

# The Green Funnel:

*Getting Western's Future Environmental Leaders Involved Today*

*Instead of Tomorrow*

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1. Purpose of the Project

Most of Western's student environmental leaders are either juniors or seniors. Our goal was to utilize the new student orientations for freshman called Summerstart and for transfers, Transitions, to immerse new students in sustainability at Western. This is a time for new students to learn about everything from the resources available on campus to where the dining halls are located. The purpose of this project is to inject the idea of sustainability into these orientations with the hope to not only educate new students about the sustainable practices on campus, but to also jump-start the participation of new student environmental leaders at Western.

### 2. What is Sustainability

Each person brings with them to the table a different idea of what "sustainability" means. We chose to use the Brundtland Commission's definition: "sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present with out compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

### 3. Significance to Western

In January of 2007, former Western Washington University President Karen Morse signed the President's Climate Commitment. This meant that WWU, along with 472 other colleges and universities, pledged to implement plans to become carbon neutral by a specified date. WWU's long-term pledge is to be net-zero by 2050. This might seem like a lofty goal, however, in 2010 Western adopted their own Climate Action Plan that illustrates the steps Western will undertake on the way meeting the goal of being net-zero

by 2050. By incorporating sustainability into orientation, we hope to educate and motivate Western's future environmental leaders when they first arrive at campus. The addition of sustainability education to the orientation sessions will give new students the tools and resources needed to get involved earlier on in their time at Western.

## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 Internet Research

In order to get a sense of what other colleges and universities were doing with the topic of sustainability around the country, we looked at many of their websites for guidance. Schools of all sizes mentioned their green orientations. Each school had interpreted green in their own way based on their student population and available resources.

We also searched through past case studies on the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's website to look more closely at other school's orientations. Surprisingly, there was not a specific case study that dealt with the addition of sustainability at new student orientation. We were able to find that some schools had updated their orientations but the reports lacked detail. The AASHE website did however point us in one direction we hadn't even thought about—Northern Arizona University has developed Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) that are related to Sustainability. WWU already has 15 FIGs set up; they consist of a maximum of 25 students that all take two larger lecture classes and smaller seminar class together, fostering collaboration and discussion early in a student's academic career.

From browsing other school's websites about their school's green practices, we came across Green Maps on a few websites. Again, this was an idea that had not crossed our mind. Finally, we did internal website research on some of Western's programs and offices for educational materials. We researched the Outback farm, the AS Environmental Center, the AS Outdoor Center, Student Clubs, First-Year Interest Groups, Sustainable Transportation, Dining Services, New Student Services Family Outreach, the Green Energy Fee, and the AS Recycle Center.

## 2.2 Contacts & Meeting

To learn about the orientation experience of new students we met with Ronna Biggs, the Assistant Director of New Student Services/ Family Outreach (NSSFO). After our discussion with Ronna we realized we would need to get information from multiple advocates of the sustainability movement on campus. This was necessary information for the creation of educational materials at Summerstart and Transitions. We met with Kathryn Patrick, an Undergraduate Advisor in Huxley. Kathryn runs an interest session for Huxley College, and as we wanted to create an interest session for sustainability, we thought she could give us tips on the session and assure that we would not overlap with her material. In terms of just gaining general information for educational materials we talked with Carol Berry, the Sustainable Transportation Coordinator, Kathryn Freeman, the Green Energy Fee Advisor, Richard Neyer, the AS Recycle Center manager, and David Burgess, the Student Transportation Coordinator. We also met with Andrew Allison in the Office of Sustainability (OS) who helped us develop a list of what should go on a Green campus map and Shayne Smith, the OS webmaster, to help us design it.

After gaining information, we met again with New Student Services, this time with Ronna Biggs and Anna Carey, the Director of NSSFO, to get commitments that they would advertise our final map to new students, allow us a PowerPoint slide in their Orientation Sessions, and PowerPoint Slides in their welcome session. All of which were given the go ahead.

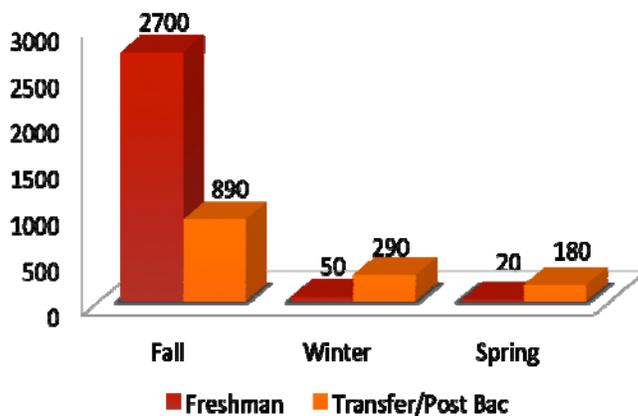
### 2.3 Program Development

In order to infuse sustainability into the first-year experience of Western's students to increase student involvement in the sustainability movement on campus we first needed to talk to the orientation experts, the staff at New Students Services/ Family Outreach (NSSFO). First, we met with Ronna Biggs, the Assistant Director of NSSFO. Ronna was very receptive to our idea of increased student sustainability awareness. She gave us an overview of the programs NSSFO is responsible for during the summer and throughout the year. Ronna then told us the programs where we could easily reach students in order to educate. Ronna told us that the certain programs during Summerstart, freshman orientation, and Transitions, transfer-student orientation could be utilized to educate new students. Looking at the description of orientation events we divided them into education versus action, or programs where you teach students versus show them. We looked at our goals of educating future campus environmental leaders and decided that with the orientation experience the first thing that needed to be done was education. We decided this because education would show students how they can get involved rather than what getting involved looks, like as an action. In the future, we believe more actions should be implemented into orientation, we just thought the education needed to be there first. We

began interview Western faculty and Staff for information about campus programs as well as researching campus sites for information as well. By compiling information about the campus sustainability effort it would allow us to be better equipped to create means of educating students.

We then began to develop the various means of educating students at Summerstart and Transitions, the new student orientations. This included a Green Map and presentation information, for multiple types of presentation. We met again with NSSFO to go over our plan, discuss means of advertising, and gain commitments from them. They pointed us to their Internet mailings to new students and families as advertising strategies, especially for the green map, and assured us if we developed what we planned on developing there would be a place for it in their presentations. In fact, it actually takes some burden off of their office because they do not have to develop the information for presentations themselves.

Incoming Students per Quarter, estimated:



Finally, we needed to find a way to make our project sustainable. That is to say after this year who will be there to update and create the educational materials. We asked Seth if we could update the job description for the Resident Resource Awareness Program (ResRAP) Assistant within the Office of Sustainability so every spring that position could update the materials. The ResRAP Assistant position is perfect for this task because they work closely with the Eco Reps. Eco Reps are campus sustainability advocates who live within the residence halls. This means they are primarily freshmen and sophomores, or relatively new students. Each spring the ResRAP Assistant will poll the Eco Reps to see what they think new students should know. This way the educational materials will get better as each year passes by honing in on what new students really need to know. We also had to make sure that the Green Map would get updated as sustainability on campus changed. We took two approaches to this. First, we had the OS webmaster Shayne Smith add a link below the map that said “Think something is missing from the map? Email the Office of Sustainability Webmaster Shayne Smith with a blurb about what you think is missing and we will consider adding it.” This way, if someone gets something new implemented on campus they can basically add it themselves. Finally, we ask Kathryn Freeman, the Green Energy Fee Coordinator, if she could update her job description to include the task of send Shayne updates to the map as Green Energy Fee projects get implemented on campus. For instance when the solar panel array on the Environmental Studies building gets install spring break of 2012, she will send Shayne a blurb to update the map accordingly.

### 3.0 Case Studies

### 3.1 Case Study #1: Brandeis University

Brandeis University is a small, private college on the east coast. So although they are not a medium-sized, public institution like Western, they still lay out a good look at a comprehensive, sustainable orientation for new students. Brandeis University has combined multiple elements to create an orientation where you are submerged in sustainability. They have sustainability tours, sustainability quizzes, zero-waste barbecues, welcome kits (which include efficient light bulbs and reusable water bottles), bike rides, camp outs, a lecture focused on sustainability, and a move-in market where reused appliances from the previous year are sold. This case study shows how orientation can be infused with sustainable practices.

### 3.2 Case Study #2: Colorado State University

Colorado State University is a larger, public school in comparison to Western. They have created a Green Map on the Google Maps platform that serves as a self-guided tour for those who are interested. CSU has developed a program called “Green Warriors” to educate their student body about their potentially detrimental ways while rewarding them as they change their habits.

### 3.3 Case Study #3: Green Mountain College

Green Mountain College emphasizes environmental sustainability and was rated the top “cool school” by the Sierra Club. The small, private liberal arts school introduces their incoming freshman with an all-sustainable orientation. Students are encouraged to bring their own eating utensils to meals with a station provided for washing after meals.

Another sustainable practice they have adopted at the orientation is to switch to more local programming. This means that they have found speakers in a closer radius rather than fly in speakers from far places. GMC has taken the idea of sustainable orientation to the next level; this could be something that we strive to, however sustainability is built into their curriculum.

## 4.0 Deliverables

### 4.1 Green Map

The purpose of the Green Map is to showcase Western's sustainability efforts. The map is located on Western's Office of Sustainability's website. Currently, the locations on the Green Map are shown as icons on a Google Map platform. Viewers can click on an icon to see a blurb about the site and included with most blurbs is a link to more information. As students learn more about the locations on the map, they will see that many of them are student driven projects and that they too can have an icon the map. Included below the map is a link to add icons to the map; the Office of Sustainability will approve the additions. This map is a resource for not only both new and returning students, but also for alums and parents.



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### Green Map



## 4.2 Welcome Slides

The welcome slide can simply be described as the ads before the previews at a movie. At both Summerstart and transition the first place students go after check-in is to the Performing Arts Center (PAC). Here, students and family who arrive early sit inside the PAC and await the welcome presentation and meanwhile a slide show is looping on the giant screen on the stage. Our idea here was to create the framework for creating a few broad slides about general campus sustainability rather than focusing in on a specific club. By framework we mean, permanent staff at Western, the ResRAP assistant, will be developing these slides, and the educational materials which will be mentioned later. This means that when we are gone from Western there will still be a position to develop the materials. This is far more beneficial than a one and done strategy where we develop materials for this year and they are then outdated the next. The goal with the Welcome slides is just to show that Western is a university committed to sustainability, and

continue new students down the funnel that the Green Map will hopefully have started. We thought it would be appropriate to have a slide that briefly describes composting, because although there are plenty of opportunities to compost during orientation many new students are unaware of how to do so; the Green Fee, because it shows that Western students are committed towards creating a green campus; and sustainable transportation, to attempt to influence students into not bringing cars. On one of these slides we would hope to also advertise for our interests, in the form of “if you want to learn more...”

#### 4.3 Interest Session Outline

The Interest Session is basically the bottom of the funnel. Student who were already or have become interested in campus sustainability efforts will hopefully attend this optional, thirty-minute presentation given three times at Transitions and eight to sixteen times at Summerstart. At this session the presenter, yet to be determined, will give a semi-comprehensive overview of campus sustainability and the various ways students can get involved on campus. In doing so students who have decided they want to be involved will know how to get involved before they even arrive on campus in the fall. This will mean they know what clubs they want to join, jobs they want to apply for, programs they want to implement, or classes they want to take. So instead of new students coming to school and having to find all of their options to get involved, we will find those options for them.

#### 4.4 Orientation Session Slide

Known as the O-Session, Orientations Sessions are a two-hour campus resource presentation given by Orientation Student Advisors, Western students, to new students. The peer-to-peer presentation is given in small groups of twenty to thirty students and covers a broad range of topics (safety, dining, tutoring, etc.). We want to add sustainability into this mix. By adding a slide on sustainability, continuing with the funnel metaphor, it will catch any water that spilled out of the funnel. The interest session, I mentioned before, occurs before the O-Session. This means that our focused effort is over by the time the O-Session begins. Our goal is to try and catch anyone who missed to interest session with this slide. It will be a more comprehensive look at sustainability on campus than the welcome slides and, because it is a small group presentation, it can serve as a shorter interest session where student's can still ask questions.

## 5.0 Conclusion

Since the topic of this project was first discussed, it was evident that there were many directions that we could have gone. We set a goal early on to reach as many new students as we could; with guidance from New Student Services and other school's orientations, we honed in on a developing an Interest Session in addition to developing a framework between the Office of Sustainability and New Student Services for developing slides for both the Welcome and O-session slideshows. We feel that the students who might otherwise wait until their junior or senior year to get involved with sustainability on campus will be excited to know about what Western does. Overall, all students will be informed of the ongoing commitments Western has made to be net-zero in the not too far

off future. We are excited that the deliverables we have developed will be carried out at the next Summerstart and Transitions sessions.

## 6.0 Future Works

This quarter, Fall 2011, we focused entirely on the development of educational materials for Summerstart and Transitions, New Student Services main Freshmen and Transfer orientation programs for new students entering Western in the fall. As explained earlier, the reason behind this was that we found there to be little education on how to get involved in sustainability on Western's campus and, therefore, we wanted to reach the largest group possible.

We got a lot done this quarter. We created a Green Map and the framework for updating it as well as the framework for the development of educational materials for new students. The most important future work from this project is the implementation of the interest session. Every other aspect of this project that has been delivered will be carried on. New Student Services will have slides focused on Sustainability in their presentations and the Green Map will be updated and maintained by the Office of Sustainability. The only part of our project in question in our project in question is who will give the interest session presentation. We see it as being a member of the Office of Sustainability staff who currently does not hold such an obligation in their job description. Whether or not the interest session ends up happening, we will still have got important education in place, this education, however, will not be as focused on getting Western's future environmental leaders involved day one on campus.

We have discussed choosing to develop education first step for introducing sustainability into orientation. Now that the education has created a foundation for sustainability in orientation, we believe actions can now get a toehold for creating an entirely Green orientation. This could take many forms, but, in our opinion, there are a few that would be more worth it to implement. Our goal was to create a sense of sustainable immersion throughout orientation. Almost every other thing on an orientation schedule will have sustainability tied into it in one way or another. A large part of a new student's day at orientation is actually spent eating in the dining hall. We think if someone continued on with this project this would be step one, make sure these meals are super sustainable (local, organic, etc.) and advertise this fact. In doing so, it will increase a new student's feeling that everything at Western is tied to sustainability. Branching off this thought, we think it is important to reinforce that message with a transition to lower waste during orientation. Simply, only using recyclable and compostable materials as well as cutting down on unnecessary printings and mailing given to new students. It is really up to anyone who continues with this project, the possibilities are endless, but a focus on what will further immerse new students in sustainability is key, because that is what will get Western's future environmental leaders involved as soon as they set foot on campus.

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