



2026 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

University of Washington

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Focus of Case Study

Education and Awareness – outreach and marketing strategies

Detailed description of campaign or effort

UW Recycling organized 8 waste reduction and reuse events during the Campus Race to Zero Waste competition period. The events were Trivia Week, the UW Trash Art Contest, a Mending Fair, a Husky Goods Free Store Pop-up and 4 tabling events to promote reusable to-go serviceware. Events were compiled on [our blog](#).

During Trivia Week (February 23 - 27), our team posted daily questions to our Instagram Story ([@uwrecycling](#)). UW Recycling staff presented waste questions via captioned short form videos and participants selected from 2-4 multiple choice answers. Answers were posted to our Instagram Story the following day. Participants with the correct answer each day were entered into a raffle. After the event, we randomly selected 5 winners to receive a reusable cotton produce bag.

The Trash Art Contest was held February 13 – March 27 for all UW students, staff and faculty. Our contest asked participants to create an art piece from items normally thought of as trash. The contest categories were 2D art, 3D art and textile art. Contest information and rules were shared on [our blog](#). Contest judges (UW Recycling staff and UW Sustainability staff) selected two winners per category using a pre-determined rubric. Winners received e-gift cards to local low-waste shops or art supply stores. All submissions were highlighted on [our blog](#) and winning pieces were exhibited at the UW's undergraduate library.

We hosted a Mending Fair on February 19 at The MILL, an on-campus makerspace. This event offered UW community members free clothing repair by volunteer menders from [Seattle REconomy](#), on a first-come, first-served basis. UW Recycling staff coordinated menders, completed attendee intake and answered attendee questions.

We held a Husky Goods Free Store Pop-Up at a residence hall on March 5. We co-hosted this event with two student organizations: [Students Expressing Environmental Dedication \(SEED\)](#) and [Huskies for Equitable Sustainability \(HuES\)](#). At the event, students shopped for free stuff, like clothing and room essentials, donated by other students. Donations were collected during the event and in advance via donation bins in two residence hall lobbies and several laundry rooms.

Our team tabled outside campus Starbucks cafes in February to promote the use of reusable to-go serviceware. We promoted UW Dining's bring-your-own-cup 25 cent discount as well as the UW's reusable OZZI container

program. Many attendees did not know about the discount. Attendees played our coffee cup themed trivia game to win a reusable metal straw kit.

Planning steps & timeline to implement

General

- Before Campus Race to Zero Waste, UW Recycling staff met to plan activities and Marketing Specialist drafted blog post
- At the start of Campus Race to Zero Waste, staff posted blog (sustainability.uw.edu/blog/crzw-2026) and updated throughout Campus Race to Zero Waste as needed

Trivia Week

- In January 2026, UW Recycling staff (Marketing Specialist, Program Coordinators) met to determine content and dates for Trivia Week
- In January and February 2026, staff drafted and finalized content (including questions/answers) then filmed and edited videos for Trivia Week
- During Trivia Week (2/23-2/27), staff posted 1 trivia story per day
- During Trivia Week (2/23-2/27), staff used a randomized generator to select 1 winning participant per question
- After Trivia Week (3/2), staff notified winning participants and distributed prizes

Trash Art Contest

- In January and February 2026, UW Recycling staff (Marketing Specialist) contacted other campus groups and departments to coordinate collaborations (such as the UW Libraries and potential staff judges)
- In January, staff updated the contest online submission form (used in previous years), contest rules and judging rubric based on previous feedback from participants, judges and the team
- In February, staff created promotional material about the contest and worked with other campus groups to cross-promote
- On February 13, staff opened the contest for submissions (published submission form and blog post with submission instructions)
- During the Trash Art Contest campaign (2/13-3/27), staff posted promotional content on our Instagram, on flyer advertisements in buildings and submitted the contest to email lists run by the [UW School of Art + Art History + Design](#) and the [UW Program on the Environment](#)
- After the Trash Art Contest, the Marketing Specialist provided submissions to the judging panel and collected judges' scores, then notified participants about results (including coordinating exhibition and prize distribution to winning submissions)
- UW Recycling staff worked on a blog post to highlight the winning pieces and promoted via UW platforms

Mending Fair

- In January 2026, UW Recycling staff contacted the UW HFS Makerspaces to explore partnership options for a repair event
 - Although the UW HFS Makerspaces could not partner on this event, they confirmed they could rent a space to our team – our team paid rental costs with the event budget
- In January, UW Recycling staff met to determine the scope of the repair event
 - We decided to limit accepted items to clothing
 - Since the event was limited to clothing only, we decided to name the event “Mending Fair” instead of “Repair Fair,” which is more general

- In January, UW Recycling staff contacted several non-UW repair organizations to inquire about menders for a clothing mending event
 - Seattle REconomy was able to provide free/unpaid volunteer menders
 - Other organizations offered to provide menders at a price – our team was unable to financially compensate menders with this event budget
- In February, staff created and posted promotional material (social media, blog posts) about the event and worked with other campus groups to cross-promote
- In February, staff created an attendee intake form to gather data about the Mending Fair
 - Questions included the issue with the item (e.g. holes, broken zipper, pocket tear), whether attendees could complete the repair themselves, how they learned about the Mending Fair, whether the event met their expectations and their satisfaction with the repair (once completed)
 - If attendees reported that they could complete the repair themselves, we recorded why they opted to attend the Mending Fair instead. If attendees could not complete the repair themselves, we asked if the attendee is interested in learning how.
 - We also recorded whether the attendee's item was successfully mended
- Held event on February 19 at UW Makerspace
- After the Mending Fair, staff analyzed the intake form data to determine event impact

Husky Goods Free Store Pop-Up

- In January 2026, UW Recycling staff contacted two student organizations, SEED and HuES, to initiate planning for a pop-up free thrift sale (part of the ongoing Husky Goods Free Store initiative at the UW campus)
- In January and February, UW Recycling staff worked with SEED and HuES to determine event logistics, including donation collection, event date/time and event location
 - UW Recycling placed donation collection containers in 2 residence halls, supported by our existing partnership with UW Housing & Food Services
 - SEED placed donation collection containers in residence hall laundry rooms
 - The event was hosted during the penultimate week of classes in Winter Quarter (UW uses the quarter system) to avoid conflict with final exams and spring break
 - The event was hosted at a residence hall to better reach students
- In February, UW Recycling staff (Marketing Specialist) created promotional material about the contest and worked with other campus groups to cross-promote
- In March, staff collected donations from the donation collection drives
- On the event day, staff transported donations from the UW Recycling warehouse to the event location (communal space in a campus residence hall)
- During the Husky Goods Free Store Pop-Up, staff assisted attendees, took action photos to use in future marketing content and provided general outreach and logistics support
 - Two student groups, SEED and HuES, tabled during the event
- After the Husky Goods Free Store Pop-Up, staff transported remaining donations back to the UW Recycling warehouse to store for future pop-up events

Tabling

- In January 2026, UW Recycling staff (Program Coordinators) coordinated an outreach schedule
 - Staff cross-referenced available outreach dates with popular coffee times and our team's availability to create an outreach schedule targeting specific spaces
 - Staff obtained approval from the appropriate UW contacts to conduct outreach in the proposed locations

- In January and February, UW Recycling staff (Marketing Specialist, Program Coordinators) created promotional materials for outreach events (flyers/posters for the table, trivia game materials)
- During Campus Race to Zero Waste, UW Recycling staff (Program Coordinators, Student Assistants) tabled at Population Health (table provided by building, supplies provided by UW Recycling) and on Red Square (table and tabling supplies provided by UW Recycling)

Resources and stakeholders involved

Budget	
1 st and 2 nd place prizes for 8 Trash Art Contest winners	\$450
Advertising for Trash Art Contest	\$0 (advertised through no-cost mediums, did not use paid advertising)
Giveaways for Waste Trivia Week participants	\$7
Giveaways for tabling events <i>\$2.81 per item</i>	\$230.42
Mending Fair space rental <i>\$33 per hour</i>	\$99
Mending Fair menders	\$0 (menders were unpaid volunteers)
Supplies for coffee cup trivia game (single-use cups)	\$0 (samples provided for free by UW Dining)
TOTAL	\$786.42

The primary cost/resource was staff time. Staff involved from our team (UW Recycling) were the Marketing Specialist, three Program Coordinators and two Student Assistants.

Our efforts were supported by various campus departments and groups, including Housing & Food Services Makerspaces (provided space for Mending Fair), University of Washington Libraries (supported exhibition of winning pieces in Trash Art Contest), Hans Rosling Center for Population Health (academic building, hosted reusable serveware tabling), UW Sustainability (provided a Trash Art Contest judge), various University marketing and communication groups (University Marketing and News, UW Facilities Employee newsletter, UW Sustainability) and collaboration with UW student groups (SEED, HuES).

Results of this campaign component

Trivia Week

- 72 unique people engaged
- 29 people participated on multiple days
- 17 new followers to our Instagram account during the event

Trash Art Contest

- 19 submissions
- 6 winners
- 1,245 [web page](#) views in February and March
- 2,613 Instagram promotional post views
- 737 views in April on [blog post showcasing winning submissions](#)

Mending Fair

- 33 attendees
- 20 people had clothing items mended
- 87% of intake form respondents reported that the event met their expectations
- 234 [web page](#) views (promoted on various platforms, social, e-calendars, and e-newsletters)

- 5,975 views, 159 likes, 103 shares and 26 saves on event Instagram post

Husky Goods Free Store Pop-up

- 124 attendees
- 281 [web page](#) views (promoted on various platforms, social, e-calendars, and e-newsletters) in February and March
- 8,575 views and 274 interactions combined on two separate Instagram posts about event

Reusable To-Go Serviceware Tabling

- 4 tabling events
- 82 attendees

What would you do differently in the future?

In future, we will begin campaign planning during the UW's Autumn Quarter (September-December). We started planning this year's campaign in January 2026 and ran out of time to finalize several new initiatives. In January, our team contacted 13 [campus programs focused on waste reduction and reuse](#) to explore outreach partnership opportunities. We partnered with 5 groups. These collaborations resulted in: a [seed ball workshop with a student farming club](#), an [upcycled item workshop with HFS Makerspace](#), a [video tour of the ASUW Bike Shop](#), a video tour of the Salvage Wood Program, social media projects with the UW Farm and a webinar on University and personal property resale with UW Surplus and the Husky Goods Free Store. These initiatives will occur after Campus Race to Zero Waste because we need more time to fully plan and execute them. A longer planning period will better distribute the workload for our team and enable us to fulfill our full scope.

In future, we hope to assess the broader shape of this campaign at UW Seattle. The University of Washington has participated in Campus Race to Zero Waste for over 20 years. The UW campus has changed. We hope to define a focus for our campaign efforts by examining what we want to prioritize and how we define impact. We may introduce a theme. The outreach events and activities we create may change as we explore how Campus Race to Zero Waste grows at the UW.

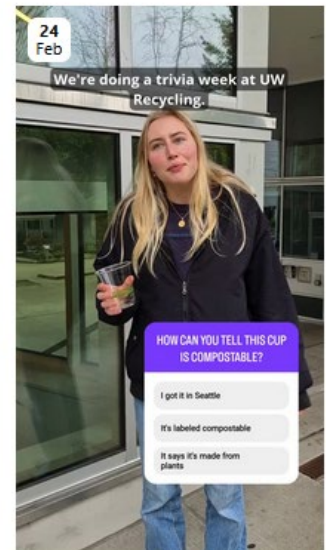
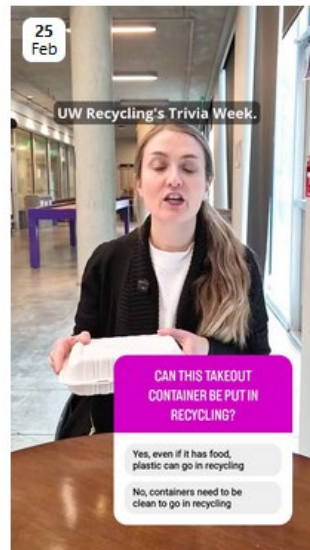
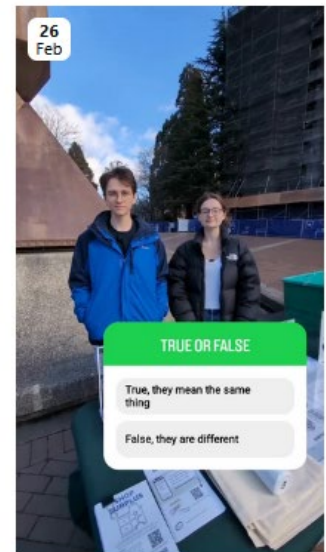
What advice would you give to another college that wanted to do a similar effort?

We advise colleges to consider the goal of each outreach initiative when determining the format. We tried several new ideas this year and found that some ideas did not work because the goal did not match the format.

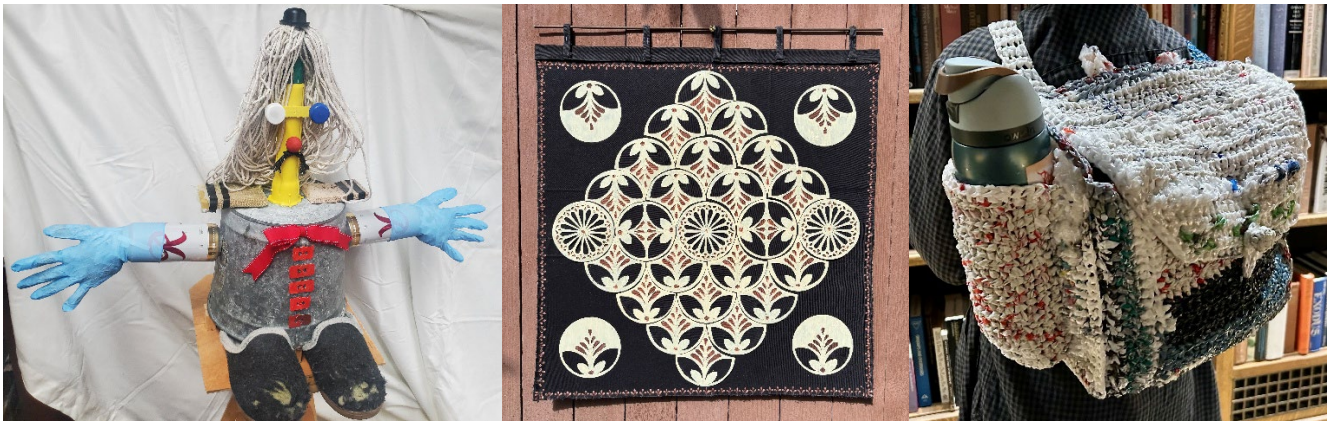
For example, our reusable to-go serviceware tabling goal is to encourage reuse by spreading the word about a discount program through conversations with UW students, staff and faculty. We selected Red Square as a tabling location because Red Square is in the center of campus with high foot traffic. However, this location was not a good match for our goal. People most often pass through Red Square during 10-minute periods between classes. The UW campus is large and students often need the full 10 minutes to travel between classes. This time restriction does not encourage conversations. Our goal was better supported when tabling directly next to an indoor café order line. People were more open to conversation when waiting in line.

As another example, our Trivia Week goal is to educate the UW community about proper waste disposal. This year, we trialed using videos to present trivia questions because shortform videos are increasingly valued on social media. We anticipated that this format would engage more people. However, this year's Waste Trivia Week received less interaction than previous years (without videos). While we could explore social media strategies to increase engagement (such as posting on Reels), we are considering our overall use of social media. A different format, such as an in-person trivia event, may better achieve our goal.

Photos and graphics



A selection of questions and answers (posted the following day) for our Waste Trivia Week, hosted on Instagram Stories. Credit: UW Recycling.



A selection of submissions to our Trash Art Contest. The statue is made from used cleaning supplies and home items. The wall hanging is made from old jeans and yogurt container lids. The bag is woven from old plastic bags. Credit: University of Washington (Peter Brodsky, Marisa Garcia, Asher Jayme).



Attendees and volunteer menders at UW Recycling's Mending Fair, hosted in partnership with Seattle REconomy, at The MILL in McCarty Hall. Credit: UW Recycling.



Attendees select clothing at UW Recycling's Husky Goods Free Store Pop-up, hosted in partnership with SEED and HuES, at Spratlen Hall. Credit: UW Recycling.



UW Recycling's reusable cup service outreach table at the Hans Rosling Center for Population Health, UW Seattle campus. Credit: UW Recycling.