

Plastic Recycling Pre and Post

Brief description of project:

We proposed a Sustainable Campus Initiative Fund to the Office of Sustainability and got a stipend to increase recycling inside the Union by adding a Plastics recycling bin for plastics number 3-7. We included a 3-part education process so as to educate the student body about this change. The 'Pre-test' Education occurred first. This took place before we had installed the extra recycling bins into the Union. The point of this educational piece was to see how much the Student Body knew about plastics recycling inside the Union. We relayed these questions through the use of iPod Touches to refrain from using paper as a waste. The next step was to install our recycling bins inside the Union next to the other recycling stations. The second phase was then our 'Educational' piece in which we enlightened the student body about this extra bin inside the Union. We stood near the waste/recycling receptacles and utilized the tabling spaces to show off our educational poster about the harmful effects of waste around the world. The last phase was our "Post-Test" phase. This was very similar to our "Pre-test" phase as we again used the iPod Touches and bribed the student body to test their knowledge through cookies, doughnuts, bagels, and muffins. When the students were done taking the surveys we then asked if they wanted to learn more, or let us talk about our recycling project. We want to increase the education and hopefully allow the students to leave more educated and less confused about plastics recycling inside the Union.

Who was asked to complete survey:

The Student Body was the main target for our surveys. However, we wanted anyone who utilized the recycling bins inside the food court, whether they were students, professors, teachers, or employees.

Respondents: 415 respondents for pre; 157 respondents for post

Administration Type: Campus Labs app on iPod touches

Summary of Key Findings:

"Pre-Test"

When looking at the results during the November- December time period we were able to target a lot more students to take our survey. The results show that before we educated, many students weren't even aware that there were seven different types of plastics. Despite this knowledge, about half of them did know how to identify what type of plastic it was by the triangle at the bottom of the plastics item with a number residing inside. Due to the fact that most of the student body was unaware of the seven

different types of plastics, it is not surprising that they were also unaware of the only two plastics allowed for recycling inside the Union.

In general, the students were aware that they couldn't recycle contaminated material into the recycling bin, however they weren't aware that the only acceptable recyclable plastics were 1&2 and not 3-7. B

“Post-Test”

The point of our “Post- Test” is to see if we were successful in the “Educational” portion of our recycling project. Despite the fact that it is impossible to target the exact same students that we educated or asked to take the “Pre-test” we did notice a small increase in their basic knowledge about recycling and specifically inside the Union.

A larger percentage of the Student Body was aware about how many plastics are made. Along with the “Pre-Test”, the student body was familiar with the triangular recycling sign found at the bottom of recyclable materials.

The question regarding the specific recycling bin relayed almost 50% answers saying that they did know that there were two different recycling bins. However, of the people who did seem to know there were two different bins, most of them weren't aware that they were only located inside the Union.

Similar to the “Pre-test” the student body does seem to clean off their materials and place them in the correct bins. Question 5: “When you recycle plastics in the Union, how often do you check to make sure you place your plastics items in the correct recycling bin?” I believe the student body understood this question as they separated their paper, aluminum, and plastics in general vs. separating their specific numbers of plastics. This means that most of the student body is able to sort their basic recycling materials in a successful way.

Actions Taken:

As part of this lack of education, Georgie and I implemented an “Educational” portion in which we stood in different areas of the Union (i.e recycling bins, waste receptacles, and tabling locations) to train the student body about how to recycle items after purchasing and eating their food from the Chartwells Food Court area.

Now that the “Pre-test”, “Education”, and “Post-test” portions are completed, we will follow up by furthering our education for the student body by placing posters throughout the Union near the waste/recycling locations. These locations will be approved by the Union.

Which Student Affairs goals does this project align with?

I believe that this recycling project helps “Promote physical, spiritual and psychological health and wellness, collaborating across campus with multiple organizations” by the physical act of recycling and how it helps the physical health and wellness of the planet. The spiritual being is more engaged in

their affect towards other people and the earth as well as how they can make a difference in other areas of campus and across the city through recycling.

This recycling program also “promote[s] experiential learning opportunities.” There are many learning opportunities for the leaders of the projects as well as the Student Body, the reason why this project was started. There is always more educational concerns regarding recycling and we hope to clear up confusion so as to utilize our recycling facilities the most we can.