



## 2023 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study University of Pittsburgh

### Contact info:

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### Focus of Case study:

The University of Pittsburgh's annual Clean & Swap event ensures office, laboratory, and other campus materials find their best next homes on-campus and off.

### Detailed description of campaign or effort:

The University of Pittsburgh's [Clean & Swap](#) event provides Pitt employees and graduate students with an annual opportunity to bring their unwanted office, medical, and laboratory items to "Clean & Swap," during which items find their next home with both on- and off-campus entities. On the 2 event days in 2023, Pitt community members both dropped off materials (including books, clothing, office supplies, electronics, furniture, & more) and "shopped through" for free items, fostering a culture of reuse on campus. At the end of the event, Pitt Surplus sweeps all University equipment, electronics, and other specialty items for University redistribution and resale; teaching supplies are donated to The Education Partnership (local nonprofit that helps underfunded schools); and medical supplies were donated to Global Links (Pittsburgh-based international nonprofit who shares U.S. healthcare surplus to support health programs globally and locally).

2023 was Pitt Clean & Swap's most successful year to-date, diverting 6,427 pounds of office items, medical supplies, and personal electronics from landfill, engaging over 73 departments, and with 140 individuals rehoming at least one item. Additionally, 7,800 face shields were saved from landfill by connecting a department with overstock with another in need. For the first time in 2023, the event was advertised to both employees and graduate students (previously years included employees only). Via a partnership with SHI (University-wide Contracted Supplier for Apple products and services), Pitt employees were able to bring personal electronics from home to be recycled.

The nearly 3 tons materials rehomed and recycled in 2023 topped the 3,155 pounds diverted during the 2022 Pitt Clean & Swap event, which was 2 days and included a call for unwanted medical supplies for the first time (the direct result of an undergraduate student project).

While Clean & Swap was on hold in 2021 (due to the pandemic), the first 1-day Pitt Clean & Swap in 2020 diverted ~728 pounds of unwanted office items from landfill to reuse by various Pitt individuals and departments (including

the Center for Creativity, Engineering, Student Affairs, Surplus, and many others); unclaimed office suppliers were donated to The Education Partnership.

## **Planning Steps & Timeline to Implement:**

### **3 to 6 Months in Advance**

- 1) Contact donation partners (Pitt Surplus, Education Partnership, Global Links, Pitt Surplus, SHI International) regarding availability and interest
- 2) Reserve campus location and set room layout
- 3) Coordinate with Pitt Surplus to move materials on event days

### **2 Months in Advance**

- 1) Coordinate with Pitt Police and Pitt Parking to reserve lots and spaces for drop off
- 2) Confirm accepted and desired materials with donation partners and update event listing
- 3) Build registration pages (separate processes for Clean & Swap Electronics Recycling)
- 4) Add events to University Calendar and Sustainability calendars

### **6 Weeks in Advance**

- 1) Email to Communications partners for inclusion in University-wide newsletters including HR and Staff Council
- 2) Create outreach materials and send to partners and networks to share out

### **4 Weeks in Advance**

- 1) Promote on social media, with partners, and via targeted outreach to sustainability-related groups
- 2) Create volunteer roles and registration mechanisms
- 3) Recruit/sign up volunteers
- 4) Request Housing Carts to help participants move materials more easily

### **2 Weeks in Advance**

- 1) Confirm pickup times with partners
- 2) Confirm building setup

### **Week of Event**

- 1) Send reminder emails to Clean & Swap attendees, including accepted materials list
- 2) Send timed reminder email to Electronic Recycling attendees, including accepted materials, event map, and drop-off time
- 3) Order food for volunteers
- 4) Set up room and receive Housing carts

### **Day(s) of Event**

- Meet & train volunteers
- Assign volunteers tasks:
  - a) Greeting attendees (outside)
  - b) Shuttling carts of materials
  - c) Sorting & displaying materials
  - d) Keeping attendee & swap tallies
  - e) Social media posting and updates
  - f) Receiving volunteer food delivery

- Sort & organize materials for each partner
- Track materials donated to Pitt Surplus as picked up (multiple pickups throughout week)

### **Event Materials Pickup Day**

1. Coordinate pickup by external nonprofit partners The Education Partnership and Global Links.

### **Post-Event**

- 1) Send thank you notes and emails to all partners and attendees
- 2) Request final weight and inventories from all donation partners
- 3) Highlight event's success in Sustainability Newsletter, on Clean & Swap website, and via University-wide communications

### **Resources & Stakeholders Involved:**

The University of Pittsburgh's Clean & Swap offering was created as a partnership of the Office of Sustainability and Pitt Surplus Property, which handles the sale, storage, distribution, and disposal of all surplus properties. The Office of Sustainability led on all event planning, marketing and communications, logistical support, and event staffing. [Pitt Surplus](#) provided post-event item processing including:

- Refurbishing and reselling items of value to the University community and/or public (including, but not limited to, electronics, equipment, and furniture).
- Securely destroying any University computer hard drives prior to disposal or resale.
- Recycling used printer toner cartridges.
- Recycling end of life University-owned electronic equipment.

Post-Clean & Swap, local nonprofit organizations The Education Partnership & Global Links picked up donations from campus rehoming teaching and medical supplies with local educators and global communities, respectively. SHI staffed and supplied a Guardian Storage box truck and electronics collection materials, as well as recycling electronic waste with and Evolution E-Cycling (local R2-certified electronics recycler). All partners weighed materials to help quantify the event's measurable impact.

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

The University of Pittsburgh's 2023 Clean & Swap event helped divert 3 tons (6,427 pounds) of office items, medical supplies, and employee personal electronics from the landfill to reuse and recycling. Additionally, through connections made at Clean & Swap, 7,800 face shields were saved from the landfill by connecting a department with overstock with another department in need. It was advertised University-wide by both [University Communications](#) and the *University Times*, University's Pittwire news service also published an [accolade](#) about its accomplishments.

In 2022, Clean & Swap helped divert 1.5 tons (3,156 pounds) of office and medical supplies no longer needed by Pitt offices, labs, and departments. Materials were redistributed to other Pitt departments, resold by Pitt Surplus, and donated to The Educational Partnership and Global Links, two amazing Pittsburgh nonprofits.

In 2020, Clean & Swap helped redirect 728 pounds of unwanted office and laboratory items to other Pitt departments, Pitt Surplus, and The Educational Partnership. It was advertised by both [University Communications](#) and [University Times](#), Pitt's independent employee newspaper.

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

In a mere three years of its offering, Pitt's annual Clean & Swap has gained popularity across our Pittsburgh campus, including requests to increase the program's frequency. As a result, due to popular request, we are considering hosting the event twice annually. In the future, we will also seek out additional nonprofit partners to help rehome commonly donated items.

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

Look to your community and identify assets that already exist, including how their strengths and offerings might be combined to create a unique sustainability opportunity. Effective collaborations enable collective action, including impactful programming like the University of Pittsburgh's annual Clean & Swap.

### **Photos and Graphics:**



**2022 University of Pittsburgh Clean & Swap Medical Supplies Pickup by Nonprofit Global Links**



**2023 University of Pittsburgh Clean & Swap**



**2023 University of Pittsburgh Clean & Swap Office Supplies Section**



**2023 University of Pittsburgh Clean & Swap Item Sorting**



**2023 University of Pittsburgh Clean & Swap Medical Supplies, Equipment, & Office Items**



**2023 University of Pittsburgh Clean & Swap Medical & Office Supplies**