



Georgia College and State University Milledgeville, Georgia Environmental Education and Outreach

SCHOOL

Georgia College and State University, Milledgeville Campus, Public - Four-Year Institution, 5,100 undergraduate, 900 graduate, Milledgeville, Georgia.

ABSTRACT

At one university in the Southeastern United States faculty and staff have stepped outside their comfort zone creating interdisciplinary knowledge of sustainability beyond the classroom. The sharing of information on sustainability through a weeklong series of on-campus events, Shades of Green Week (SOG), was designed for students, faculty, staff, and the local community to move individuals from lack of knowledge and misinformation to knowledge that fosters informed decision-making. Planning the event began a year before the event occurred and involved faculty, staff, students, and community volunteers. The events during the week (e.g., bike ride, panel discussions, product displays, and product demonstrations) crossed six days and two campuses. Both large companies and smaller companies participated. These companies sent representatives to Georgia College and State University (GC) from Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, and Texas. The costs for these events included personnel time, food, and promotions (all costs except salaries were covered by various campus organizations and sponsors). Participating companies paid their own expenses. As with all events, the founders learned from experience, thus, 2013-week of events is expected to be great.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

One goal was to create an interdisciplinary series of panel discussions and product demonstrations that utilized faculty, staff, and community members as facilitators. This goal was successfully completed. Faculty from computer science, biology and environmental science, and nursing; as well as, the Career Advisor and the Dean of the J. Whitney Bunting College of Business (COB), the Chair of the Sustainability Council (SC), a representative from the military, and a Pulitzer Prize nominee for journalism facilitated panel discussions. Further, the Theatre Chair directed a play "An Enemy of the People," a member of the US Forestry Service supervised a bike ride, and the mayors of two counties signed proclamations for the week of events.

A second goal was to involve students from all disciplines in event preparations and as student leaders at events. Providing students with experiential opportunities during the week enabled students to be recognized for their work beyond their discipline and to grow as individuals. This goal was successfully completed. Students from the



following disciplines (Art Education, Business, Environmental Sciences, Outdoor Education), and exchange students participated as either panelist or volunteers. These students were recognized in program guides and on the event website. Two students were recognized by the General Motors representative visiting the campus as outstanding leaders and were provided with a Hybrid Chevy Tahoe to drive to a Public Relations hiring conference in Orlando, Florida all expenses paid and were given the opportunity to talk with General Motors executives over dinner nightly.

Informed decisions bring true change. Another goal was to create a diverse, fun, and interesting series of events to educate students as to sustainability and elicit personal change. A student research team designed and conducted a series of surveys for the event. Students and community members' attitudes and intentions were measured. As for attitude toward the event, an individual's level of satisfaction with each event attended was measured. For eight of the nine events, the respondents' level of satisfaction was high. As for satisfaction with the overall week of events, the majority of participants were satisfied overall (e.g., met expectations to exceeded expectations). Positive experiences at the events were expected to increase the individuals' intentions to change their behavior to be more sustainable. Conclusions could be drawn from the data that many respondents planned to make a personal change in their level of sustainability. The survey results show that this goal was met.

Challenges and Responses

A major challenge was getting the resources needed for an event of this magnitude. This was the event's maiden voyage, thus concern over "what's in it for me" was expressed. Also, in a time of economic uncertainty it was difficult to obtain funding for the events. However, minimal financial support across campus, funds supplied by the founders, and from the COB were obtained. As to human resources, it was difficult to convince faculty to take on one more responsibility. The easier part was obtaining students to volunteer as the benefits outweighed the time constraints and workload. As a result of these efforts, one major corporation encouraged the Board to seek funding from their corporation for 2013. Publicity after the event also brought offers of future support.

Another event challenge was gaining buy-in from across the campus and the community to participate. However, the founding Board members did not let the lack of interest slow the process, they dug in deeper to gain need resources for 2013. The particular timeframe for SOG created a time conflict for many students. It was mid-term exam time during the weeklong event; this could explain some of the low attendance for the events. As well, many community members do not see the university as part of their community. However, local radio, television, and a magazine ran commercials and/or stories of the event, in turn created a positive effect for future community support. Further, the 2013 team is much larger than the original Board, which includes members of the SC. Through this asset Shades of Green week will have more community connections.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

The event had a significant indirect impact on the school's carbon footprint by bringing attention to sustainability issues and by introducing students to the SC's work. Previously, efforts of the council were not well known. The work of the SC is very important to the reduction of the college's carbon footprint; therefore, the SOG event can be said to have a positive impact on reducing the college's carbon footprint through awareness.

Commentary and Reflection

Success is measured in many ways (e.g., student attendance, lessons learned, industry participation, sponsorships gained, etc.). Unsustainable habits and a disposable mindset do not evaporate overnight. In order to see great successes, baby steps must be taken before giant leaps can occur. Preparation for such an event is time intensive, but holds a high probability of an increasing impact at each successive event. Finding other faculty and community members to participate begins by looking at the teaching and publication records for those who proactively engage in learning and disseminating sustainability knowledge. To further grow the reach of sustainability and gain a collective strength, it is necessary to determine organizations, no matter how small their sustainable efforts, and invite them to join the initiative. Opportunity for partnerships from community members can be identified through faculty and staff personal networks, Green Chambers of Commerce, and Good Jobs Green Jobs Career events. Having said all this, it should be noted that there has to be a collective change in mindset from the current consumerism behavior in order for a true shift to occur. It will take more than a few bodies at an event to bring out a noticeable change in the campus's carbon footprint.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The founding Board consisted of Dr. Sams, Ph.D., Marketing; the Career Advisor, COB, Mrs. McCord; and community member from Ravenwood Consulting, Warner Robins, Mrs. JaLynn Hudnall. Student organizations participating included: Environmental Science Club and Global Business Student Leaders Association.

Members of the Marketing Research class created surveys and analyzed the data. GC MBA students developed a marketing plan for SOG.

Direct involvement during the week of events included a team of student volunteers led by Emily Scarboro. GC student volunteers were: Abbey Benton, Erin Fair, Jackie Hooper, Courtney Kennedy, Zachary Tuman, and Angel Watkins. Student panelist included: Lucas Newton, Cody Edge, Nicole Field, Sarah Hazzard, Matthias Jacob, Colin Maidonado, Tyler Mattix, Nigel Sanyangore, and Hannah Sadowski. Graduate student, Jeniffer Sams from the University of Florida also volunteered. GC masters student and meteorologist for the Georgia Forestry Commission, Dan Chan, supervised the ride. The ride was sponsored by the Bicycle Club of Milledgeville.

Others directly involved were: Dr. Karen Berman, Ph.D., Theatre Chair; Dianne Chamblee, Professor, GC School of Nursing; William (Bill) Fisher, Ph.D., Chair, GC Art Department, Tanya Goette, Ph.D., Chair, Information Systems & Computer Science; Liz Havey, Study Abroad Adviser at GC; Will Hobbs, Ph.D., GC Leisure Behavior Assistant Professor, Outdoor Education; Gregg Kaufman, Department of Government & Sociology; Matthew Lio-Troth, Ph.D., Dean of COB; GC Printing Department; GC Communications; GC 88.3 Talk Radio; Kalina Manoylov, Ph.D., GC Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences; Barbara Monnet and her staff in GC IT Department; Doug Oetter, Ph.D., Department of History, Geography, and Philosophy, Chair of GC SC; and Dale Young, Associate Dean of the COB.

Direct supporters from the community included: April Bragg, CEO, Chamber of Commerce Milledgeville Georgia; Jeff Bartholomew, Director of Global Client Collaboration, Sales + Coaching & Development -- Steelcase, Inc.; Mike Couch, City Planner, City of Milledgeville Georgia; Angie Gheesling, Executive Director, The Development Authority of the City of Milledgeville and Baldwin County; Mayor Richard

Bentley, Baldwin County; Mayor Robert Reichert, Bibb County; and Carl Perrazola, Chief Deputy Corrosion Prevention US Air Force Warner Robins.

Sponsorships both monetary and in kind came from: Gerri McCord, GC Career Advisor; Frito Lay Corporation, Warner Robins; The J. Whitney Bunting College of Business, GC; JaLynn Hudnall, CEO, Ravenwood Forest Consulting, Warner Robins; Keep Milledgeville Baldwin Beautiful; Honors Program of GC; Krogers of Milledgeville; Museum of Arts & Sciences, Macon; Dan Nainan, Professional Comedian and Voiceover Artist; Dr. Doreen and Mr. Phil Sams; Dr. Art Howard and Jalyann Hudnall, CEOs, The Heart of Georgia Energy Coalition; The Georgia Forestry Commission; Milledgeville Baldwin County Development Authority; The Salty Dog Carmels from Barbary Brix; the 42nd Floor Custom Apparel & More, Milledgeville; and Wheeler's Nursey, Inc., Macon.

Funding and Resources

It is difficult to measure the costs in dollars and cents. Approximately \$800 was spent on the week of events, but many organizations donated in-kind items so the true cost cannot be measured. Many people also donated their time. The J. Whitney College of Business provided some of the funding, while other campus organizations and individuals contributed as well. The IT Department, Communications Department, and the Print Shop also lent their support to the event. No funds came from NWF Campus Ecology Fellowship for the event.

Education and Community Outreach

As stated above, radio, television, newspapers, and even magazine companies provided free press for the event. The college talk-radio interviewed students and faculty involved, the local television stations published the information on their websites, and the local newspapers ran articles before and after the event. The campus received the word through flyers, on-campus TV station, a SOG website, word-of-mouth advertising, and social media via both Facebook and Twitter were utilized. After the event a local, widely read magazine published a multi-page story on the event. The local community showed interest through public entities (e.g., Mayors' offices, city planners, etc.) and some nonprofit organizations involved in sustainability efforts supported the event with their presence at events. Attendance by the general public in general was sparse except at two events. One event was planned just for business professionals in Bibb County Georgia and did receive a great deal of community participation. Another event was planned specifically for the Women's Leadership Forum and was very well attended. The less attended events seemed to have been the events which occurred at lunchtime or in the afternoon when many community members at lunch or work.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

Attendance by a member of the SOG founding Board at a National Wildlife Federation (NWF) event in Atlanta inspired her to reach more people by creating a weeklong event for a diverse group. Further, her participation in NWF webinars provided more ideas and incentives to move forward with the event. She is in the process of working with one of the student volunteers and recent graduate of GC to start an Eco-Rep campus ecology group on the college's campus. Through this group, the university will be able to broaden awareness and reduce its carbon footprint.

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MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History - *Sustainability Council (SC)*

GC's SC was created in April 2009 to help identify and promote actions and initiatives that improves sustainability on campus. As part of its charge, the council is required to submit an annual report, which assesses campus practices, initiatives, and offers recommendations for actions that will move GC toward a more sustainable future. The GC's SC is made up of dedicated students, staff, and faculty who work together to assess and promote activities related to sustainability issues. The council members consist of: three students, five staff, and seven faculty members. The council reports to the Vice President of Business and Finance who also serves on the council in an advisory role. The council holds monthly meetings. Workgroups were designed to help the committee of 15 members divide their attentions to seven different areas, and incorporate additional volunteers.

Visit our website at: green.gcsu.edu, or Blog at: <http://gcgreen.wordpress.com/>, or

Facebook at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Georgia-College-Sustainability-Council/121655944689>

Environmental Science Club

The club's purpose is to educate students/staff/faculty on environmental issues, improve practices on campus and in the community, and sponsor environmental affairs and events. Club website:

<http://www2.gcsu.edu/orgs/student/esc/>

Image Credit: The J. Whitney Bunting College of Business