Final Report

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Sustainable Purchasing Intern
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Introduction

The aim of this position is to maximize Oberlin’s potential for environmental sustainability through the use of recycling programs for office supplies and the purchasing of certified “green” products. The position was (originally) aimed towards research of frequently used products by the College and the suggestion of more “green” alternatives to staff holding purchase cards (P-cards). By the end of the semester, I had hoped to fully implement a well-publicized, campus-wide ink and toner cartridge recycling program, which this institution is currently lacking. Due to delays in communication, the program is ready for implementation, but the boxes need to be delivered to each designated administrative building.

Accomplishments

- Made contacts with individuals involved in sustainability efforts: Konica Minolta (provider of campus workstation printers), purchasing office staff, facilities, building managers, and OCOPE representatives in order to further initiatives
- Designed an ink cartridge recycling program for Konica Minolta recyclables to be carried out with help from the Resource Conservation Team. Boxes are currently located in the OES office, ready to be distributed in the Fall by the RCT, with my help.
- Planned to design a complementary recycling program to accommodate recyclables from desktop printers and non-Konica products.
- Planned to begin designing a program, perhaps through Terra Cycle, to recycle various items that are generally non-recyclable.

Challenges

- Determining the appropriate party to contact regarding the implementation of new programs
- Lack of timely responses by recipients of emails regarding an Ink Cartridge Recycling Program (i.e.: determining where to place a recycling box in each campus building)
Key Stakeholders

- Bridget Flynn (primary supervisor)
- Keith Watkins (for clarifications, procedural questions related to campus facilities operations)
- Jim Klaiber (purchasing questions)
- Rick Snodgrass (purchasing audits, contact with Staples representative)
- RCT (implementation of sustainability-related programs): recycle@oberlin.edu
- Konica Minolta (supplier of workstation copy machines)

Deliverables

- Aimed to complete implementation of ink cartridge/toner recycling program for all campus workstation products.
  - Instruction sheet to be paired with collection boxes (attached)

Recommendations

- Continue implementing programs to accommodate a wider variety of recyclables
- Work with Purchasing Office to evaluate the sustainability of products that are purchased most often in administrative offices.
- Engage Administrative Assistants regarding sustainable purchasing decisions and educate them on preferable products.

Conclusion

- This semester served as a valuable lesson regarding the proper channels (and individuals) to pursue while designing a program for Oberlin College. I learned which steps must be taken to ensure that a program is appropriate for this institution, as well as which steps are unnecessary. I look forward to continuing to design and implement programs that will further Oberlin’s sustainability efforts. Upon stationing the recycling boxes (with labeled directions) in each building at the beginning of Fall semester, I intend to write a blog post and send out a faculty and staff-wide email to alert people of the new program and how it functions.