



2021 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study Competition

University of South Florida Case Study

Category: Summary of Waste Reduction Efforts (more than 1 project/effort, over at least 1-year timeframe)

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2. Focus of Case study

Student leaders of sustainability projects on campus collaborate to create a social marketing campaign to increase awareness of recycling and food waste reduction on campus.

3. Detailed description of campaign or effort:

Graduate students at the University of South Florida (USF) have been working on waste reduction projects on campus over the course of several years, including a Recycling Bin Signage project which seeks to improve and standardize USF's recycling program, and a Food Waste Recovery Project, which seeks to create an on-campus food waste recovery program involving collection and anaerobic digestion. These students collaborated over the course of the Fall 2020- Spring 2021 academic year to create an educational campaign centered around waste reduction to spread awareness. The students partnered with a group of marketing students on campus called the SAGO organization to make this educational campaign come to fruition. Among the initiatives involved was creating the @usfgreencampus Instagram page, through which we posted engaging and interesting material

centered around recycling and food waste awareness, shared ideas for waste reduction, spread information about local recycling guidelines, and provided relevant resources. The account gained over 1,000 followers over the course of the 2020-2021 academic year. Other initiatives included working with the Hillsborough County Recycling & Waste Reduction Specialist, Danny Gallagher, E.I., to promote their pledge campaign “Reduce Your Use,” to encourage waste reduction and creating/promoting an educational webinar with both the student project leaders and recycling specialist, posted on our @usfgreencampus YouTube page. Furthermore, we worked with the county to do a giveaway featuring 3 prize winners from the USF community. Furthermore, we created new innovative signage to place on campus to encourage waste reduction and administered several surveys throughout the 2020-2021 academic year to gauge interest in recycling and food waste reduction among USF students. The surveys produced very insightful results, which revealed that students are very interested in learning more about recycling on campus and care about seeing improvements in waste reduction on campus. We also wrote an article for USF’s Oracle newspaper to inform USF students about our participation in the CR2ZW competition!

4. Planning steps & timeline to implement:

- Recycling Bin Signage and Food Waste Recovery Projects passed through the Student Green Energy Fund (SGEF) in 2018, ongoing efforts
- These two projects collaborated, similar goals of waste reduction and education & awareness on campus
- Collaborated with a student marketing agency, SAGO, in the Zimmerman School of Advertising in order to design and implement a social marketing campaign to spread waste reduction knowledge among the USF community
- In Fall 2020, initially created an Instagram page called @usfgreencampus. By the end of the fall semester, the account had around 75 followers. With the use of targeted social media strategies by SAGO, by the end of the academic year, the account had over one-thousand followers. SAGO also helped with the administration of a survey to assess student baseline knowledge on recycling and food waste to help steer future efforts. SAGO also helped to design standard recycling bin signage for the goals of the Recycling Bin Signage project which also aims to create standard and effective recycling signage on campus in order to reduce recycling contamination on campus. The design standard created by SAGO followed USF Communications branding guidelines, ensuring the successful acceptance of the educational marketing materials.
- Elected to participate in the 2021 CR2ZW as the combined partnership of the Recycling Bin Signage and FWR projects. Continued working with SAGO to rebrand and relaunch our @usfgreencampus page to engage more students and gain more of a following. Gained over 1,000 followers in one semester consisting largely of USF students, community members, prospective USF students, and USF organizations. Had great engagement on posts, which were educational in nature but also fun and visually appealing, which led to a large number of shares.
- Shared calls to action, engaged with students and USF organizations, provided tips to reduce waste production and provided students with local resources and “sustainable swaps” which can be used to reduce waste (including local businesses where reusable bags and straws can be purchased sustainably, etc.)

- Partnered with the Hillsborough County Recycling & Waste Reduction Specialist on initiatives including promoting the county's, "Reduce Your Use," pledge, conducting a giveaway for materials which help to reduce plastic use, and in creating a webinar posted on our @usfgreencampus YouTube page.
- Conducted a giveaway, which involved having students take the Reduce Your Use pledge, share our post, and engage with other students. The winner received Hillsborough County's "Reduce Your Use Recycling," materials and a Busch Systems miniature recycling bin.
- Conducted surveys over Instagram to receive feedback from our audience on our posts, their recycling knowledge, whether they felt they had learned from the page, why they follow us, which posts they are likely to share and why, and why they follow our page, etc. Received fantastic feedback which will help us to continue to grow the page and expand our reach.
- SAGO also helped to design a mockup website for the Food Waste Recovery (FWR) and recycling bin projects which can be utilized in the future to further spread waste reduction awareness on campus.
- SAGO created standard recycling bin signage for the goals of the Recycling Bin Signage project which also aims to create standard and effective recycling signage on campus in order to reduce recycling contamination on campus. SAGO also developed signage for the FWR to be displayed in USF dining halls in order to encourage food waste reduction.
- Wrote an article for the USF newspaper, The Oracle. The article (included in this case study) is currently under review and awaiting publication.

5. Resources and stakeholders involved

The team of students who worked on this initiative are all student project managers for sustainability project at USF passed through the Student Green Energy Fund (SGEF). Students at USF are charged \$1/credit hour, which is put into the SGEF. The SGEF was created in 2010 to honor the campus president's Climate Action Commitment. The purpose of the fund is for students and staff at USF to propose and receive funding for sustainability projects on campus that result in energy usage reduction and carbon/emission reductions or educate the USF community about sustainability concepts on campus.

The Recycling Bin Signage Project, led by Robin Rives, was passed through the Student Green Energy Fund (SGEF) in Fall 2018 and aims to promote proper recycling on campus in the hopes to reduce our contamination rates. The Food Waste Recovery (FWR) Project, led by Whitney Fund and Mitchell Jaskela also received funding through the SGEF in Fall 2018, and is working to reduce and repurpose food waste on campus through diverting and composting food waste on campus. The Green Guidelines Project, recently passed through the SGEF in Spring 2021, is working to create a framework to make events at USF sustainable, and each team member will be obtaining the TRUE Zero Waste Certification to inform the creation of these guidelines.

Part of the project budgets of the FWR and Recycling Bin Signage projects were allocated for an educational campaign on campus to promote waste reduction. These two projects collaborated over the course of the Fall 2020- Spring 2021 academic year to hire the student-led SAGO organization to help with this effort. SAGO is a for-credit course program offered for students at the USF Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications. The students gain real world advertising experience by working with clients to provide a consulting service. The SAGO organization charges a \$500 fee for a semester of consulting. Both the FWR and Recycling Bin Signage projects paid this \$500 fee for both the Fall and Spring semester for an ongoing yearlong waste reduction awareness effort. The SAGO team helped with various initiatives including creating a joint

Instagram account @usfgreencampus to serve as our forum for the educational campaign. The team created unique content for throughout the year and grew our following to over 1,000 by the end of the spring semester.

Furthermore, SAGO helped both projects to design signage to promote effective recycling and the reduction of recycling contamination, and to promote food waste reduction. SAGO also helped to promote a giveaway and webinar, which were organized by the Recycling Bin Signage and FWR projects. Finally, SAGO also created a comprehensive Instagram guide to aid the team in continuing to create content into the future in keeping with the current style of the USF Green Campus Instagram page, and helped to administer several surveys over the course of the year to assess the effectiveness of our campaign.

The giveaway materials consisted largely of donations from Hillsborough County. Robin from the Recycling Bin Signage project coordinated with the Hillsborough County recycling specialist Daniel Gallagher to promote the county's Reduce Your Use pledge to encourage students to reduce their waste production. Daniel also collaborated with the students to create an educational webinar to spread awareness and to encourage waste reduction on campus. Daniel gave great insight into topics including the recycling industry, recycling in Hillsborough County, recycling contamination, and waste reduction techniques, to name a few.

Furthermore, the effort was also supported by USF Facilities Management, who helped with coordination of the giveaway, budget transfers from the project budgets to SAGO, providing advice and encouragement for the students, helping to register for the CR2ZW case study competition, and so forth.

6. Describe the Results of this campaign component

Results of our social media campaign include:

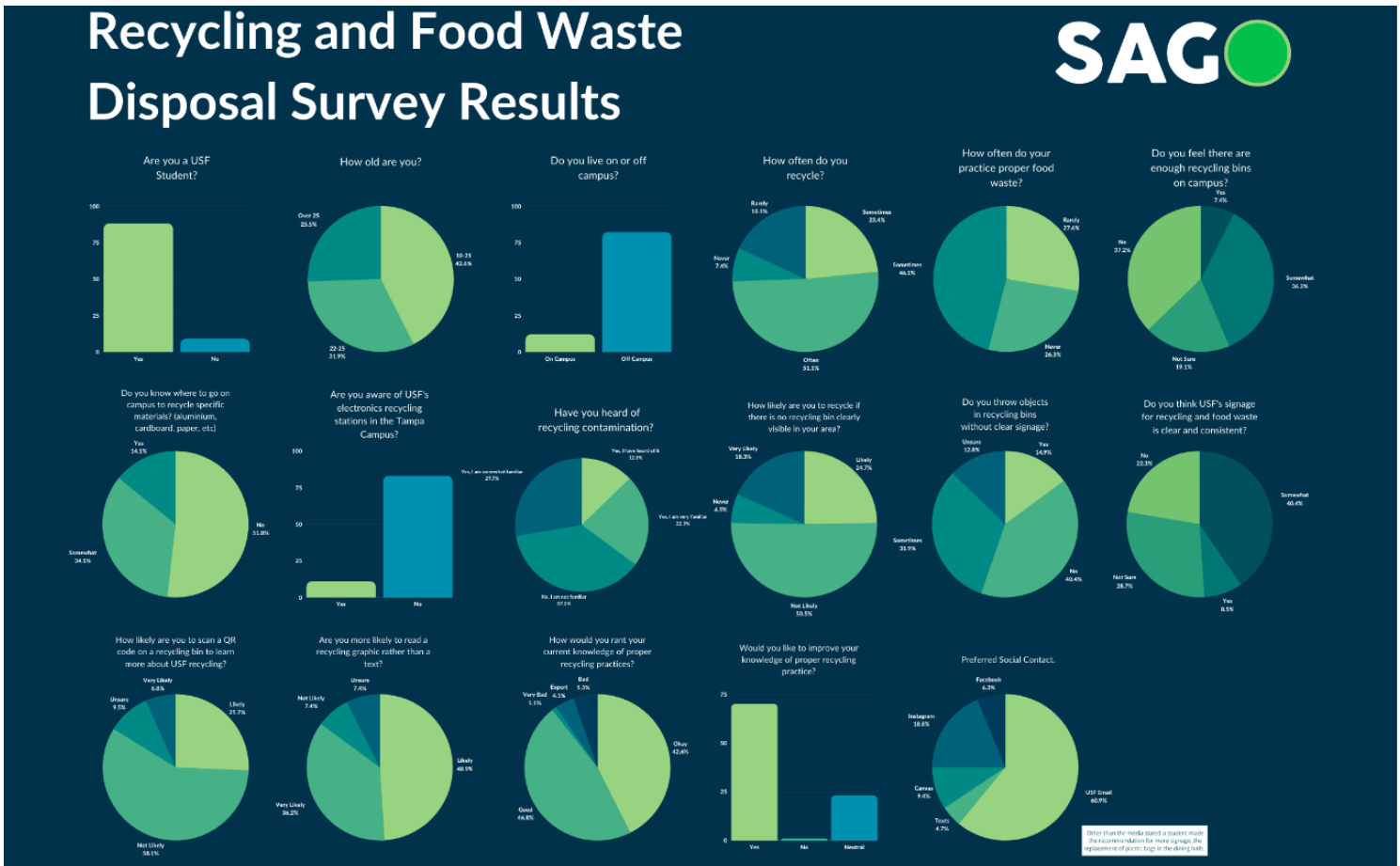
- Gaining over 1,000 followers from August 2020 to May 2021
- After a rebrand of the account in January, over 24 posts created and published over the Spring semester
- Average interactions per post:
 - 67 Likes
 - 5 Comments
 - 22 Shares
 - 5 Saves
 - 544 Impressions
 - 446 Reached
- Our top performing post "How to be a Responsible Recycler" received:
 - 132 Likes
 - 6 Comments
 - 110 Shares
 - 24 Saves
 - 869 Impressions
 - 653 Reached
 - 13 Followers gained

Results of our Fall 2020 survey:

The survey was conducted in **Fall 2020** to provide a **baseline on recycling awareness** and proper food waste disposal practices on campus. This survey was posted in a variety of campus forums, organization, and Facebook pages, and was emailed to student groups. **We received 99 responses from nearly all USF students** (with a few non-USF students), which **overall indicated that students at USF are motivated to learn more about proper recycling** and food waste disposal practices and believe that the **university could be doing more** to inform the student body on recycling.

Of these respondents, a majority (**37.2%**) felt that there are not enough recycling bins on campus, with 19.1% unsure, 36.2% somewhat, and only 7.4% answering that there are enough bins. **Over 51% of students indicated that they do not know where to go on campus to recycle specific materials**; only 14.1% indicated that they do know where to go. **Over 75% of students were unaware that USF has electronics recycling stations** on the Tampa campus. **Over 50% of students answered that they are unlikely to recycle if there is no recycling bin clearly visible in their area.** **When asked if students throw objects in recycling bins without clear signage, 14.9% answered yes and 31.9% answered sometimes**, while 12.8% were unsure and 40.4% answered no.

Further supporting our graphic signage method, **48.9% of students answered that they are likely to read a recycling graphic rather than text, 36.2% said they are very likely**, and only 7.4% of students were unlikely and unsure. While a majority of students indicated that their current knowledge of proper recycling practices is good (46.8%) and okay (42.6%), and even some rating themselves as expert knowledge (4.3%), **approximately 70% of students indicated that they want to improve their knowledge of proper recycling practices.** To this question, 25% answered neutral and there were zero no's. In the optional comment section of the survey, **one student specifically wrote that they would like to see more signage on campus and the replacement of plastic bags in**



the dining halls. See the attached results of the survey.

Results of our Spring 2021 survey:

- The survey was broken up into a series of short surveys conducted via Instagram Stories. The survey consisted of
- 3 rounds of 5 questions each varying from ranking questions, “Yes or No” polls, quiz feature, and open-ended questions.
- For all of the surveys:
 - An average of 20 people participated in the 5 survey questions.
 - Saw a decrease in participation 28 people participated in the 1st story vs 15 people in the last story.
 - Overall, all responses were positive with a greater than 80% likelihood of sharing the post, finding it helpful, or trying out the tips.
- From Round 1 of survey:
 - Received the following comments:
 - @cristalwuter:** “Going to USF this fall and I want to help promote and eco-friendly campus”
 - @Centipedeseeta:** “I love learning about how I can be more green... Free swag sometimes helps too!”
 - @nicoleecoppagee:** “I want to start practicing more sustainability post grad”
 - An average of 46 people participated in the 5 survey questions.
 - More interaction due to the usage of quiz, poll, and open-ended features.
 - Results revealed that the audience **does not possess huge current knowledge on recycling or awareness on food waste practices** at USF.
 - Additional results:
 - 97% are interested on improving their knowledge** on proper recycling practices at USF.
 - 35% interested in food waste practices
 - 26% interested in recycling tips
 - 23% interested in local initiatives and events
 - 16% interested in thrifting
- From Round 2 of survey:
 - **An average of 103 people participated in the 5 survey questions.**
 - More interaction due to the usage of quiz and poll features.
 - Additional Results:
 - 86% of respondents belong to the 18 - 22 years old age group.
 - 42% of respondents prefer to consume their content through photos.
 - 43% want us to post 3-4 times a week and 42% 1-2 times a week.
- Awaiting the results of Round 3 of the survey

Engagement on our webinar:

URL of full-length webinar: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rgklu4ANG-Y>

Views to date: 17

Likes: 2

Subscribers gained: 2

URL of webinar trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvsGLTyxHB8>

Views to date: 24

Likes: 1

Number of pledges gained:

One goal of our educational campaign was to encourage students to take Hillsborough County's Reduce Your Use pledge to promote waste reduction. We did this by creating posts to inform students about the pledge and have students take the pledge to enter our giveaway. Since over 50 students successfully entered the giveaway, we know that we successfully encouraged at least 50 students to take the pledge. Not all of these students took the pledge with USF emails, however.

Of those who took the pledge during the spring semester, 22 did use an @usf.edu email. A total of 107 pledges were made during the spring semester (January 1- May 15). Spikes in the total number of pledges corresponded with our campaign efforts and posts promoting the pledge, indicating that we did help to encourage more individuals to take the pledge.

- January 2021
 - USF Email – 1
 - Total Pledges - 5
- February 2021
 - USF Email – 0
 - Total Pledges - 17
- March 2021
 - USF Email – 2
 - Total Pledges - 6
- April 2021
 - USF Email – 20
 - Total Pledges - 76
- May 15th, 2021
 - USF Email – 1
 - Total Pledges - 3
- Spring Semester Totals
 - USF Email and USF related pledges– 24
 - Total Pledges - 107

Number of giveaway entries:

- Over 50 people entered our giveaway, and 170 people liked our giveaway post
- We had nearly 60 comments on our giveaway post
- A lucky 3 winners picked up their prizes to help them to live more sustainably and reduce their waste production

7. What would you do differently in the future?

This year was our first time formally participating in the CR2ZW case study competition. Students have made previous attempts in the past but did not realize the fall registration deadline to participate. This year, we

decided to start planning our efforts early so that we could participate. Our goal this semester was to create a framework for USF's regular participation in the CR2ZW annual competitions.

In the future, we would like to follow this framework to allow for consistency and guidance. This includes having a student-led initiative supported by USF Facilities Management, and beginning our planning for the competition in September to ensure that we register in advance and have adequate time to plan our campaign efforts. Furthermore, we would like to potentially branch out and have a goal of participating in the other CR2ZW competition categories in the future.

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

The students leading our participation in the CR2ZW Case Study Competition this year have been working on their waste reduction projects at USF for several years now. The students came together to collaborate on this educational campaign and case study for the 2020-2021 academic year as a component of their existing project goals. It is important to recognize that these are long-term efforts and accomplishing similar projects and goals in a university setting takes time. These initiatives should not start and end within one year; working toward sustainability is a lifelong and evolving process. That being said, do not be discouraged if you are not able to complete your project or reach all of your goals within a short time frame. Although the results may not be seen immediately, all of the work and effort that you put in over time will have long-term benefits and improve the state of your university and community in the future.

9. Photos and Graphics

See attached.

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Document 4 (Pages 10-14): SAGO Social Media Guide developed for the FWR and Recycling Bin Signage projects

Document 5 (Pages 15-16): Instagram Media Plan for Spring semester, Part 1

Document 6 (Pages 17-20): Instagram Media Plan for Spring semester, Part 2

Document 7 (Page 21): @usfgreencampus Instagram page (example of posts)

Document 8 (Pages 22-43): SAGO end of Spring semester presentation and summary

Document 9 (Page 44): Waste Reduction Webinar created and posted on the @usfgreencampus YouTube page

Document 10 (Pages 45-48): Article written for the USF Oracle newspaper (pending publication)