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 had been currently lacking.

Accomplishments

- This semester was primarily used to implement the new ink-cartridge recycling program and carry out the necessary research to determine which alternative recycling programs the college will develop next.
- As described in the “Deliverables” section, a memo was composed to announce the implementation of the program.
- Several important connections with stakeholders were solidified.
- Collaboration with the RCT was highly successful and will be key to future OES work.

Challenges

- Scheduling meetings with the RCT to distribute boxes for the ink-cartridge recycling program.
- Evaluating whether various Terra Cycle recycling brigades would be worthwhile, given the amount of waste that Oberlin would generate for each item-specific collection program.

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): Rachell Johns (rjohns@BTOhio.com) and Linda Malinkey (lmalinkey@BTOhio.com)
• Scott Callow (questions related to custodial procedure and staff)

Deliverables

• Fully developed ink-cartridge recycling program with ongoing help from the Resource Conservation Team.
• Memo announcing the implementation of the above program, to be circulated to the Oberlin faculty and staff.
• Research of various Terra Cycle brigades that OES may consider implementing.

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.

Unanswered Questions

• N/A

Conclusion

I found that parties that I reached out to this semester for assistance were far more responsive than they were last year, which greatly helped in gathering information regarding the viability of potential recycling programs. I would be eager to see this position develop more in the area of aiding P-holders in making more sustainable purchases for their offices.