



## University of Pittsburgh 2022 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

### Contact info

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### Focus of Case study

The University of Pittsburgh's 2022 case study focuses on the Zero Waste Period program and giveaway that we featured during the 2022 CRZW Competition.

### Detailed description of campaign or effort:

The Student Office of Sustainability and our affiliate organizations have been working towards menstrual equity on the University of Pittsburgh's Oakland campus since 2019. The 2022 Zero Waste period event was hosted collaboratively with Pitt EcoReps, Free the Planet and Pitt Planned Parenthood and featured information about the physical and environmental health aspects of period products.

"The Period Talk" was held on March 18, 2022, at 3:00pm during the CRZW competition cycle. The team behind the event positioned it as an unconventional version of the traditional "period talk," retold with an environmental impact and public health perspective. Organizers adopted a three-pronged approach in planning the event:

- a. Education and conversation around menstrual health, period poverty and equity.
- b. Bringing awareness to the environmental impact of single-use menstrual products.
- c. Distribution of free reusable menstrual products and education on how to use them.

The event marketing highlighted the free product giveaway as an incentive for students to attend the event. The educational components of the event featured information about the short and long term environmental and health impacts of disposable and reusable products. Organizers also provided information such as type of product, use, and cleaning and storage. Inclusion of trans-students in this conversation was an important part of the event. Snacks and drinks were provided post-event to contribute to the social atmosphere, further destigmatizing the topic.

The primary and secondary collaborators helped to tailor the event as a part of the continuing effort towards menstrual equity at the University of Pittsburgh. This collaboration allied students working on zero waste programs with those advocating for menstrual equity on campus. These may seem like unlikely allies but their



shared purpose towards embracing social and environmental sustainability made them a powerful coalition and resulted in a successful and impactful event.

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

- Identify event objective: Focus on menstrual equity and an environmental and social justice issues and provide reusable period products
- Evaluate resources: Take stock of available reusable period products and create budget for the event
- Organize and choose collaborators: FTP (Free the Planet), Planned Parenthood, EcoReps and SOOS have an initial meeting with everyone interested in the event and brainstormed ideas (2 meetings)
- Rough draft for event: Short educational session, pick up of free period products at (after) the event as incentive to attend the session, session makes such products less intimidating
- Outreach: Identify similar projects across campus and form a network to organize the event as a continuous action for efforts related to menstrual equity
- Fine tuning the program design: Choosing location for event (SOOS office + virtual option), choosing date and time that would work best for student population (Friday 3PM), choosing if we should order more products (decided against due to shipping delays)
- Registration: Set up a link to register for (in person or virtual) event
- Registrations questions: 1) Does attendee want a product, 2) Which do they prefer (reusable pads with refills, menstrual cup), 3) What questions did they want us to address, 4) Concerns or comments
- Refine program content: Pick topics to be addressed and put them all together and format (PPT), divide the workload between collaborators and include questions from registration link
- Gather all resources together: Collecting products for the giveaway, get food, drinks, plates and cups for event
- Information session and distribution: After the information session, we provided food and drinks for attendees (adding a social component) and attendees picked up the products

#### **Resources and stakeholders involved:**

The Period Talk stakeholders included the Student Office of Sustainability, Pitt EcoReps, Free the Planet, and Pitt Planned Parenthood. Additionally, the program received in kind marketing support from the Office of Sustainability and the Division of Student Affairs. The Student Office of Sustainability, the Student Government Board and the Pitt Green Fund have invested over \$7,000 in both reusable and free single use period products since 2019 to address menstrual equity issues on the University of Pittsburgh Oakland campus. The Period Talk utilized reusable pads and cups that had been previously purchased for reusable product giveaways. The total estimated cost for period products for this event is \$2,000 and the SOOS purchased refreshments for the event totaling \$120.

#### **Describe the Results of this campaign component:**

- *60 students registered for the event*
- *40 students attended and 35 students received a reusable menstrual product*



- *Coalition building for future menstrual equity programs and initiatives*
- Tampons, pads, and liners, along with their packaging, generate more than 200,000 tons of waste per year
- In the U.S. alone, 12 billion pads and 7 million tampons are landfilled annually
- The average user throws away 275-330 lbs. of menstrual waste in their lifetime

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

The event organizers did not create a post-event survey. This is something we will do for future events. A post-event survey could gauge if the students are using products, how often, and check in with students on their satisfaction with the program and product.

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

The event organizers have the following advice for other colleges and universities: 1) Work with other related student organizations to have a complete understanding of previous efforts related to the program and 2) Use surveys to gauge the usage and satisfaction with the products after the program.

### **Photos and Graphics**

*\*Please see attached flyers and photos. The photos are credited to Annalise Abraham. Autumn Morgan created the event flyer.*

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