

Oregon universities go environmentally friendly

BY MELISSA RHODES

Waste at Oregon universities has been steadily decreasing due to a newfound environmental awareness among students and faculty. They take pride in giving extra care to the environment by reducing electricity, fuel, and solid waste. Oregon universities place trash bins all over campuses, which separate waste into three bins: landfill, recycling, and paper. Separation of waste is critical to avoid a toxic methane gas that is produced when different garbage types mix in a landfill.

These universities find noteworthy ways to help protect the environment:

Southern Oregon University (SOU) educates students to be proactive toward environmental problems. Some students run environmentally friendly projects, such as zero waste; others hope to build a recycling center, while many others repurpose things for their art. SOU sustainability and recycling employee Roxane Beigel Coryel said, "SOU works to educate the campus to reduce generated waste and to divert as much waste as possible from the landfill via reuse, recycling and composting. We are also continuously striving to reduce energy use on campus by upgrading lighting, investing in more efficient equipment, and infusing green building practices in all renovation and new construction projects." In particular, the on-campus dorms are almost self-sustained by using solar panels built onto the roofs. Green lighting not only saves energy and lasts longer, but also reduces glass, plastic, and gas waste by simply reducing the number of light bulbs used.

University of Oregon's student-run "Campus Zero Waste Program" takes "environmentally friendly" to a new level by separating compost, white paper, mixed paper, cartons/glass/metal/plastic, and garbage in every building. They also accept toner cartridges, cell phones, lights, batteries, cassette tapes and more.

Oregon State University also encourages students to produce less waste. An example is Dixon Recreational Center,



which houses two cardio rooms, two weight rooms, two gyms, six racquetball courts, three squash courts, three multipurpose rooms, a 42-foot-tall climbing wall, a one-tenth mile indoor track, a 25-yard pool, a dive well, a hot tub, three sand volleyball courts, and the Adventure Leadership Institute. The giant building is totally powered by the users' efforts. "Oregon State University is very environmentally friendly!" exclaims student Samantha Damon. "Dixon runs completely off the treadmills and machines. I like that it uses no outside power."

Western Oregon University's club, The Green Team, promotes "save the environment, save the world" as they try to educate students to recycle and reuse water bottles and other products. Eighty-four percent of used water bottles will end up in landfills or littering streets where they can make their way to our rivers, lakes or oceans through the storm-drain system. Western Oregon University specifically invites students and staff to buy reusable water bottles in order to lower the amount of plastic wasted or littered. "To sustain is to continue" is student Miranda Sommer's environmental mentality.

For more information about zero-waste campuses across the country, visit <http://www.grn.org/page/zero-waste-campuses>.

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Melissa is currently a junior at SOU and plans to pursue a master's degree in English. We thank her for volunteering to research and write this article and take photos.

ZERO WASTE

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businesses and communities that work together with government and industry to promote a zero waste future. They define the practice as "designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume and toxicity of waste and materials [and to] conserve and recover all resources, not [to] burn or bury them." Their goal is to eliminate "all discharges to land, water or air that are a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health."

Although no business in southern Oregon has yet achieved official "zero waste" status, many are working hard to reduce waste that ends in landfills. The Ecology and Sustainability Resource Center at Southern Oregon University,

for instance, has recently been given a silver rating and a "five out of five" status by The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. See the "Oregon universities" article on this page for examples of what SOU and other Oregon universities are doing to work toward zero waste and help protect the environment.

Applegate businesses and community groups can join the zero waste effort, too. Go to the website of the Zero Waste International Alliance, <http://zwia.org>, for inspiration and information.

Imagine what we could do by eliminating all waste. Imagine the future.

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Moving toward a zero waste lifestyle

Here are a few ways to start living the zero-waste lifestyle to prevent waste in the various aspects of your life (from onegreenplanet.org).

1. Down with disposables.

The kitchen is filled with disposable items that are responsible for a whole lot of waste. Try these alternatives instead:

- Replace paper towels with reusable rags.
- Pack meals with reusable sandwich bags.
- Use non-disposable or biodegradable dinnerware.
- Bring your own shopping bags.
- Try earth-friendly sponges.

2. Buy in bulk.

Disposable containers generate 13 million tons of plastic waste in the US. Taking a few minutes of planning before you head to the grocery store can help eliminate that waste. Bring mason jars to the grocery store to hold bulk items or foods from the deli counter. Check out zero waste shopping from Trash is for Tossers at <http://www.trashisfortossers.com/2013/08/zero-waste-food-shopping.html>.

Consider buying bulk castile soap to use as hand and dish cleaner instead of buying a bunch of little bottles of different cleaners. Castile soap can also be used as body wash and shampoo.

3. Love your leftovers.

Forty percent of all food goes to waste in the US. Check out these recipes from We Hate to Waste at <http://www.wehatewaste.com/recipes/> and learn to love your leftovers. Whatever can't be salvaged should be composted!

4. Shop secondhand.

Carbon Trust estimates that three percent of global CO₂ emissions are associated with the purchase and use of clothing. This number includes outsourced production, shipping, washing, and drying. Shopping secondhand saves good clothing from a landfill and reduces the overall demand for clothing production.

5. Take care of clothes.

Buying fewer items of higher quality will save you money in the long run and make it more likely you will take the time to mend rips and tears instead of throwing out an article of clothing.

6. Bring your lunch. According to RecycleWorks.org, disposable lunches (to-go packaging, plastic utensils, etc.) generate 100 pounds of trash per person annually. Check out these waste-free lunch supplies from ReUseIt.com and save some waste and money as well (<http://www.reuseit.com/waste-free-lunch.htm>).

7. Go digital. The average office worker uses two pounds of paper per day! Take notes on your laptop and communicate with your colleagues via email rather than using paper.

8. Recycle. Unless your office has gone completely paperless, chances are there are stacks of paper that could be recycled. While reusable water bottles are the *best* option, any plastic water bottles should be recycled as well. Introduce a recycling bin to your office. You can even make a game out of it with help from Recyclebank (www.recyclebank.com).

9. Simplify cleaning supplies.

White vinegar and baking soda are your new best friends. These all-natural alternatives to dangerous chemical cleaners are versatile and effective and eliminate plastic bottle waste.

Check out this link for a list of zero waste alternatives for all your bathroom supplies: www.trashisfortossers.com/2013/08/zero-waste-alternatives-ultimate-list.html.

10. Make your own cosmetics.

Save money, avoid harsh chemicals, plastic containers, and packaging by making your own cosmetics. Check out Free People's blog for instructions on how to make your own natural cheek and lip stains, perfume, shampoo, make-up remover, and more (<http://blog.freepeople.com/?s=natural+make+up>).

These are only a few of the ways you can live with less waste. For more information on adopting a zero-waste lifestyle, check out these other resources:

- www.zerowastehome.com
- www.storyofstuff.org
- www.yesmagazine.org/planet/42-ways-to-not-make-trash
- www.trashisfortossers.com
- www.utne.com/environment/zero-waste-living-ze0z1306zpit.aspx

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