

WWU Green Survival Guide

Project: Sustainably Oriented Students (SOS)



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I. Executive Summary:

Imagine you are an incoming student coming to Western Washington University for the first time. You may have heard of the school's commitment to serve as a sustainable model or that it's past students voted to create a Green Energy Fee that gives grant money to green projects on campus. Or maybe this is the first time you have heard the word sustainable be used to describe Western's campus.

As new students come to our campus, they make a transition from their previous community to one whose mindset focuses on reducing its impact on global resources. At the same time, our university's community actively expands its accomplishments in sustainability. With this expansion of ideas, Western has the opportunity to perpetuate and strengthen the dominating culture of sustainability to new incoming students. Currently, this can be a slow process as these students are exposed to so many new aspects of Western's community at once. If a new student did not know how to properly dispose of their recyclables in the waste bin system located around campus, they may quickly lose the incentive to recycle on campus.

To address this and other potential roadblocks a student may face to acting sustainably, creating a green orientation will provide an introduction for students to the idea sustainability. For our project, Sustainably Oriented Students (SOS), we have researched through other colleges' approaches to green orientation models and collected information from current and potential students. Our recommendation is to come up with a Green Survival Guide that will help make an easy transition to Western's sustainable practices.

II. Organizational Information

For 44 years, the dominate culture on Western Washington's Campus has been one of environmentally mindedness and sustainability. This culture has grown and seeped into many different facets of the school, not only the curriculum but student activities and clubs as well. Huxley College of the Environment is probably the most well known outlet for sustainable ideas

at WWU, but they also have a Western Sustainability web site that collects all the sustainable ideas and projects into one central location.

In 2013, WWU received the STARS (The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) Silver rating from AASHE. WWU is also a member of ACORE (American Council on Renewable Energy) and was a top 20 school in the EPA's Green Power Partnership program.

III. Statement of Need

Due to the increasing necessity for a more sustainable way of life, universities are the perfect place to assemble the next generation of sustainably oriented human beings and Western Washington is no except. The university is already a beacon of environmental stewardship for the community and should continue the effort in every aspect possible. Although recycling, and even to an extent composting, has become a major practice of sustainably, there is so much more to the effort and that should be introduced to every person wishing to be a steward of the earth. Western should be on the forefront, before other universities, of every effort of sustainably, leading the way for future generations.

IV. Project Description

Objective:

The goal of having a green orientation is to introduce new students at Western to the sustainable practices on and off campus. Our objective for this project is to create a guide with information that will help for an easy transition to our school's sustainable way of life. This "survival" guide will include instructions on what students may not know when they first come to Western, such as how to recycle and compost, reduce energy and water usage, places to shop and eat in Bellingham, and the sustainable resources available on campus.

To meet our objective in this project, we will create a Green Survival Guide (GSG) that encompasses all of the concepts we think would be most helpful for new students to know about acting sustainably on and off campus. Next, this guide will be distributed throughout Western, either as a physical book copy handed out at SummerStart or a binder placed in each dorm room on campus. A virtual copy of the guide will also populate a web page on Western's Sustainability site. This will serve as a source for year round access for all students to use.

Methodology:

1. To get an understanding of the knowledge base of the current freshman class, we conducted a survey of seven participants. The results showed that the freshman class has a knowledge of sustainably, but had a harder time being able to explain what it means in their own words. Although all said they came to Western with prior knowledge, once at the university, their knowledge base increased. Most thought it would be beneficial to receive some type of informational letter or brochure about the sustainable community at Western prior to coming to Summer Start. Once at Summer Start a few of the students showed interest in having some type of a lecture or handout at the event to learn more about sustainably. When asked about a Green Survival Guide that would be placed in the dorm rooms, all the students seemed intrigued and said that if there, they would use it. The guide would need lots of pictures and a wide range of sustainable practices and places both on and off campus. The students showed concern that if it was too length or not "eye-catching" that it wouldn't be utilized. For a complete list of questions asked, refer to Appendix B.
2. To further our understanding of the knowledge of sustainably that students might have, we conducted a survey of twenty-three high school seniors, from

Bellarmino Prep in Tacoma, WA. We asked these students a total of eight questions about sustainability (see appendix B). It became clear that the seniors in high school and the freshman in college have a very different understanding of the concept of sustainability. So it appears that the colleges students, having been at Western for almost a whole academic year, have been introduced to more rounded concept of sustainability. Overall, many of the seniors believed sustainability to be creating a product that can last a long time and be reused. So their view is very economic based, not really the Triple Bottom Line theory that is most commonly used, involving economics as well as society and environmental. They also showed a lack in knowledge of what a renewable resource was when given the choice between coal, oil, and trees. Although 26% did choose trees, 30% chose all the below and 39% chose none of the above. There is a clear disconnect between the information being learned about sustainability prior to arriving on campus and the information being learned on campus. The GSG is the perfect tool to increase that knowledge base of sustainability right from the beginning when the new students first walk onto campus.

3. To make sure that the guide is a successful way of achieving of goal of providing a sustainable orientation for new students, there could be a trial run in one dorm for an academic year and from there, monitoring can take place to see if the guide makes a difference in the sustainable practices. A survey of the people living in that dorm about if they believed the GSG to be a useful way of learning more about Western's and Bellingham's sustainable opportunities and practices. Also whether or not they actually utilized it often. If the trial run is successful, then the GSG could become a permanent feature for every dorm on campus.

4. In the surveys, the students showed an interest in receiving the sustainable information via a web page. Since Western currently has a sustainability website, it would be beneficial to make that web page more accessible to the whole student body, as well as make it known that it is there to help guide students in their sustain efforts and let people know what is going on around Western on the sustainability front.

Green Survival Guide:

V. Budget

For some new incoming students to be Sustainably Oriented Students, there would be a hard copy of the Green Survival Guide. This would be a short, 8-10 page quick guide, a “how to” be sustainable as well as a resource guide as to where to get more information on campus. This would be done one time, and then evaluated by way of survey to determine if more printing would be needed or not. Ideally this would be a one time process.

A laminated copy of a sustainable guide could be included as part of each dorm rooms item list. This would be part of the room inventory and need to be returned as it would be part of the room set. This guide in the room is just another touch point to get information into the hands of the students. These would be reused and only updated when major changes need to be applied, if at all, and could also only be a one time cost.

A web page which would host the majority of the information would be created, and need to be maintained and updated.

The majority of this would be covered by the green fee and other funds for sustainability available on campus. The copy center quote on printing 2,000 copies of an 8-page color booklet was \$2,178.00.

VI. Future Opportunities

Although it is not a part of our present proposal, our hope is that this green orientation become a multi step process and pervasive resource for students throughout their collegiate career at WWU and beyond.

First the students would receive information prior to Summer Start. Ideally this would be a letter written by whomever is in charge of campus sustainability or the president of the school, and the purpose of the letter would be to welcome the student and introduce them to the rich legacy of sustainability they were inheriting by becoming a Viking. The letter would also include a link to the web version of the Green Survival Guide. A informational portion orientation at Summer Start could be made available for those seeking it out.

The Sustainably Oriented Students format could also be shared to other operations on campus, such as new employee orientation. Leading by example and being a role model has the ability to contribute to students just as much if not more than a Green Survival Guide for them. This could be an integral part of the entire process.

A sustainable competition could take place through the dorm communities all year long. The dorms would receive some sort of points for their excellence in sustainable practices they participate in and at the end of the year, there would be some sort of prize for the winning dorm. This could be a fun, positive way to introduce a behavior change toward making a more sustainable student body.

VII. Conclusion

Western Washington University's legacy is carried forward and grows each year not only by every new student that first enters our campus but also in those who graduate and move

beyond the halls of WWU. For this reason, it is important that these students in transition hold on to the same ideals of sustainability that Western strives for on campus. Western is known for their past and the present leadership in environmental stewardship, and this project will perpetuate that legacy through the graduates as they go beyond Bellingham.

This growth in values toward sustainable behavior is important for going beyond the students' time at our university as there is a global need for more sustainable practices. Western Washington University recognizes this need by implementing sustainability in their own community by committing to renewable energy, waste reduction and sustainability-minded courses. To continue this stewardship, we hope that the incoming students who utilize the Green Survival Guide will become more connected and practiced in the idea of living sustainably.

Appendix A:

Case Studies

Duke G

Appendix B:

College Freshman Focus Group Questions:

Q1: What is sustainability? What are some sustainable practices?

- i. Sustainable development, maintaining a level

- ii. Responsible with resources
- iii. Sustaining from using a resource up
- iv. Reusable
- v. Limit resource use for a prolonged life of a habitat

Q2: Did you have any prior knowledge of sustainability before coming to Western? More specifically Summer Start (SS)?

- i. No prior knowledge, learned in a class at Western (sustainable lit)
- ii. Word is said a lot, but didn't really know what it exactly meant
- iii. Did not have prior knowledge
- iv. Yes, they did have prior knowledge (knew how to recycle and compost)
- v. Prior info but did not recycle until coming here

Q3: Would you like to learn more about sustainability prior to coming to Summer Start?

- i. Yes to prior info (answer of every student asked)

Q4: Would you like to learn about the sustainable practices that Western's campus offers at Summer Start?

- i. Yes
- ii. If there was free stuff to draw attention
- iii. Possibly with a physical letter at SS

Q5: How would you like to learn about them? (online, a pamphlet, both?)

- i. Not in emails (don't always read)
- ii. Talking at summerstart, lectures
- iii. Letters may not be effective
- iv. Presentation of lecture may be good
- v. Physical copy over email

Q6: If there was a sustainable green survival guide, would you use it?

- i. Yes, it would be helpful

- ii. Yes if there were pictures
- iii. Likes the idea, thinks it would be useful

Q7: As a new student, would you have found a guide on _____ helpful?

- a. Recycling
 - i. Yes to guide
 - ii. More info needed
 - iii. Images help them know how to recycle on campus
- b. Composting
- c. Sustainable, businesses
 - i. Yes
 - ii. More info needed, especially about organic food
 - iii. Good idea to incorporate off campus
 - iv. Some felt like they didn't always go off campus (athletes)
 - v. On campus sustainable eateries as well
- d. Environmental clubs
 - i. Also wants information about sustainable stuff on campus like composting in the outback farm (relates back to legacy)
- e. Alternative transportation
- f. Energy/water conservation
 - i. More info needed

Q8: Green Survival Guide in dorm rooms

- a. What do you think of this method?
 - i. Needs pictures in guide
 - ii. Need facts, responsibility statement (make it important and urgent to the reader)
 - iii. Needs to be concise and short

b. Pros/Cons?

i. Guide would be utilized in room, said friends would also read it

ii. Room guide sounds ok, people wouldn't read it if they weren't interested

(make it more appealing)

iii. Good to have in the room

iv. May read if bored

Q9: How has being a student at Western affected or influenced your views on "sustainability"?

a. Bellingham is good about being environmentally friendly

b. Learned more about when they came here

c. Became more conscientious of being environmental friendly

High School Senior Survey Questions:

Q1: How often do you recycle?

Always: 21%

Most of the time: 52%

About half of the time: 13%

Once in awhile: 4%

Never: 8%

Q2: Please select the best statement that best describes why you do not recycle?

I do recycle: 74%

I do not know how to recycle: 0%

Recycling is inconvenient: 21.8%

I choose not to because I do not believe it makes a difference: 4.4%

Q3: How important is composting to you?

Extremely important: 8.7%

Very important: 8.7%

Moderately important: 8.7%

Slightly important: 34.8%

Not at all important: 30.4%

What's composting: 8.7%

Q4: What does sustainability mean to you? Please provide some examples.

The main ideas of answers were 1). Having a renewable resource, 2). To preserve the environment, and 3). Being able to reuse a product.

Q5: Which one of these resources is renewable?

Coal: 4.4%

Oil: 0%

Trees: 26.1%

All the above: 30.4%

None of the above: 39.1%

Q6: When at your future college's new student orientation, would you attend an informational session about sustainability?

Yes: 4.4%

No: 56.5%

Maybe: 39.1%

Q7: When learning about sustainability, what types of sustainable practices would you like to learn about? (Check all that apply)

Energy conservation: 63.6%

Water conservation: 59.1%

Recycling: 41.0%

Composting: 31.8%

Q8: Given the resources, how would you prefer to receive information concerning sustainability?

(Check all that apply)

Facebook: 31.8%

Twitter: 27.3%

Online Website: 40.1%

Email: 22.7%

Handout: 45.5%

Guidebook: 4.6%

Appendix C:

Green Survival Guide: