Final Report

Moses Riley
Sustainable Purchasing Intern
Academic Year 2015-16
May 6, 2016

Introduction

This position aims to promote sustainability on Oberlin College’s campus by making it easier to recycle common items. In order to achieve this goal, this position works to encourage the purchase of reusable or recyclable products by the college for campus facilities or to implement new ways to recycle common materials.

Accomplishments

- **Colgate Oral Care Terracycle Brigade:** successfully implemented new recycling brigade on campus that collects old toothbrushes, toothpaste tubes, and floss containers. Collection bins were put in all gender-neutral bathrooms in all first-year dorms and Mudd library. Participation was higher than expected and we plan to send off our first shipment to Terracycle before the end of the year.

- **Ecolympics:** built stronger relationships between OES and local businesses during Ecolympics when soliciting for donations. Was able to get donations for raffle prizes from six local businesses. Also helped organize two Ecolympics-themed trivia nights at Slow Train that we will be able to do again in the future.

Challenges

Balancing work with implementing the new recycling brigade made getting it off the ground difficult. The brigade required lots of time—in making collection bins, putting the signs and bins around campus, and coordinating logistics with facilities—that made it difficult to implement immediately. In the future I hope to be able to get something like this off the ground quicker, either by planning ahead better or getting more people involved. I also think communication was a barrier at times, especially with people outside of OES who were helping in coordinating projects. I’m hoping that now that I have established relationships with many of these people that communication will be better in the future.

Key Stakeholders

- Bridget Flynn: primary supervisor; bflynn@oberlin.edu.
Keith Watkins: for questions related to facility operations; keithwatkins@oberlin.edu.

Scott Callow: for questions related to facility operations, specifically products purchased and used on campus; scallow@oberlin.edu.

Sharon Pearson: for help regarding interaction with the Oberlin community outside of the college, works for the Oberlin Project; spearson@oberlinproject.com.

Becky Mosely: for questions related to ResEd housing, procedures, and operations; rmosely@oberlin.edu

**Deliverables**

My work this year has brought about collection bins for a recycling brigade and a new relationship with Terracycle which we hope grows. The collection bins are of preliminary grade and we hope to use them and the flyers as a template for future recycling brigades implemented. The waste we have sent into Terracycle will also give OES Terracycle points which we can redeem online.

**Recommendations**

Collaboration is key, which means good communication. Emailing is not always the best way to get in touch with someone, in fact it often fails completely, creating the need for face-to-face interactions. Local businesses are included in this; you have to go in multiple times to each place in order to get responses.

I do hope that the recycling brigade implemented this year is continued and expanded upon, whether that be power bars or instrument string recycling. There is a lot of opportunity to implement weird recycling programs like I did this year because of Oberlin’s try-anything culture—you will undoubtedly have people participate no matter how weird the program seems or feels. I hope if recycling brigades are implement or expanded upon that we get better collection bins and better communication with facilities. I have a suspicion that they are still collecting our recycling, which they shouldn’t be doing. I hope to make recycling second nature at Oberlin since it seems like the best place to try and do it.

**Suggestions and Insiders Info**

The RCT is always willing to help and all the people are awesome, so definitely use them to your advantage. Becky Mosely in ResEd is also a good contact for on-campus logistics around residential buildings. She is also in contact with all of the RAs which is helpful for spreading news throughout campus. Ecolympics is very busy.
Unanswered Questions

Why isn’t trash separated in most places on campus? We have departed bins in some buildings, but not all of them, and separating trash is very good at reducing waste. Also, I feel as though it’s almost hypocritical to encourage recycling and environmental stewardship but then make products such as single-use coffee mugs and plastic the only options on campus, therefore making it hard to recycle and eliminate waste. Why do we make it difficult? If we believe in recycling, we should make it easy.

Conclusion

I enjoyed working for OES! I hope to do more active projects in the Oberlin community.