

Sustainability 2020 Committee Project Proposal Abstract

Waste Management, April 2017

Background – USC currently divides its waste into four waste streams: food waste, recyclables, mixed waste and trash. USC separates its cardboard waste into a separate stream, and USC Hospitality contracts with a kitchen grease hauler to collect that waste stream. All told, USC's current waste diversion rate is approximately 53%. The Sustainability 2020 goal is 75%.

Project Description and Objectives – After a high-level assessment of USC's waste streams and waste collection practices, we found that our UPC recycling volume could be increased in the following waste streams:

- **On-campus Recycling** – Increase by 30% from current rate of 7% for a total 37% recycling diversion
- **Food Waste** – Increase by 18% from current rate of 3% for a total of 21% food waste diversion
- **Yard Waste** – Increase by 2% from current rate of 2% for a total of 4% yard waste diversion
- **Overall** – An overall increased waste diversion rate of 50% over the current diversion rate of 12%, for a total of 62% increase in waste diversion in these 3 specific areas.

This proposal requests funding for several annual program costs for more and improved new waste bins and cardboard program improvements, and one-time costs for location signage, education, and miscellaneous materials costs that would facilitate the proposed waste stream changes.

Benchmarks – Universities all over the country have waste diversion goals, and instituted similar waste diversion programming to achieve those goals. Below are a few examples of universities with similar programming and goals.

- University of California schools have a system-wide goal of zero waste by 2020 with a 50% benchmark met in June of 2008 and in 2014, 63% of the entire UC system's waste was diverted from the landfill. Individual campuses are already piloting zero waste programs.
 - In 2012, UCLA reached 80% diversion.
 - In 2012, UC Davis reached 75% diversion.
 - In 2011, UC Irvine reached 80% diversion.
 - In 2012, UC Santa Barbara reached 75% diversion.
- Colorado University Boulder also has a zero waste initiative that began in 2007 with their diversion goal set to be reached in 2020, CU Boulder finished their Recycling Operations Center in May of 2015, so the 2015-2016 numbers should increase over past years. They reached about 50% diversion in 2014.
- American University has also instituted a zero waste program, which began its efforts in 2010 and is slated to be achieved by 2020. Currently, the program is focusing its efforts on establishing its composting program, and continuing education. The diversion rate sits at about 65%.
- Stanford has an eventual zero waste goal, and has progressed their diversion rate from 30% in 1994 to 65% in 2014. They have a 75% waste diversion goal in 2020 and plan to

achieve this by focusing on compostable materials, which currently comprises over 30% of the waste in their dumpsters.

- University of Washington has a waste diversion goal of 70% by 2020 and as of 2015, has a diversion rate of 62%. This is mainly due to yard and food waste, and the university is now focusing on developing their recycling and enhancing their composting program.

Risks

1. The operational risk involved in this proposal is that USC falls short of the 75% diversion rate goal set forth last year in the Sustainability 2020 plan. Culture change and the formation of habits can take time, which is why this proposal is among the first being proposed by the committee. Ultimately, once the infrastructure is in place, it is up to the USC community through the educational programming put forward by Facilities Management to adopt the behavioral changes necessary to achieve the goal. Pprojected savings indicated below may differ from the actual contract arrangements after January 1, 2018.

Sources:

<http://www.american.edu/finance/sustainability/waste.cfm>

<http://www.colorado.edu/center/recycling/what-zero-waste>

<http://www.colorado.edu/center/recycling/about-us/glance>

<http://www.ucop.edu/sustainability/programs-initiatives/zero-waste/campus-zero-waste-plans.html>

<https://sustainable.stanford.edu/waste>

<https://sustainable.stanford.edu/solutions/waste-initiatives>