



## 2021 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study Competition

*Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), Worcester, MA*

### ***Case Study: Education & Awareness Efforts on Waste & Recycling at WPI***

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

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2. Focus of Case study

This case study focused on an interactive seminar developed in collaboration with WPI's Student Green Team to convey information and awareness on waste and recycling.

3. Detailed description of campaign or effort:

WPI's Green Team has been working throughout the year to keep sustainability in the forefront to the greatest extent possible in this challenging time. The student groups have included a few online initiatives that support increase the awareness of sustainability, and more specifically waste management and recycling. This case study involves a "Waste and Recycling" Interactive Seminar.

The Waste and Recycling Interactive Seminar was entitled "Recycling and Waste Management in a time of transition", was led by Michelle Lee Guiney of Waste Management in cooperation with WPI's Office of Sustainability and WPI's Green Team. The unique aspect of the seminar was the close correspondence between the speaker and the Green Team members in the development of the topics for the seminar. The Green Team and the seminar speaker met in advance and identified the following key areas of interest to the students:

- 1-Waste and Recycling in aftermath of the COVID 19 pandemic and global recycling market disruptions
- 2-Circular Economy: how recyclables are used to make new products
- 3-Materials and assessing GHG emissions impacts vs. reuse
- 4-Social Justice: environmentally friendly, sustainable solutions & affordability

The seminar was held on March 29<sup>th</sup> from 5 to 6PM, and was broken into 4 blocks to allow for brief presentations on these topics and time for questions and discussion. The breakdown on the session was

5:00-5:05PM-Introduction

5:05-5:30PM-Presentation and discussion on Topics 1 and 2

5:30-5:50PM-Presentation on Topics 3 and 4

5:50-6:00PM-General Discussion/wrap-up

The format allowed the students to identify the topic of interest and develop questions to follow up on the presentation and gather information that was directly beneficial to the students. Additional items were distributed to the students following the seminar to help incorporate new information and lessons learned. Figure 1 shows the flyer for the recycling and waste management seminar.

#### **4. Planning steps & timeline to implement:**

All activities were planned during the spring of 2021. Promotional Materials were completed in March, April, and May of this year. The steps and timeline for the seminar and green talk events are as follows:

- 2/12/2021 - Initial invitation and correspondence contact with seminar speaker
- 2/15/21 - 3/1/2021 – Correspondence with student green team
- 3/7/2021 - Planning/coordination meeting with Student green team
- 3/9/2021-3/29/2021 – Promote event
- 3/29/2021 – Recycling and Waste Seminar Event
- 3/30/2021 – 4/2/2021 - Follow up slides sent
- 4/2/2021 – 4/22/2021 – Additional info provided by speaker (she was very helpful!)

#### **5. Resources and stakeholders involved**

All meetings and correspondence were completed via Zoom. The recycling and waste management seminar was completed in collaboration with the Office of Sustainability. Stakeholders included faculty, staff, and students.

#### **6. Describe the Results of this campaign component**

- a. General results (*ex: attracted attention of campus president, campus paper did a news story on the event, etc.*)  
Given the available time, resources and constraints due to the pandemic, the publicity was limited. Nevertheless, the program was successful in reaching students who were interested in the topics.
- b. Specific measurable impact figures, if applicable (*Ex: Reduced contamination rate 13%, Gathered 316 pledges to recycle more, etc., 250 people engaged, etc.*)  
The students engaged 25 people for the seminar itself. The programs were recorded so more people could be reached following the seminars/talks. We've also been distributing information to other faculty and students who are working in the topic area.

#### **7. What would you do differently in the future?**

For the waste mgt. and recycling seminar, some adjustments would:

- tighter controls on the timeline
- More detailed consideration of Zoom operation during the seminar, and a rehearsal for the program
- better marketing through social media and other communication venues to reach a wider audience

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

We would encourage approaches to engage students in the development of seminars and programs. This is a great way to encourage engagement. Identifying a student/faculty team or committee may also provide a great way to develop effective programs and align presentations to meet student needs.

9. **Photos and Graphics:** A flyer for the event is shown in the following figure.



## Recycling and Waste Management in a time of transition

- *Waste and Recycling in aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and global recycling market disruptions*
- *Circular Economy: how recyclables are used to make new products*
  - *Materials and assessing GHG emissions impacts vs. reuse*
  - *Social Justice: environmentally friendly, sustainable solutions & affordability*

Michelle Lee Guiney serves as Manager of Waste Management's Total Recycle Program. She has over 10 years of experience in the waste industry, is Zero Waste certified, and LEED accredited.



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