Final Report

Sarah Epstein
Sustainability Engagement Intern
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Introduction

The aim of this position is to engage more students and community members with sustainability topics; fostering a community with sustainability in mind; and integrating infrastructural and behavioral changes on campus. This position includes planning events, administering the Green Room Program, aiding in various communication efforts from the Office of Environmental Sustainability to companies, speakers, the student body, community, etc. By the end of the year, I hope to revamp OES Hangouts; aid in From Coal to Carbon Neutrality continuity and follow up with working groups; continue to work on the Green Room Program; install the bike fixit stations; and generally attend to tasks as directed by the Sustainability Coordinator.

Accomplishments

• Published articles: I wrote an article for the OES eNewsletter on November 15th consisting of interviews of students who participated in the Green Room Program, mainly focusing on ways to improve individual and collective sustainability practices on campus. I also wrote an article for The Grape, a student publication, giving a broad overview of Ecolympics and highlighting certain activities in order to raise awareness of the three-week event.
• Administered the Green Room Program: In order to both catalogue and reward students who participated in the Green Room Program, I updated the program participant list on a weekly basis and sent certificates, as well as interviewed some outstanding participants. However, I was unable to finish the last four certificates due to complications (I did not have Adobe programs on my computer—I will have access to Adobe in the 2014-2015 school year).
• Installed a Bike Fixit Station: I worked with the Green EDGE Fund, Dero Bike Company, FacOps and the Sustainability Coordinator in order to install a bike maintenance station on campus. In order to do this, I met with and emailed various stakeholders, and worked collaboratively with the groups and company mentioned above. While only one station was installed this school year, we hope to install two more in the summer for the fall semester.
• Corresponded with Working Groups for From Coal to Carbon Neutrality: I catalogued the working group notes from the From Coal to Carbon Neutrality workshop. I attempted to start both a dialogue and prompt working groups to continue their project after the workshop, this included emails and check-ins with various groups. I hope to continue working on bringing the projects to fruition in the coming semesters.
Revamped Green Teas: I worked with the Sustainability Coordinator in order to recreate “Green Teas” into OES Hangouts. This included scheduling rooms, sending announcements, creating posters, organizing food, and generally promoting the Hangouts. The Hangouts now are focused on inter-campus and town community building and a much more informal way. They include food and fun.

Scheduled Speaker/aided in Ecolympics: This year I scheduled a speaker, Jordana DeZeeuw Spencer, to speak at Oberlin during Ecolympics. I aided in Ecolympics, including hanging and creating posters, sending announcements, promoting events, etc. However, I was not as intimately involved as I was in the past, and hope to be more involved in the coming spring semester.

Challenges

I felt that the biggest barrier for me was the lack of student communication. Oberlin students overcommit, and I found it hard to 1) get in touch with students 2) schedule meetings 3) have them follow-through. However, this is not due to a shortcoming of the Office, rather they are an issue of Oberlin students in general. Therefore, it would be helpful if the Office strategized about how to get in touch with and follow through with students on projects. Moreover, it would be helpful to strategize about different methods of engaging students so that they would be keener to follow through on projects and on feedback for different campaigns. One other challenge I faced was a lack of deadlines and at times, a lack of specific tasks. Bridget is extremely easy going, and while I absolutely enjoy working for her, I do believe that she could give me more concrete deadlines. Moreover, Bridget tends to over-task herself. I feel it would be, at times, less stressful for her and for the office overall if she delegated more minute tasks to student interns. Overall, however, I felt that the intra-office work environment was extremely cohesive and Bridget was always an excellent supervisor. I could not ask for a more engaging and understanding boss.

Key Stakeholders

- **Green EGDE Fund:** edgefund@oberlin.edu
  - Key player and major financial support for the bike fixit stations. Interaction included meetings, email correspondence, and submitting a grant proposal to GEF.

- **FacOps: Keith Watkins and Scott.Callow@oberlin.edu**
  - Scott oversees custodial staff and will tell them not to take posters down. Also worked with him on fixit stations.

- **Dero Bike Company (Stephanie Beebe): SBeebe@dero.com**
  - Main contact at Dero Bike Company; corresponded with and set up delivery and invoice for fixit stations.

- **John Petersen:** john.peterson@oberlin.edu
  - Started Ecolympics, attended staff meetings with him. He also runs the Dashboard.

- **Green scene email list:** greenscene@oberlin.edu
- The mailing list that all bulletins and mass emails get sent to regarding anything enviro related
  - **Cindy Frantz**: cindy.frantz@oberlin.edu
    - Co-Head of the From Coal to carbon neutrality workshops. Attended meetings and worked on the workshops.
  - **Recycled Products Co-op**: recyprod@oberlin.edu
    - Environmental group on campus. Useful resource for email forwarding and integral to ecolympics.
  - **Michele Gross (CDS)**: mgross@oberlin.edu
    - Head of CDS- meatless Monday campaign and Ecolympics event planning
  - **Rick Panfil (CDS)**: Rpanfil@oberlin.edu
    - Part of CDS: ecolympics event planning
  - **Oberlin Bike Coop**: bikecoop@oberlin.edu
    - Bike repair and enthusiast cooperative on campus. Ecolympics events and coordination regarding bike fixit stations
  - **CDS Recyclers**: cdsrecyc@oberlin.edu
    - Major player in Ecolympics and environmental group on campus working on campus dining sustainability. Also part of the recycling campaign on campus.

**Deliverables**

Green Room Program interviews and participant list:
https://sites.google.com/a/oberlin.edu/green-room/photos

Bike Fixit Stations: Located Outside Mudd:
https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.743708712322282.1073741826.266991859993972&type=3

OES Hangouts: Example: Facebook event page:
https://www.facebook.com/events/628736997188472/

Intern Blog: http://oberlinsustainability.wordpress.com/2014/05/08/certifiably-a-good-year/#more-196

*From Coal to Carbon Neutrality* Spread Sheet of projects

**Recommendations**

I recommend booking speakers far in advance so as to avoid unnecessary travel costs. I also advise that one should be extremely vocal about events that are occurring. I found that publicity was the most important aspect to accomplishing all of my tasks involving the community and the student body (i.e. OES Hangouts, speakers, Green Room Program). I also advise that one continues to be
persistent. Don’t be afraid to send a multitude of follow-up emails and continuously check-in with students, faculty, and community members when working on a project.

**Unanswered Questions**

I have no unanswered questions.

**Conclusion**

I feel that working at OES taught me how to be a better communicator. I feel as if my administrative skills have improved immensely. I have also learned how to work with a team extremely efficiently, and am extraordinarily grateful to have had the opportunity to learn and grow at OES for two years.