

November 17, 2022

Sustainability Sub-Council

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1. Zero waste

- a. Received purchasing data for *pouring* (Housing, Dining, retail, catering, iHotel)
- b. Approximately half a million plastic bottles purchased/year
- c. Water bottle purchases declined by only 4% since 2016
- d. It is clear that water bottles are the most consumed/purchased beverage container
- e. We have increased our diversion rate over time; still only 20-30% compared to our total solid waste generation (nationally there is only about a 10% recycling rate for plastics)
- f. We can and need to do more to increase recycling rates and reduce waste holistically.
- g. Up until July 2022, Athletics had multiple vendors collecting waste/recycling; now serviced by F&S.

**h. Drivers of Demand**

- i. iSEE conducted a survey to understand the drivers of demand; convenience and flavor were the primary factors explaining why people choose bottled water
- ii. 75 participants took a blind taste test at Green Quad Day comparing water bottles with tap water; half of participants could not tell a difference between the two.

**i. Inventory of water bottle filling stations**

- i. Inventory is incomplete; need to inventory residence halls and athletic facilities.
- ii. Additional filling stations are needed; there is a decent distribution but additional stations are needed to provide greater access (perhaps near campus convenience stores).

**j. Discussions with Coca-Cola**

- i. Our collaboration has focused on increasing recycling rates and engagement.
- ii. Infrastructure and engagement – “Don’t Waste” campaign
- iii. At Welcome Celebration for ~6000 new students, first time that recycling bins were provided.
- iv. Plan to increase recycling infrastructure at future events

**k. Partnering with Athletics**

- i. F&S, iSEE, Coca-Cola, Athletics collaborated to host Zero Waste Basketball Game on Nov. 14.
- ii. Diversion rate was approximately 11%
- iii. Plan to discuss more permanent recycling infrastructure.

**l. Discussion**

- i. Next steps - educational campaign about environmental problems caused by single-use plastics
- ii. Increase in infrastructure with recycling bins and filler stations
  - 1. Recycling itself is not enough
- iii. Continued engagement with Athletics

1. How do we incorporate sustainability on a permanent, ongoing basis within Athletics?
2. Susan asked if there is an added revenue stream with water bottles for Athletics?
  - a. While we have not discussed this with Athletics, water bottles are a strong source of revenue.
  - b. Athletics staff have stated that people can bring in their own empty bottle to fill it up on-site, though it may not be widely communicated.
  - c. **It would be beneficial to understand the financial implications of reducing the purchase of water bottles.**
    - i. How can Housing and Dining potentially make up that income?
    - ii. Tipping fee – perhaps there could be a cost savings opportunity (e.g., a rebate for avoiding/reducing landfill costs?).
    - iii. Water bottle tax
    - iv. What is the profit and revenue related to plastic water bottle sales at concessions for Housing and Dining, Union, and athletics
  - d. Athletics could make it easier for people to bring their own reusable water bottles or purchase reusable water bottles on-site.
    - i. Athletics should provide additional recycling bins and add additional water bottle filler stations.
  - e. We could ask Coke if, using the 10k annual budget, they could provide permanent recycling stations.
2. Energy planning
  - a. Collaboration with students has been prioritized in this process; F&S and iSEE worked with ABE 469 students who conducted an analysis of potential scope topics
    - i. Energy efficiency, energy conservation , clean energy technologies, conversation from steam to hot water heating system
    - ii. Will present clean power options to campus leadership later this semester
    - iii. Next EPC project is starting soon at College of ACES and includes 7 buildings with projected annual savings of \$1.5M in first year with a 20 year payback
    - iv. Facility Condition Assessment
  - b. Discussion: options for energy reduction
    - i. Increase funding for existing energy conservation programs (e.g, \$15M/year for centralized energy conservation programs), increase funding in Revolving Loan Fund
    - ii. Incentives/rewards for individuals actions and programs
    - iii. Cost-share/match funding with energy reduction/conservation energy projects funded by the Student Sustainability Committee
3. Campus Strategic Plan

- a. How can we incorporate sustainability and the iCAP more visibly in the Illinois Strategic Plan?
  - b. Sustainability seems to fit most closely with “Goal 3: Make a significant and visible societal impact”, though sustainability topics could be embedded across the other goals.
4. Old business
- a. Sustainability General Education requirement
    - i. This has been a student-led effort that we have discussed in the past.
    - ii. Bill Stewart and the Senate expressed an interest in building a coalition with the colleges.
      - 1. After conducting this, did not receive too much pushback from deans.
      - 2. Suggested that it should be broadened to include additional options within the social sciences.
    - iii. Top-down initiative → iSEE should be involved in moving this forward beyond student leadership (evaluate, for example, what are the financial implications?)
    - iv. Create full comprehensive proposal that includes this
  - b. Sustainable land management committee report
    - i. Dr. Emily Heaton’s lab group is working on developing an inventory of sustainable practices on South Farms to establish baseline.
    - ii. Adam Davis has requested that there be an increase of crop diversity on fill (non-research) acres.
    - iii. Post-doc support needed to write chapter/update agronomy handbook
5. **Next steps**
- a. Thoughts are welcome from the Committee to edit the agenda or further discussion before the Council meeting
  - b. Behavior-change has to be the driver in terms of plastic reduction
    - i. Eva Pomerantz, Interim Director of Center for Social & Behavioral Science, may be a good resource (Madhu will contact)
  - c. Investigate financial implications of reducing plastic water bottles from Housing and Dining, Union, and athletics