested activities, challenges, and action items for each week. Participants had the option to sign up both as a building representative or as an individual. Each participant, whether on campus or off campus, received an email at the beginning of each week providing competition standings and information about that week's waste reduction theme and activities. All activities and suggested actions were specifically developed to be engaging and applicable regardless of where one is studying or working. For example, we kicked off the competition with a Know Where to Throw theme week. We provided resources for participants to learn how to properly recycle and compost on the U-M campus, and how to find this information if they were currently at home. By providing resources that encourage and foster waste reducing behaviors, we hope people will continue these when returning to campus, helping us to achieve our campus sustainability goals.

4. Planning steps & timeline to implement:

Fall 2020

- OCS began brainstorming strategies to engage the campus community, regardless of where they are currently studying or working. We decided to develop weekly themes and activities in addition to an intra-campus building competition.

- We connected with the OCS marketing and communications team and important campus partners and stakeholders for input and to determine what additional communications and promotional materials were needed.

Fall 2020/Winter 2021 (pre-competition)

- OCS developed promotional materials, including posters, digital signage, newsletters, weekly theme graphics, and social media posts. Weekly content was finalized.

Winter 2021 (during competition)

- OCS sent weekly communications to participants, including standings, suggested activities, printed posters, sign files, and weekly theme graphics for use on electronic displays and in department newsletters.

5. Resources and stakeholders involved

Resources

Budget - This included the cost to print posters (\$100, printed internally) and OCS staff time to develop theme weeks and corresponding promotional materials.

Stakeholders

Campus building facilities staff – Facilities staff have been crucial in engaging their building occupants and sharing weekly information.

Student Life - Our Student Life department includes Housing, Dining, eco-reps, and dedicated sustainability staff. This group was an instrumental partner in disseminating information to students and staff.

U-M Waste Management Services - This U-M department collects and tracks waste from all campus buildings. The data they provide allowed us to provide timely weekly building updates throughout the competition.

6. Describe the Results of this campaign component

a. General results

We were able to reach and engage a broad audience and provide waste reduction information, particularly to those living in on-campus housing. Key partners and campus contacts provided positive feedback and look forward to participating in future years. The competition attracted the attention of U-M's social media office and they shared our efforts on U-M's accounts.

b. Specific measurable impact figures, if applicable

The campus diversion rate during the 8 weeks of the competition was 12% higher as compared to the previous fiscal year's diversion rate.

Sixty-five individual buildings participated in the campus "U-M Edition" of the competition. From this, we can assume much of the building staff received the weekly theme emails and communication and engaged in the suggested activities.

7. What would you do differently in the future?

In the future, we will reach out to additional large campus units before the competition to engage their students and staff. While we track and report building waste data each week, in subsequent years, we will also strive to incorporate a

quantifiable component into each of the theme weeks. Some weeks did include this, for example, some weeks had a pledge form, or included a personal waste tracking form. However, being more deliberate about including trackable metrics for participant behavior will be helpful for evaluating and reporting on the success of the program.

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

Starting small or primarily targeting one section of campus or audience is always a great way to try a new engagement strategy. This allows for trying new tactics, evaluating, making adjustments, and expanding in the future. For example, we focused a lot of our communications in on-campus housing this year and plan to expand these efforts for next year's competition.

9. Photos and Graphics



WEEK 1: KNOW WHERE TO THROW

Your effort supports U-M's waste reduction goal:

Reduce landfill waste by 40% by 2025



Actions and Resources

- [Where to throw on campus](#)
- Review our [Know Where to Throw training](#) and search specific materials in the Where to Throw search tool.
- Know where to throw at home
- How to recycle if you live in [Ann Arbor](#)
- How to recycle if you live in [Washtenaw County](#)
- When in doubt, contact your local municipality for assistance.
- [Earth911](#) provides a comprehensive nation wide database of recycling resources.
- After your recyclables are collected, they are sent to a Materials Recovery Facility, or MRF. Check out this [video](#) of a MRF's operations. While not specific to Michigan, the video provides a good overview of how a MRF works.

Takeaway

- Encourage people to make sure they know where to throw both on campus and wherever they may be working from.
- It is important to make sure our recycling and compost streams are free from contamination.
- Make sure you know where to throw, both on campus and wherever you are currently working or studying.

GET INVOLVED: ocs.umich.edu

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Sample of weekly theme information and graphic (Office of Campus Sustainability)



CAMPUS RACE TO ZERO WASTE
JANUARY 31-MARCH 27 2021

REDUCE • RECYCLE • COMPOST

Your effort supports U-M's waste reduction goal:
Reduce landfill waste by 40% by 2025

Campus Race to Zero Waste
U-M Edition
(FORMERLY RECYCLEMANIA)

COMPETE
to reduce waste, recycle, and compost as much as possible-wherever you're located this semester!

LEARN MORE AND SIGN UP: [OCS.UMICH.EDU](https://ocs.umich.edu)

Questions? recycle@umich.edu

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Sample digital sign file for participants (Office of Campus Sustainability)

<https://ocs.umich.edu/programs/waste-reduction/competitions/>

Campus Race to Zero Waste page on Office of Campus Sustainability website