



2023 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study Raritan Valley Community College

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Focus of Case study:

Recording and analyzing the recycling trends at RVCC and finding tangible solutions to promote the increase in proper recycling and composting campus wide.

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

Continuing the recycling effort that took place in spring 2022, the recycling and composting numbers were still fluctuating throughout this spring semester with trash still being improperly disposed of. With this in mind, we realized that a reevaluation of the foundation of waste management was necessary. We scheduled a meeting with the head of the cafeteria staff as they implemented a new composting device that keeps track of food waste and new food containers and utensils that are biodegradable. We readjusted all the waste disposal bins around campus and purchased more hallway bins to place in areas where they were lacking with new signage placed above the bins. With that, we updated the bottle cap recycling containers around campus and placed them in an area that is visible and more accessible. We worked with a professor on campus to host a campus wide clean up. And we met each month with the sustainability committee on campus and discussed ongoing concerns and events that focused on sustainability.

Planning steps & timeline to implement:

- February 2023- met to discuss what we wanted to accomplish.
- February 2023- met with Gourmet Dining (dining contractor) on campus.
- February 2023- readjusted all interior campus waste bins and did a needs assessment.
- March 2023- created a proposal for new bottle cap disposal bins, which was approved by Facilities management.
- March 2023- created a proposal for new waste bins, which was approved by VP of Finance.
- April 2023- held Earth Day popups and events across campus.
- April 2023- held a campus wide clean up.
- May 2023- created new signage for above waste bins.

- June 2023- built the new waste disposal bins and were placed across campus.

Resources and stakeholders involved:

Intern Anna Mihalik, Sustainability Coordinator Sue Dorward, Executive Director of Facilities Brian O'Rourke, Facilities Assistant Manager Philip Weaver, Housekeeping Manager Nely Diaz, VP of Finance John Trojan, and Environmental Sustainability Committee. Funding for hallway recycling and trash bins and bottle cap recycling bins.

Describe the Results of this campaign component:

- The main result of this campaign was the start of redesigning the foundation of composting and recycling campus wide. We attracted the attention of the sustainability committee and student government as they were able to discuss and offer ideas regarding the ongoing issue.
- We were also able to attract the attention of the VP of Finance John Trojan, as he approved the proposal for more waste bins around the campus (here is the link to the proposal).
https://docs.google.com/file/d/1fw3uewFbwkxmApqpHLL5PTIISHZMHgw/edit?usp=docslst_api&filetype=microsoftword
- The results of recycling and composting numbers seemed to increase as the new Freshens section was added to the cafeteria in the middle of April. Before then, the recycling numbers seem to stay the same as there were no food options in the campus cafeteria (here is the link to the meeting with Gourmet Dining).
https://docs.google.com/file/d/1GfcEMogiAtWxz_6l6jxZSVURIZyHXGbu/edit?usp=docslst_api&filetype=microsoftword
- The implementation of newer and more accessible bottle cap bins increased the number of caps being recycled. (RVCC recycles bottle caps through Terracycle.) This is because the bins are smaller and were able to be placed on top of the recycling bin instead of to the side of the bin (here is the link to the proposal).
https://docs.google.com/file/d/1ME8IMfO5svoPMUo4rKVtQIZ_gYm5psVy/edit?usp=docslst_api&filetype=microsoftword

What would you do differently in the future?

We would like to continue to reevaluate the foundation of waste management across the campus. There is no control over whether the individuals choose to properly dispose of waste. However, we can control the accessibility of waste disposal. By analyzing the controllables, we are able to actively look for solutions to the issue of why individuals choose to not sort their trash into the proper bins. The main thing that we would do differently in the future is to discuss with students as to why they choose not to follow the guidelines by putting out a student and staff survey. This way we are able to analyze all aspects of this ongoing issue.

Coordinate better with Housekeeping. After putting out the new cap bins, we discovered that Housekeeping was not putting them back on top of the mixed recycles bins after emptying the bins. So, we had to follow up with Housekeeping to make sure they put the caps bins in the right place.

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

- Create a solid outline of what exactly you want to accomplish.

- Analyze the whole system of waste management at your college and bring to light issues in the overall plan and system set in place when it comes to waste management.
- Do not expect drastic changes because it takes time to promote recycling and composting throughout the staff and students.
- Find creative ways to create interactive initiatives with the staff and students to create excitement around composting and recycling.
- Make explanatory signs simple and visual.
- Communicate, coordinate, and follow up with Housekeeping.

Photos and Graphics:



Picture Key:

- Left- picture of a new recycling bin on campus.
- Middle- picture of one of the new labeled bottle cap bins.
- Right- picture of the new waste bins.

- Link to the signs over top of the bins:
 - https://docs.google.com/file/d/1GfcEMogiAtWxz_6l6jxZSVURIZyHXGbu/edit?usp=doclist_api&filetype=msword