Commitment To Sustainability

Oklahoma State University

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The Introduction...

The year was 2007, Oklahoma State University decided to start a new chapter in its life. President Burns Hargis and faculty decided to make sustainability the new focus on campus. President Hargis set the precedent for the future of OSU when he defined sustainability. Thus began the approach to make Oklahoma State more sustainable which is the continuous goal as of 2016 and the upcoming 2017 year. These efforts were pursued in the classroom through campus energy usage and most importantly changing the daily culture of life at Oklahoma State.

“Sustainability is the development and use of resources to improve human quality of life now and in the future.”

–President Hargis

A Sustainability Task Force was formed in 2007 and continues today in hopes of making the changes that Oklahoma State needed to be sustainable. The first of these was the changes in the classroom. As we are here today, Oklahoma State has 49 sustainability focused classes and 148 sustainability related classes. As well as degrees such as Sustainable Enterprises. These efforts continue to grow yearly. On campus, the campus has quickly become sustainable in its practices with the Physical Power plant operate on natural gas, recycling bins being placed, and light fixtures become more sustainable. The last and arguably most important piece of this is the student involvement. In recent years student organizations have been popping up in increasing numbers. Organizations such as SGA Sustainability, Net Impact Eco-Reps, Environmental Science have all shown that students are adapting and accepting this new way of life.

Over $30 million has been saved system-wide since 2007 through the OSU Energy Conservation Program.
The Task Force set a campus goal in 2007 and it is prevalent today. The Oklahoma State mission statement that they had created states, "The mission is to cultivate a campus-wide, sustainable recycling system and culture that will increase OSU Stillwater's recycling rate, reduce waste and pollution, and raise conservation awareness."

Oklahoma State University is a land-grant institution so they approach this mission statement by embracing its heritage. This approach has set the goal that Oklahoma State dedicates its practices to ensure that the university is a steward of the resources that were entrusted to us. Every year, we continue to grow and better our sustainable practices and operations throughout the community.

Wind energy reduced the amount of nonrenewable resources used and therefore reduce pollution, demonstrating that Oklahoma State University is upholding their mission of being sustainable.

The goal set for Oklahoma State University’s sustainability plan is realistic because it is achievable. Every year, the school achieves the goal, then setting a new standard for the upcoming year. We have seen these goals been achieved through:

- Academics
- Buildings
- Dining
- Energy
- Organizations
- Recycling
- Transportation
- And more...
One of the efforts that Oklahoma State University exceeds in is the transportation department. OSU offers free bus transportation for all of its students. The thing is, all of these buses run entirely off of natural gas. They even have their own bus depot. Other than the buses, OSU also offers its students the opportunity to rent its own bike rental service known as Orange Ride. This service allows students to have a bike while on campus as well as allowing them to bring their own bikes in to have them repaired and refurbished.

Today, Oklahoma State University’s campus has

64 WATER BOTTLE REFILL STATIONS
located around campus. These include classroom buildings, office buildings, and residential halls. More stations are added each year where needed. They are equipped with filters and motion censored spigots that make it easy to refill your water bottle. Not only does this make life easier, it saves students and faculty money from having to frequently buy disposable plastic water bottles. This project has lowered the number of water bottles being used and thrown away into the landfills.

“The stations have saved me a lot of money, and helped motivated me to drink more water.”
-Hope Watkins
Throughout the years, the “sustain-ability” of Oklahoma State University’s residential halls has grown stronger... Last year, the Commons residential halls were built with motion censored, energy efficient lightbulbs in the hallways. They also have motion censored thermostats in the rooms. This year, energy efficient halogen lightbulbs were installed in all of residential hall rooms. Water bottle filling stations were also implemented in the new halls, to conserve water bottles and encourage the use of refillable water bottles.

ResLife Recycles makes an effort every year to promote recycling and Being sustainable through Poster series in the halls. They also create emails Tips on how to be sustainable over breaks, such as unplugging all cords, close your blinds, and turn all lights off.

Eco-Reps TO THE RESCUE!

Eco-Reps is a student organization with the goal of bringing student awareness of sustainability movement in the residential hall. With being created only two years ago, and this past year becoming an official organization has done a lot for the halls. They first implemented single stream recycling bins each lounge of all the halls. Eco-Reps also started OSU’s participation in the Campus Conservation Nationals, where they monitor the energy usage on college campus’ compared to others. In 2015, OSU received fourth place. They are planning to participate again this year.

“This year, Eco-Reps has grown into having a member in each hall where they provide peer mentoring for their residents.” –Ryan Northcutt, founder of Eco-Reps

Student recycling using the lounge bin
Fall 2016, a great change occurred at Oklahoma State University, that has not been attempted before... For the last several years, basic Styrofoam cups were sold at the dining options on campus. During the fall 2016 semester, all Styrofoam cups were replaced with biodegradable cups and lids at every dining option. The planning process took the summer to design and have them distributed. The green earth and leaves to promote sustainability. The text "SHOWN TO BIODEGRADATE 84.3% AFTER 1154 DAYS," is also printed on each cup. This simple switch has had a great affect on Oklahoma State University's sustainability efforts. These cups are used by both students and faculty throughout the university to implement the mission of reducing waste on campus because Styrofoam isn't biodegradable in the environment.

On top of the switch to biodegradable cups, dining has another effort to help OSU’s sustainability effort and the university’s mission. Every year starting in 2010, a new “refillable” cup is designed and sold to students on campus. The goal of these cups is for students to carry them around campus and pay a discount price to refill it instead of continuously purchasing disposable cups. This program is great because it has decreased the amount of Styrofoam cups being used. New cups are designed each year so that students remember to buy one, as well as see them as a sort of “collectible.” These cups have shown to be a success, with students carrying them all over campus.

"Until I bought a refillable cup, I would have stacks of water bottles all over my room. This refillable cup allows me to save the earth even if only a little.”

- Carly Suttle
At the beginning of the 2016–2017 basketball season, OSU Recycles created a recycling promotion video. The comical video featured one of OSU’s former star basketball players, Michael Cobbins, enforcing recycling on “his campus.” Multiple scenarios show the different types of recycling that Oklahoma State University has to offer. This video took only a week to plan and targeted all Students and faculty of OSU. This video only took a week to plan. The people involved were OSU Recycles workers, student volunteers for the video, and Michael Cobbins.

“Not on MY campus! OSU...Recycles. –Michael Cobbins

After a day of filming and another week to edit, the video was promoted across Oklahoma State University’s various social media accounts. This passive program achieved the sustainability mission to raise conservation awareness and promoting that the culture is to recycle. The program also has the hope to increase the recycling rate on campus. It shows the various recycling options on campus such as the single stream bins, recyclable paper only, and plastic and cans. This passive program was a success, because people talk about it on campus and are more informed about the recycling options on campus.
Recycling the Recycled...

In the fall of 2016Professor Luo provided plastic bottles, milk jugs, wood pallets, chicken wire, and other reclaimed materials for the project. Five groups were created to design and build recycled recycling bins to be finished at the end of the semester. “The students were encouraged to consider designers’ responsibility to the Earth,” said Luo. The students also presented their creations to a panel of local materials management experts to demonstrate that materials can be useful before becoming trash and to show their success with implementing the project. These bins are being showcased in the Student Union so that students passing by can see and read about the bins. This passive program was a success in showing students that their part in recycling matter. Students have difficulty recycling because they are not exposed to all that recycled materials are used for. But now, they have the chance to learn that what they recycle can be extremely useful.

"While all recycling bins in this exhibition were created with reclaimed materials, it demonstrates that materials can have more than one life before their disposal into landfills."

—Ilda Hershey, Sustainable Stillwater Leadership Team director

“By being required to use only recycled materials, the students’ resourcefulness and creativity was really challenged.”

—Dave Brown, OSU landscape services coordinator

Fall 2016, what was once seemingly impossible, became possible... Professor Qing Lana Luo teaches the Sustainable Sites Construction II class. In the Spring 2016 semester, he had the great idea to demonstrate that recycled materials can be turned into useful objects before being thrown away as trash. He decided to put this project into his Fall 2016 curriculum.
TAKE THE PLEDGE...

On November 15th, 2016, OSU Sustainability joined all of the student organizations with a focus on sustainability. A table was set up in a high traffic area, right outside of the Student Union so that they could target the most students. As a student approached the table, they were greeted by a student hero with all the information about sustainability on and off campus as well as how they can get involved with promoting sustainability. Bags that were made out of recycled plastic were passed out to interested students with more information inside. This program took a month to plan, get the pledge and materials made, and inform organizations of the date. Students from the involved organizations spread out around the outside of the union to target as many students as possible. They would inform them of OSU’s recycling programs and ask if they would like to take the pledge to recycle. On the pledge, students could choose what type of material they pledged to start recycling.

OSU Sustainability created a type of “board” game that educates what types of trash and materials you can recycle. There is a recycling bin that holds a variety of common trash and materials with Velcro on it. The board has a “Yes” and “No” side. The objective of the game is to categorize the trash by placing it on the board based on if it is “Yes” recyclable, or “No” non-recyclable using Velcro. The program showed to be a success with over 2000 students taking the pledge to recycle more. OSU Sustainability plan to continue this event each semester to keep it fresh in their minds as well as get more students involved in the recycling efforts.

2000+ PLEDGES TAKEN
Move-In Day, 2012, was found to be catastrophic. A partnership was formed to change future move-in days by using its sustainability. This program was started by an environmental science graduate student and former student staff member and ACTIVATE Leadership Conference attendee, Robyn Salisbury.

OSU Sustainability, Facilities Management, ResLife Recycles, and the ACTIVATE Leadership Conference came to the rescue by implementing a volunteer program for ACTIVATE attendees. The volunteers spent a couple of hours near the dumpsters and recycling containers. They would assist in breaking down cardboard boxes, help separate recyclables from trash, as well as inform students and their families about the recycling program. This program has shown to increase how much cardboard that we can rescue. OSU plans to continue and better this program for the future.
In 2013, the first attempt of having the ACTIVATE attendees volunteer with move-in day proved a success. The streets were more clear from trash, and the number of cardboard recycled increased.

In 2014, ResLife Recycles implemented single-stream recycling containers next to high-traffic dumpsters shortly after move-in day occurred. These new containers helped residents learn more about what can and cannot be recycled without them having to separate it into different bins.

In 2015, the single-stream recycling showed a great increase in use. OSU Sustainability and Facilities Management also added roll-off containers to collect more cardboard. The number increased tremendously, but that wasn’t enough.

This year, the roll-off bins were strategically placed in high-traffic areas so that they were easily accessible to the 5000 students moving in. This simple strategy of placing containers proved a success and nearly doubled the amount of cardboard recycled during move-in day!

This year, the program was intended to help with the nearly 5,000 residents return to campus. The goal was to keep the streets clean of trash, collect more cardboard than last year, and inform students of the sustainability initiative on campus. It took three weeks to plan. ResLife Recycles had to call and plan where to set the roll-off containers. They also had to assign locations and times to student staff and ACTIVATE attendee volunteers. Supplies such as gloves and blades were also bought in to help with the breakdown of cardboard. 15 Student Staff members and over 100 ACTIVATE attendees volunteered. This year was most definitely a success with the number of cardboard recycled doubled over one year. Volunteers enjoyed the day and hope to see the program grow over the years.

"THE CARDBOARD BOXES WE RECYCLE REINCARNATE AS PAPER BAGS, PAPERBOARD PACKAGING (LIKE CEREAL BOXES), AND NEW CORRUGATED CARDBOARD BOXES."
CITATIONS...

Pistol Pete:
www.guideposts.org%2Fbetter-living%2Flife-advice%2Ffinding-life-purpose%2Fa-dream-to-inspire-others%3F

President Burns Hargis:
https://news.okstate.edu/articles/oklahoma-state-university-okc-fire-department-riversport-rapids-partner-create-premier

Recycling Machine and BOB bus:
http://sustainability.okstate.edu/get-involved-students

Wind farm and natural gas refill station:
http://sustainability.okstate.edu/operations

Water refill station:
http://sustainability.okstate.edu/quicktips

Orange Ride:

Dave Brown:

ACTIVATE volunteers:
http://news.okstate.edu/articles/greener-move-week?utm_source=OSU+Communications&utm_campaign=1ba0059649Headlines_10_11_1610_10_2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ef85cdae6a-1ba0059649-20596565

2012 move-in day and single stream container
http://sustainability.okstate.edu/move-in-recycling

Michael Cobbins video:
http://www.ostate.tv/?play=D6C4F838-224C-4237-0326-A260E7FF889E

Recycled recycling bins:

Student using the lounge bin:
http://sustainability.okstate.edu/reslife_recycles/lounge-bins

THE END.