

Cats Optimizing Recycling Education -CORE - Progress Report

Email

namohasante@arizona.edu

Project Manager Name

Jill Burchell

Requested Metrics

Basics

1. # of people in the core project team involved in planning and execution of the project (if they're a student/ staff/ faculty etc.).

4 CORE Staff

Jill Burchell- Staff

Nana Adwoa Akuffo Amoh-Asante- Graduate Student

Kemper Egan- Student

Giulia Herckes- Student

Previous student workers -3

2023/2024 Academic year

RAs – 262

CDs – 14

GCDs – 7

ACDs – 5

Custodial Unit-100

Facilities management-5

Eco reps- 8

2024/2025 Academic year

RAs – 262

CDs – 30

Custodial Unit-100

Facilities management-5

Eco reps- 10

Total number of people involved in CORE project- 822.

2. # of hours on this project (broken up by students/ staff)

Jill Burchell

Primary Project Coordinator- Total number of hours: 680 hours

Nana Adwoa Akuffo Amoh-Asante

Graduate Assistant -Total number of hours: 1,360 hours

Kemper Egan

Recycling and Facilities Specialist - Total number of hours: 406 hours

Giulia Herckes

Recycling Specialist- Total number of hours: 234 hours

Previous team members

Tyler Johnson - Total number of hours: 57 hours

Chloe Stenmark- Total number of hours: 100 hours

Courtney Kim - Total number of hours: 183 hours

Total number of hours spent on the project: 3,020 hours

Engagement

1. # of students directly engaged with recycling education

1-on-1 recycling education

Spring 2024 - 532 residents engaged directly through 1 on 1 recycling education in 6 dorms.

Fall 2024 - 523 residents engaged directly through 1 on 1 recycling education in 9 dorms.

Spring 2025 - 119 residents engaged directly through 1 on 1 recycling education in 3 dorms.

A total of 1,174 residents directly engaged with recycling education during 1-on-1 education.

Bin It to Win It (BI2WI) engagement

Fall 2023 - 7663 students engaged directly through BI2WI

Fall 2024 - 7734 students engaged directly through BI2WI.

A total of 15,365 students engaged directly through BI2WI.

2. # and type of interactive events held (i.e. Focus groups, interventions, workshops)

Focus groups

1 resident only focus group was organized in Fall 2023 with 2 residents attending.

1 CD only focus group was organized in Spring 2024 with 3 CDs attending.

1 RA only focus group was organized in Spring 2024 with 3 RAs attending.

2 resident-only focus groups were organized in Spring 2024 with 6 residents attending.

1 resident-only focus group was organized in Fall 2024 with 7 residents attending.

1 resident-only focus group was organized in Spring 2025, however, none of the individuals who RSVP'd showed up.

A total of 7 focus groups were organized with only 6 of them having participants.

Staff Meetings

1 staff meeting in Spring 2024 with 19 RA attending.

3 staff meetings in Spring 2025 with 53 RAs attending.

of students reached through these events

There were a total of 21 participants who attended the focus groups organized by CORE, with 15 of them being residents (non-staff).

A total of 72 RAs were present at the four staff meetings the CORE team attended.

Recycling

1. #Results from recycling surveys conducted

The Fall 2023 recycling contamination quiz was sent to 7663 students with 996 students (13%) completing the quiz.

The Recycling survey for Spring 2024 was conducted as part of Housing's End of Year (EOY) Undergraduate residents' survey. 6,717 non- RA residents were sent the survey and 824 (12.3%) of them completed a recycling question.

The Fall 2024 recycling contamination quiz was sent to 7,734 students with 493 students (6.4%) completing the quiz.

The Spring 2025 recycling survey was sent out to 7,324 residents, with 609 residents (8.3%) completing the survey.

2. # Contamination rates

The average contamination rates per dorm have gradually reduced over the 2024/2025 academic year.

Average contamination rate per semester

Villa del Puente

Fall 2024- 45.2%

Spring 2025-24.6 %

Posada San Pedro
Fall 2024- 40%
Spring 2025- 18.7%

Pueblo de la Cienega
Fall 2024- 38.6%
Spring 2025- 17.5%

Likins
Fall 2024- 29.8%
Spring 2025- 21.8%

Apache-Santa Cruz
Fall 2024- 31.9%
Spring 2025-21.2%

Navajo-Pinal
Fall 2024- 41%
Spring 2025-21.9%

Colonia de la Paz
Fall 2024- 32.7%
Spring 2025- 38.2%

Hopi/Graham-Greenlee
Fall 2024- 32.1%
Spring 2025- 20.8%

Pima
Fall 2024- 13.5%
Spring 2025- 4.5%

Babcock
Fall 2024- 25.4%
Spring 2025- 27.7%

Manzi-Mo
Fall 2024- 49.2%
Spring 2025- 51.1%

Coconino
Fall 2024- 15.6%
Spring 2025- 14.3%

Yuma
Fall 2024- 16.9%
Spring 2025- 11.3%

Maricopa
Fall 2024- 23.8%
Spring 2025-12.5%

Gila
Fall 2024-20.4%
Spring 2025-12.8%

Kaibab-Huachuca
Fall 2024- 25.8%
Spring 2025- 26.6%

La Aldea
Fall 2024- 19 %
Spring 2025- 9.3%

Coronado
Fall 2024- 33%
Spring 2025- 26.1%

Arbol de la Vida
Fall 2024- 28%
Spring 2025-15.4%

AZ-Sonora
Fall 2024- 30%
Spring 2025- 19.7%

Cochise
Fall 2024- 23.8%
Spring 2025- 17.3%

Yavapai
Fall 2024- 22.5%
Spring 2025- 12%

***Honors Village**

The recycling bins in Honors Village were mostly empty when the recycling specialists visited the dorm this semester, however, for the few times they were able to collect contamination data, the recycling had little contamination.

From the contamination rates above, there has been a general reduction in contamination rates across the dorms, with the exception of Navajo-Pinal, Colonia de la Paz, Babcock, and Manzi-Mo. Two out of these four dorms have dumpster-style recycling bins and have historically had high contamination rates.

Project Accomplishments

In year two of the CORE project, spring contamination rates dropped below 15% when it had been averaging about 36% over the past couple of years. The intensive education in Fall 24, with all of the improvements we made over year one of the project, appears to have been quite effective in decreasing contamination rates in the dorms by Spring 25.

Across the CORE project, spring recycling rates consistently increased and spring contamination rates consistently decreased.

	22-23	23-24	24-25
Fall Recycling	30453	33780	15318
Fall Contamination	20785	24945	26396
Fall Contamination %	40.57%	42.48%	63.28%
Spring Recycling	14027	21423	31880
Spring Contamination	8959	11190	5354
Spring Contamination %	38.98%	34.31%	14.38%
Yearly Recycling	44480	55203	47198
Yearly Contamination	29744	36135	31750
Yearly Contamination %	40.07%	39.56%	40.22%

The Recycling Specialists created a new video demonstrating what can and cannot be recycled on campus. It was filmed and edited entirely in-house, using student phones, team-owned microphones, and Adobe Premiere Pro. The result was a more engaging video with significantly improved sound quality, replacing the outdated version on the Housing website. In the process, students also gained valuable experience with Premiere Pro, adding a new skill to their toolkit. Also, to address widespread recycling misconceptions among students, the CORE team has launched a "Deprogramming" campaign, which will be fully implemented in Fall 2025. This initiative responds to key findings from our recent recycling survey and enrollment data. About 43 percent of undergraduate students, who make up the majority of dorm residents, come from outside Arizona where recycling guidelines often differ. Many may be unknowingly contaminating the recycling in the dorms because they assume they already know how to recycle properly.

One of the aims of the CORE project was to put together a recycling education plan that would be used to teach new students in the dorms how to recycle each year. Using the findings from our assessments and data collection, as well as feedback from students and staff, the CORE team has put together an educational plan that details how recycling education and interventions should be conducted throughout the academic year.

Additionally, when comparing the contamination data collected by both the CORE team and Facilities Management, there has been a significant improvement in contamination rates in the dorms. Although the expected decrease did not occur immediately after the first year of the project, a comparison of contamination data from the second year to that of the first year shows a gradual and consistent improvement over time. This suggests that the interventions and educational efforts implemented through the CORE project are beginning to have an impact.

Next Steps

1. Implement new recycling education plan in the next academic year.
2. Continue conducting annual quizzes, and surveys to gather student feedback on recycling education.
3. Continue comparing student-generated contamination data with Facilities Management (FM) records to monitor trends and improvements.
4. Revise recycling signage and educational materials every two to three years based on student and staff feedback.
5. Partner with ResEd to integrate sustainable living more deeply into Wildcat Living and make recycling education a top priority for residential staff.
6. Restructure summer staff training to include Kahoot quizzes and partner role-playing exercises to help staff practice how to answer recycling questions residents may ask.

Challenges Faced

During our assessments of our implemented interventions, one thing that ran across our interactions with students and staff was their reservations about our 1-on-1 recycling education, which made it a failed intervention. Many students were uncomfortable with having people they did not know (Recycling Specialists) coming into their personal space to teach them about recycling. While they liked the coaching sessions, they would have preferred familiar faces, such as their RAs, or sessions held in the lobbies, so they did not feel like their privacy was being encroached upon.

Based on these experiences with 1-on-1 education, the intervention has been discontinued and is being replaced with Lobby programs, where students will be incentivized with cookies after interacting with Recycling Specialists and bringing their recycling for inspection.

Another issue faced during the CORE project was staff retention. At several points during the project, our Recycling Specialists resigned, which meant we had to recruit new individuals to fill these positions. This slowed down the activities of the project since interviews had to be conducted to recruit staff.

Also, many of our focus groups were poorly attended, despite our several marketing strategies. Even though we involved CSF and the Housing marketing team to help us advertise our focus groups, what we could have done differently was start advertising our focus groups earlier and recruit the Hall Council and RHA to help us get participants.

Finally, the CORE team faced challenges with collecting contamination data during several shifts, as many bins were empty when contamination checks began after the bins in those dorms had been emptied. Additional contamination checks were later conducted for dorms that had no recordings for a given week. In the future, facilities management will be consulted to ensure that contamination checks are conducted on days when the recycling bins have not been emptied.

Project Support

CSF was extremely supportive throughout the entire project. We look forward to future collaborations with CSF.

Photo Link

Media/Links

https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3Dd98KhNHr0Yo&data=05%7C02%7CSBLY-CSF-ServiceAccount%40arizona.edu%7C156dc31e4c7b4eb3859008dd9405fabe%7C5ee35505eb8e4929937d645df5013288%7C1%7C0%7C638829475600732331%7CUknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWU%3DIiOiIlwLjAuMDAwMCIiIAI0iXaW4zMilskfOIjoiTWFpbGlldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2Bo62m32pJXwffwZHV43mp63MMI1HKtFTH75%2Fb6lHs%2Fk%3D&reserved=0