



University of Massachusetts Amherst 2025 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

Contact info:

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Focus of Case study:

Launching UMass Amherst's first on-campus thrift store to support year-round waste diversion and circular consumption through student-powered, zero-waste innovation.

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

The New2U Thrift Store isn't just a secondhand store – it's a year-round, student-powered waste diversion engine that redefines how UMass Amherst thinks about reuse, equity, and sustainability.

Started in 2014, the New2U Program has diverted over 100,000 pounds of waste from landfill and consistently provides affordable, accessible materials to incoming students. In February 2025 – during the official Campus Race to Zero Waste Competition – New2U launched its most ambitious expansion yet: UMass Amherst's first on-campus thrift store.

The New2U Thrift Store marks a major evolution in campus waste diversion, allowing students to donate and purchase gently used items year-round. Responding to data showing that usable goods are discarded outside of move-out windows (e.g., mid-year graduates), this initiative captures that ongoing waste stream.

Run by a small team of students and staff, the store was designed entirely with secondhand and reused materials. From items discovered in the abandoned space to goods sourced from the reuse center "The Great Exchange" in Devens, MA, the store embodies circular economy principles in both form and function. Since opening in February 2025, it has quickly become a hub for sustainability, hosting three zero-waste events during the competition period, including a donation drive for the Alianza Domestic Violence Shelter and a collaborative bike repair pop-up with the UMass Bike Coop.

In April, we proudly launched the Artist & Vendor Catalogue—a creative initiative spotlighting campus talent. We gathered student submissions and invited each artist to design their own slide, encouraging full recognition for their unique craft. Beyond visibility, we offer tangible support: artists receive discounts on materials from the store and resources to help them grow. Our goal is to nurture a circular, student-centered art economy where creativity and sustainability go hand in hand.

Beyond events and collaborations, the store offers themed sales tied to holidays, a growing Instagram presence, and a strong collaborative spirit with other student organizations. While it operates on a lean budget, reuse is core to its mission: nearly everything used was previously donated or salvaged.

The store now serves as a living lab for waste diversion and student leadership, making zero waste visible, accessible, and replicable. Its success has led to funding from the UMass Office of Equity and Inclusion to

launch a wellness series and recognition by the Chancellor. It fills a functional need while inspiring a cultural shift toward mindful consumption.

Planning steps & timeline to implement:

1. Secure permanent storefront space (Spring 2023) - Work with campus planning to establish a permanent location to avoid moving costs and strenuous planning.
2. Build brand identity and mission (September 2024) - Discussed brand name, theme, colors, and overall mission and impact we hope to make on the community.
3. Build a Business Plan and Operations Manual (October 2024)
 - To establish methodology to properly implement seamless daily operations and store efficiency
 - Developed and implemented a campus survey to inform Business Plan and Operations Manual
 - Received over 250 responses, which were used to inform key store operations, including: store hours, days open, desired merchandise, store design, and more.
 - Works as a handbook/manual for future staff and/or volunteers.
4. Storefront design (November-December 2024)
 - Used previously donated or second-hand items
 - This is essential – as a secondhand store, using secondhand products encourages stakeholders to build resourcefulness skills and allows the brand to stay aligned with their mission of sustainability and reuse.
 - Created an appealing design catered to the students' requests and accessibility demands.
 - Used posters and signage to indicate prices, events, and other need-to-know information
5. Social Media development (January 2025)
 - Launched a New2U Instagram handle to advertise grand opening @new2u.umass
 - Allowed for collaboration across multiple clubs and groups
 - Provided a platform to showcase and highlight store opportunities – whether that be new items, job opportunities, or events
 - Useful for advertising surveys
6. Advertise and Collaborate (Ongoing, though initiated February 2025)
 - Made posters and display across campus
 - Teamed up with other clubs and advertisements to spread brand awareness, and potentially even hold events and other collaboration opportunities
 - Created frequent-flyer cards – huge incentive for students!
 - Utilized campus-wide emails and TV Advertisements for awareness

7. Final touches (early February 2025)

- Gather office supplies for behind the counter – pens, paper, staplers etcetera
- Planned grand opening, host an event

8. Grand Opening! (February 13th 2025)

- Catered event
- Planned time for tours, a few speakers, raffle, and celebratory ribbon-cutting to build community around the storefront
- Left plenty of time for shopping after the ribbon cutting.
- Invited the school mascot.
- Great to engage stakeholders and important faculty and staff

9. Host events and build community space (Ongoing, though initiated March 2025)

- Continue to engage with the community
- Work with facilities + student affairs
- Use surveys to shape student-centered design

Resources and stakeholders involved:

Staff:

- Sustainable UMass:
 - Ezra Small, Campus Sustainability Manager
 - Laurie Simmons, Assistant Campus Sustainability Manager
 - planning, move-out & tag sale leadership & execution, and volunteer coordination
 - Eva Bergloff, Student – Store Manager
 - Led this project in the Fall 2024 semester as part of her for-credit fellowship
 - designed and prepped storefront, operations manual & business plan, maintained store operations
 - Worked 20 hours a week, paid \$15 an hour
 - Maitri Chandrashekar, Student – Events and Advertising Coordinator
 - Took charge of Instagram advertisements and events with other clubs and registered student organizations
 - Worked 5 hours a week, paid \$15 an hour

- Mohommad Mohommad Shahrukh, Student – Volunteer Coordinator
 - Worked with volunteers to track hours
 - Worked 5 hours a week, paid \$15 an hour
- Dhanush Reddy Arragonda, Student – Operations Coordinator
 - Brainstormed inventory management systems to implement at the store.
 - Worked 5 hours a week, paid \$15 an hour
 - 10+ Student Volunteers – supported store operations during open hours

Program supported by:

*These groups support New2U through the annual New2U move-out collection and move-in tag sale. The storefront operations were not developed in collaboration with these groups, though their support was essential for the overall program's success.

- Operational Services (formerly ResLife Facilities Operations) - planning, tent rental, move-out operation & logistics (traffic patterns, etc.), meal tickets, golf cart gas
- Office of Waste Management - planning, provision and set up of tent and storage location materials (toters, pallets, gaylords, etc.), removal of broken rigid plastic (for recycling) and trash from outside collection tents, removal of banned materials and mattress pads from roll-off dumpsters
- Residential Life - promotion and training of hall RA staff & getting information to residents
- New Students Orientation & Transitions – promotion of move-in tag sale
- International Programs Office – promotion of move-in tag sale
- School of Earth and Sustainability - ongoing promotion support of all New2U efforts, events, and store
- Student Affairs & Campus Life - promotion of volunteer recruitment for New2U and move-out collections
- UMass Career Hub - Worked with New2U to advertise and share the business

Funding:

- With the opening of the store, New2U is now classified as a revenue-generating operation on campus, which means that the funds we take in from the tag sale and the store are meant to support ongoing operations of the program (student payroll, renting tents and hiring movers for collections, etc.)
- Fall 2024 New2U tag sale revenue \$18,340
- Spring 2025 New2U Thrift Store revenue \$3,419
- \$8,000 from MassDEP Reduce, Reuse, Repair Microgrant (awarded 2024 for startup costs associated with opening the store)

- Support from Sunrise UMass Amherst chapter using some of their 2023 end of year budget for store needs
- Grants for future projects:
 - \$1,400: UMass Office of Equity and Inclusion – Campus Climate Improvement Grant
 - \$5,000: LARP Department’s Go Get the World Sustainable Community Development Scholarship

Describe the Results of this campaign component:

- **Daily Hampshire Gazette Cover Page**



- **LARP Department news story and Instagram video:**
 - [Article](#)
 - [Instagram Video](#)
- **Store Manager received Robert F. Scanlon Employee of the Year Award for her work designing the New2U Thrift Store.** Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VzwtSHM2T8>
- **Endorsed by UMass Chancellor**

Below: UMass Chancellor Javier Reyes taking a selfie with Danush, or Operations Coordinator.



- **Various collaborations with multiple departments and clubs**

Club/Department	Flyer/Social Media Post
<p>Bike COOP: Outdoor Bike Workshop with bagels and great vibes! Ask any question about your bike and the team will be happy to help.</p>	 
<p>MassPIRG: New2U x MassPIRG Tabling at the weekly UMass Farmers Market</p>	
<p>MassPIRG x GirlUP: New2U became a drop-off location for the Alianza Drive, a collaboration between New2U, MassPIRG, and GirlUP UMass to collect items for the Alianza domestic violence shelter in Holyoke Massachusetts. We also held a bracelet-making event in the store space, where the bracelets were sold the next day at the Student Union as part of their fundraiser for the drive.</p>	 
<p>UMass Career Hub We collaborated with the UMass Career Hub to make & share social media content for New2U, to help us expand our mission on campus.</p>	<p>https://www.instagram.com/reel/DI114gWsQq2/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFiZA==</p>
<p>Various Student Projects: We had the pleasure of working with various groups of students on campus who were interested in doing work with us for their assignments & projects. Multiple students interviewed us to write articles for their courses - we</p>	<p>These three students, Katherine Heavey, Ashna Omar, and Lyvia Migliaccio, worked with us to design posters and flyers to help advertise across campus. Here is some of their work:</p>

do not have access to their finished assignments.



Specific measurable impact figures:

- Survey with over 250 student responses
- Donated over 210 pounds of food to the Amherst Survival Center
- \$2,000+ in the revenue during first two months
- 100% positive feedback from customers
- Over 160 unique sales
- Held 3 events –
 - Alianza Drive in collaboration with MassPirg and GirlUP UMass
 - Held a Bracelet Making event as well to fundraise
 - Collected over 400 goods for the Alianza Domestic Violence Shelter in Holyoke
 - Bike Repair event in collaboration with the UMass Bike coop
 - Pop Up New2U Thrift Store at Earth Day Extravaganza
- Grew Instagram following from 0 to 314 with over 160 posts/reels and over 30,000 views!
- Awarded over \$3,000 in grants during competition period for future work

- \$1,400 From the UMass Office of Equity and Inclusion – Campus Climate Improvement Grant
 - For a future event series to take place in Fall 2025, titled the “Making, Movement, and Mindfulness Event Series” to educate students on the importance of work-life balance.
- \$5,000 from the Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department – Go Get the World Sustainable Community Development Scholarship:
 - Supports juniors in the Sustainable Community Development major who are planning a community project which will have positive impact on the communities with which they collaborate.

What would you do differently in the future?

In the future, we would implement more ways to track our sustainability impact at UMass. In this first semester as a thrift store, we focused most of our energy on store operations. We are committed to refining our approach and positioning ourselves as a welcoming and accessible thrift store on campus. By directing most of our time towards the store, we lacked time and capacity to collect specific data and key performance indicators that would reflect our impact as a sustainable program. Other than our sales and student feedback (100% positive BTW), we lack some of the data that could really demonstrate our impact (#donations, #items sold/inventory tracking, etc).

We hope to implement processes for the next academic year that will fill these data tracking gaps.

Additionally, we would like to allow students to use our event space during store hours to study and complete academic work. Placemaking is essential on college campuses to foster connection and progress. As a student resource, New2U hopes to make a positive impact on academic careers, and in the heart of the largest residential area at UMass, New2U is a great area for student engagement. By providing a dual study and shopping space which is both casual and comfortable, New2U becomes an escape hidden within the university, encouraging personal and academic success.

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

I encourage other colleges to tap into the immense energy and creativity of their students. Many are deeply passionate about sustainability and eager for meaningful opportunities to contribute. Engaging students in real-world projects not only supports their personal and professional development but also brings fresh ideas and hands-on help to campus initiatives. Collaborating with staff allows students to gain practical experience and insight into the operational side of sustainability at a local level—adding depth and value to their education.

Even when projects are complex or labor-intensive, students are often willing to contribute in exchange for academic credit, modest pay, or simply the chance to grow. With thoughtful planning, student collaboration can reduce institutional costs and spark long-lasting impact.

At UMass Amherst, for instance, our weekly Farmers Market features dozens of student-run businesses offering secondhand clothing and sustainable products. These entrepreneurs could benefit greatly from collaborating on pop-up shops or permanent storefront designs. Business students could assist with cost-benefit analyses, operational planning, and marketing.

Sustainability majors could assess and improve the store’s waste reduction practices. Architecture and Landscape Architecture students could repurpose unused campus spaces into thrift stores or study lounges—gaining real-world experience and creating valuable design proposals. Art students could bring life to these spaces through murals and visual installations, transforming outdated interiors into vibrant community hubs.

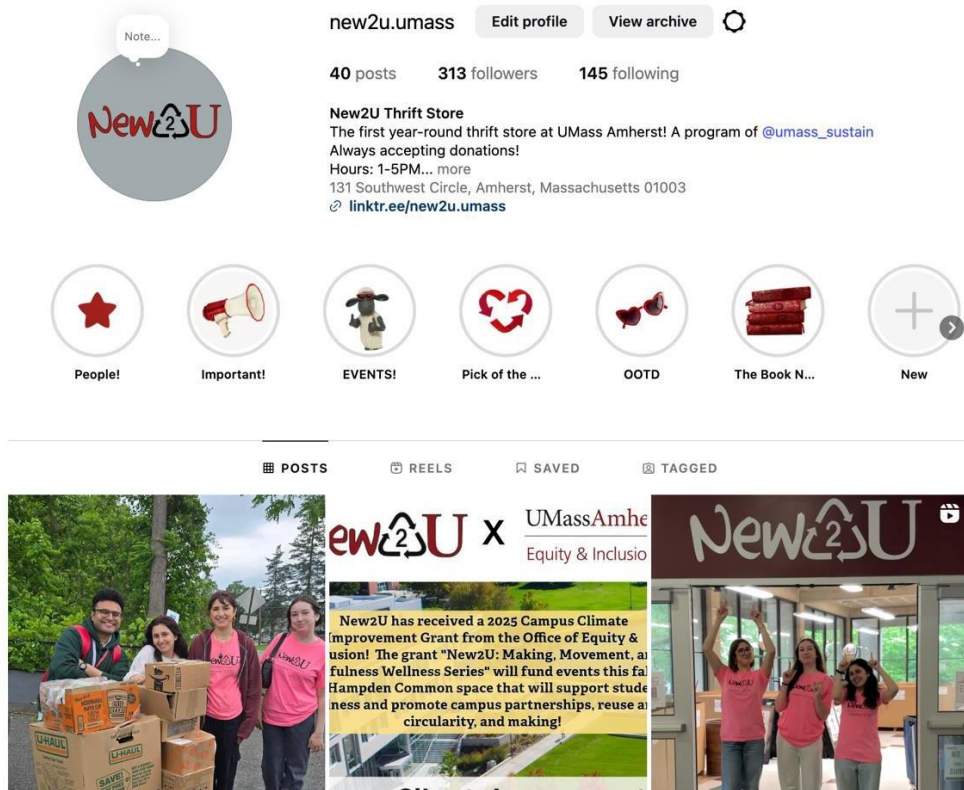
There are endless possibilities for mutually beneficial partnerships like these—colleges just need to be willing to harness the talents already thriving on their campuses.

Photos and Graphics:

Please follow this link to see a comprehensive folder of our photos and advertisements from this past year at New2U. [CRZW Case Study Photos](#)

*All the links below are included in the folder above.

- Pictures the day before Opening Day (Credit: John Solem, UMass Photographer):
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lkxTCUtN84sJ_2lLoPr4nlgSBdujyeY3?usp=sharing
- Pictures from Opening Day: Grand opening photos
- Flyers and advertisements designed by Student Employees Maitri Chandrashekar and Eva Bergloff.



Screenshot of our New2U Instagram, having collected over 313 followers since late January 2025. Content posted by student employees Maitri Chandrashekar, Eva Bergloff, and Sustainability Manager Ezra Small

