Final Report

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Writing Intern
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Introduction

This position was implemented this year to break down the dense topics/technical terms of sustainability into articles for the website that the whole Oberlin community can access/comprehend. Our aim is to find more ways of engaging the students in our office by featuring them in articles or creating interesting graphics to lure them in.

However, this position also includes a social media aspect. If we can't reach students through articles and Q+A, social media is the best way to communicate to a majority of Obies. By designing clever Facebook headers and posters, and updating social media with interesting (sometimes funny) sustainability news from around the world, we want students --and the public at large-- to get excited about all the fantastic things happening at OES.

Accomplishments

- **Published articles**: I wrote an article on the Oberlin power supply being nearly 90% renewable (published 2/29/16). I also published an interview with Gabriela Goldsmith for the Green Room Program website (11/15/15).
- **Marketing**: I created a wide variety of posters, Facebook headers and backgrounds for various Ecolympics events and OES news. We got 200+ likes to our Facebook this year!
- **Green Room Program**: I continued this program on campus by designing certificates and updating the program website to include our 30 new participants spring semester.
- **Social Media**: I updated the OES Facebook page and Twitter with entertaining, but relevant sustainability news, but also took photos at Oberlin Events (Big Parade) and reminded students of environmental opportunities happening on campus.

Challenges

A lot of the challenges this year were about deciding what my position entailed. At first the position was writing articles for the website/Facebook/OES newsletter and updating the google doc for question submissions. However, the grid article ended up taking a lot longer than we expected because there were just so many details that needed to be jam packed. Because I was so new to sustainability, it was difficult for my mind to wrap around these huge concepts months after I had written the article and I left a lot of the editing to Sean, Bridget and Megan which should have been my responsibility.
Additionally, when Mae Kate left for study abroad this year, I took on the social media aspect of OES and the Green Room Program but sort of left the writing aspect behind. Fortunately, I really enjoyed posting articles/photos to Facebook and designing posters for OES events, but it is definitely a huge ordeal for one person. It was a little hard to keep up with buffering enough material to post on all three platforms and a lot of times, I would wait it out until one week later. More specifically, I posted a lot more to Facebook than I did to the Instagram and Twitter. But in social media, timeliness and consistency is everything, so I definitely want to improve that next semester.

Key Stakeholders

- Bridget Flynn (Major advising help, position organizing, and idea brainstorming)
- Jane Clark (Huge help with Ecolympics information, letting me know what I needed to do poster wise/Facebook wise)
- Mae Kate Campbell (Really let me understand what I needed to accomplish this semester. She gave me all of her tools in an organized manner and was a really great person to aspire to in this position)
- Sean Hayes (Extremely helpful on the Grid article. Really wanted to break down the information for me and make sure I actually understood it. He went out of his way to edit and discuss anything I didn’t understand)
- Meghan Riesterer (Also very helpful on the Grid article. Gave great comments for what was and wasn’t working)

Deliverables

Grid Article  [http://new.oberlin.edu/office/environmental-sustainability/update_detail.dot?id=e58e2a5a-fac3-474a-8e34-099c32c2f1f1](http://new.oberlin.edu/office/environmental-sustainability/update_detail.dot?id=e58e2a5a-fac3-474a-8e34-099c32c2f1f1)

Green Room Interview  [https://sites.google.com/a/oberlin.edu/green-room/photos/interviewgabrielagoldsmith](https://sites.google.com/a/oberlin.edu/green-room/photos/interviewgabrielagoldsmith)

Recommendations

I think a lot of the articles in the future should have interviews with some students and their take on these dense sustainability topics. This gets more traction to the website/Facebook because students want to see themselves/feel a part of the environmental community. Also with the articles, I really do want to make sure that they are written so that everyone can understand what is happening in our office. People get discouraged and feel excluded in difficult scientific writing, so a more lively, fun, journalistic style reaches a broader audience. And it’s definitely a lot more fun to read too.

I also think it would be cool to add some community profiles next semester. I think a lot of times students never know who’s actually inside of these big concrete buildings and I know a lot of staff members have really interesting stories of how they got to Oberlin.
Lastly, especially with Ecolympics, I really want to try and get the other departments more involved with sustainability at Oberlin. Whether that be having art students create art projects for a completely sustainable art show, or we have some cinema students create a film for where our compost goes, or even have physics students/bio students crunching the numbers in our coal to carbon neutrality commitment. It would get a lot more people invested in our upcoming plans for energy efficiency and maybe hype a few more people up for Ecolympics.

Suggestions and Insiders Info

Article wise, it was really fun to talk to voices in and out of the Oberlin community. When interviewing, it’s important to ask as many questions as possible to make sure you understand the topic, but also to understand the person you are interviewing. Adding small touches and quotes that describe the interviewees and how they came to Oberlin really puts the topics in perspective and shows how connected these people are to the Oberlin community as opposed to these big administrative people who work in cubicles and are just here to pay the rent. These people are extremely passionate about their work and it’s important to emphasize that.

I think next semester there should be a few more people involved with social media. Although it was nice to have full reign on what went on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, it was definitely hard to craft enough posts for each week. I didn’t think to post photos on Instagram or Facebook at every event I went to and sort of left it to my brain to have “aha” moments. I think it would be a lot more productive to have a few people posting on social media throughout the week.

Unanswered Questions

Are there other websites or tools to get students to see our Facebook Page?

Could we use tools like Slack or Trello to communicate with other interns on the progress that is being made/any questions we have outside of the office?

How aware are students of the OES activities happening on campus? Is Facebook the best method of communication?

Conclusion

I came into this position not knowing that too much about the intricacies of sustainability. But I have learned so much this year from my peer interns and OES staff to the point where I am seriously considering an environmental studies major in addition to writing. This internship taught me how to analyze social media viewership, utilize IN-Design, Buffer and Canva and make sustainability accessible for everyone. Bridget has been so helpful in teaching me all of the website tools and advising me on my position, even with all the work she has on her plate. But most importantly, she got me excited to spread the word on campus! Sustainability interconnects with nearly every topic and education is essential to problem solving. Especially with the Green Room Program, just watching how quickly it can spread through the dorms with a simple certificate and remind people to maintain their sustainable commitment when they see it on their door. I am eager to get back to work in the Fall and implement
some new article ideas as well as ways of managing the website/communication with other interns. I think if I come into the next year with a clear idea of what I expect from myself in the position, there will be a happy medium between social media and writing. Thanks for an amazing year OES!