



Campus Race to Zero Waste 2023 Case Study

The Pennsylvania State University

Contact info: Sophia Marsh, Housing/Sustainability Institute, The Pennsylvania State University, sam7405@psu.edu, 814-865-7488

Focus of Case study: To pilot a “Green Basketball Game” initiative in which all waste generated during the game is sorted, weighed, and disposed of correctly.

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

In November 2022, Penn State EcoReps pitched the idea of hosting a “Green Basketball Game” to the event management team at the Bryce Jordan Center (BJC). The EcoReps program consists of a student-led cohort of about 50 individuals who educate students and community members about sustainable living practices. After touring the BJC facilities in early December, it was determined that the goal of the Green Game would be to capture all recyclable items and divert them from the landfill. All remaining trash would also be weighed to collect data on contamination rates at a sporting event. In addition to back-of-house waste sortation, a handful of EcoReps would be tasked with engaging and educating gameday attendees on the arena concourse.

Planning for the event began in November, but training for the basketball game did not start until February. During February, EcoReps were educated on the inner workings of a Penn State basketball game, the procedure for sorting waste, and how to collect data. The cohort of 40 individuals was split into two groups: a fan-forward concourse tabling team and a back-of-house waste sorting team.

About two hours before the February 26th game at 6:30 pm, the first group of EcoReps arrived to set up four tables throughout the concourse. Two of these tables were dedicated to recycling education, with an activity called “Recycling Roadshow” in which participants tested their knowledge of the correct disposal of various materials. The remaining tables provided an opportunity to decorate lanterns for an upcoming annual event, Earth Hour.

Once the game started, the second group of EcoReps arrived to begin setting up for waste sortation. Each volunteer was trained in how the trash compactor operates and what safety precautions should be taken when working with waste. As soon as the game ended, the concourse group packed up, and waste sorters began transporting trash into the basement. In just a few hours, we had successfully sorted and recovered all recyclable items destined for the landfill.

Planning steps & timeline to implement:

- November
 - Reached out to BJC management to pitch the Green Basketball Game.
 - Facilitated meetings with BJC staff to iron out logistics.
 - Walked through BJC back-of-house and concourse to understand waste-sortation layout.
- January

- EcoReps collaborated with the Office of Physical Plant and Sustainability Institute to plan the gameday waste sortation process and layout for educational concourse tabling.
- Collected sign-up sheet for waste sortation or tabling.
- Held data collection information session for EcoReps.
- Submitted credentials to BJC.
- February
 - Finalize preparations for the Green Game.
 - Ensured that all supplies were ordered and received.
 - Dropped off supplies at BJC the day before the game.
- February 26th
 - Team leaders arrived early to collect credentials and supplies.
 - Concourse engagement volunteers set up table activities at 4:30 pm.
 - Gameday audience arrived at 5:00 pm.
 - Waste sortation team arrived between 7:30 pm and 8:00 pm.
 - Waste collection team assisted BJC staff in collecting trash and transporting it to the lower loading dock for sorting.
 - Waste sortation was finished by 10:30 pm.
- Post-Game
 - Waste sortation data was compiled into a spreadsheet to determine impact.

Resources and stakeholders involved:

Budget: < \$250 (Office of Physical Plant, BJC, and Sustainability Institute provided resources needed – see below -- at no additional cost.)

Resources needed:

- Tyvek suits, gloves, and shoe covers (provided by OPP)
- Extra trash bags
- Hand scales
- Fold-out tables
- Headlamps/light sources
- Tabling materials (tri-folds, recycling roadshow game)
- Miscellaneous office supplies (pens, paper, clipboards)
- Trash collection carts (provided by BJC)
- Trash compactor (provided by BJC)

Campus departments/groups involved:

- Penn State EcoReps
- The Bryce Jordan Center (BJC)
- The Sustainability Institute (SI)
- Office of the Physical Plant (OPP)
- Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA)

Staff/volunteers involved:

- ~40 EcoRep student volunteers

- Douglas Goodstein; *The Sustainability Institute*
- Al Karosas; *BJC General Manager*
- Phil Stout; *BJC Assistant General Manager*
- Gregory Severino; *BJC Facility Manager*
- Daniel Kutch; *BJC Facility Manager*
- Rebecca Plesica; *Director of Marketing and Fan Experience*
- Ayodeji Oluwalana; *OPP Waste Reduction and Recycling Program Manager*

Describe the Results of this campaign component:

General results:

- The Green Game attracted the attention of BJC staff and encouraged interest in future partnerships and waste-reduction efforts. Al Karosas, the general manager of the BJC, has since expressed interest in inviting the EcoReps back to facilitate other waste-sortation initiatives.
- Since this was a pilot program, a major result of participating in this challenge was the relationships built between the Sustainability Institute and Intercollegiate Athletics. Through the success of this initiative, EcoReps have built a level of trust with BJC officials that strengthens our ongoing relationship.

Specific measurable impact:

- Through the EcoReps' waste-sortation efforts, we achieved 100% recycling capture for the February 26th PSU vs. Rutgers men's basketball game. We collected every bag of waste generated at the event, recovering 145.18 pounds of recyclable items that would have otherwise been landfilled. We also reduced recycling contamination by removing 78.8 pounds of landfill material from bags of recycling. In total, we captured 262.2 pounds of recyclables during this event.

What would you do differently in the future?

In the future, we will increase our efforts to promote the Green Game to the public and event attendees. We will do this by advertising more heavily and collaborating with the BJC's marketing team and Pepsi. We will also start planning for next year's Green Game earlier, so that we have more time to collaborate with these partners.

Additionally, we will rethink how we engage with fans in the concourse. We will find ways to make our interactions more meaningful and beneficial to both parties. This will give us opportunities to try new activities and tactics to educate the Penn State community about sustainability.

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

The first and most important piece of advice we would give to another college making a similar effort is to start as early as possible with connection and conversation. We realized early on that it was important to host meetings with the BJC event experience team and managers and meet with facility supervisors and hands-on operations workers who have first-hand experience with running an event from the back end. The facilities workers had the best understanding of how to run the logistics of collecting waste in a

large-scale event, so we had a good idea of how we could accomplish our goals while also helping the team do their jobs more efficiently. Because we fostered these relationships early on, we built the trust we needed to be invited back to continue this effort next year.

A second piece of advice for other colleges would be to start this planning process as soon as possible. The planning of athletic events at any university will start extremely early (planning for one season begins directly after a season has ended), so we do not recommend waiting until the academic year begins to start talking about making these efforts. Additionally, it is critical to always have multiple back-up plans and options. The athletics space is ever-changing and the more flexibility your organization or group has, the easier it will be to make quick planning decisions.

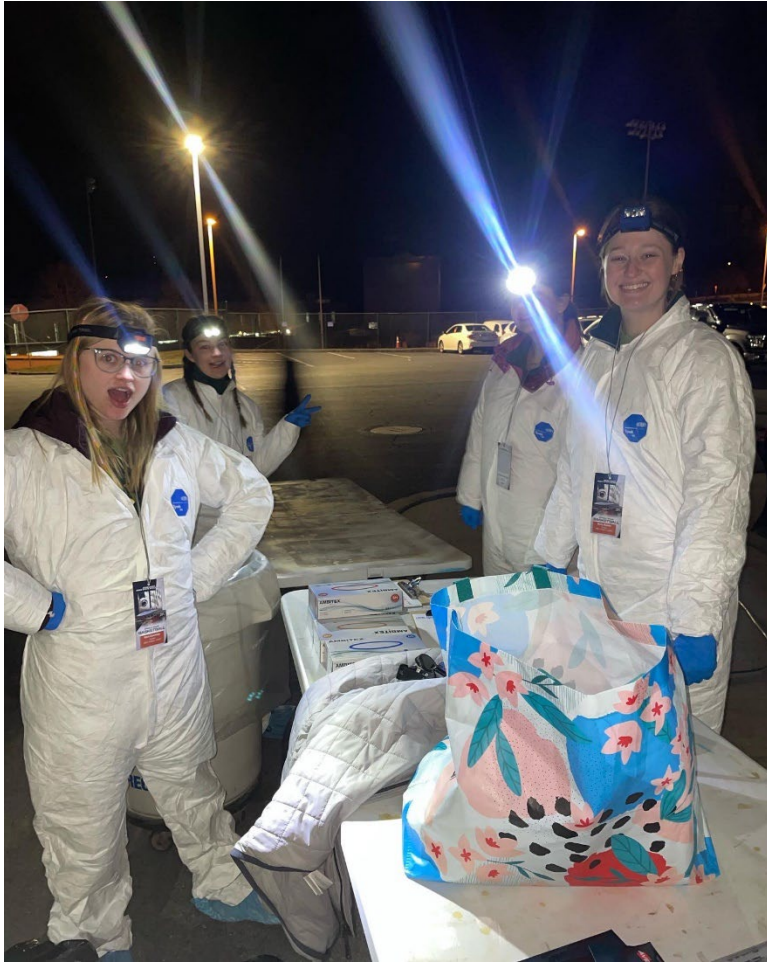
Photos and Graphics:



Caption: EcoRep volunteer waste-sortation group photo with Ayodeji Oluwalana (OPP). [Credit: Ayodeji Oluwalana]



Caption: EcoRep volunteer, Gavin Maxson, transporting a cart of trash to the waste-sortation loading dock. [Credit: Sophia Marsh]



Caption: EcoRep volunteer waste-sortation team captains, Riley Wian, Dora Courtney, Molly Gulden, and Gabby Pinchot preparing for the first wave of trash sorting. [Credit: Sophia Marsh]



Caption: EcoRep concourse tabling volunteers educating gameday attendees about Earth Hour and energy conservation at Penn State. [Credit: Hailey Madara]



Caption: Recycling information table and recycling roadshow activity set up for concourse tabling. [Credit: Hailey Madara]



Caption: Group photo of the waste-sortation EcoRep group. [Credit: Sophia Marsh]



Caption: Instagram post by @psuecoreps to highlight volunteer efforts at the BJC. [Credit: Hailey Madara and @psuecoreps on IG]