

Homewood Green Events Task Force

Summer 2014 Report



JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

Sustainability

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Overview

During the summer of 2014, representatives from various departments across Homewood came together to discuss opportunities, ideas and impediments to success for hosting events that are environmentally responsible, without compromising convenience, quality or the cultural components of these initiatives. This group represented event planners for many namesake university events, as well as facilities and operations coordinators who provide the on-the-ground support or resources for campus programs.

The goal of the task force was to collaboratively define sustainable event planning for the Johns Hopkins University campus, and identify best practices for consistent coordination across campuses and event type. Together we defined what a sustainable event at Johns Hopkins can and should mean; evaluated unique and shared opportunities for event planning and promotion; considered ways to leverage their collective efforts to achieve a greater impact, and assessed how to measure progress. This report reviews the outcome of these conversations, including setting an institution goal for university events, as well as the steps and unique strategies to deploy in order to achieve that goal.

Outcome

The group concluded that it was reasonable, feasible and sensible to set a formal goal for university events, and that in doing so, it would help each person/group to individually achieve greater sustainability in their event(s) by having a shared, formal and definitive commitment. Upon review of five key areas: logistics, infrastructure, resources, day-of-support, and accountability and recognition, the group reached consensus on a **goal of zero waste university-hosted events by 2020.**

This includes: events that are planned by university staff and are hosted on a Johns Hopkins campus (owned or leased building); events with attendance of 500 people or more; and most critically, recurring, name-sake institution events that are integral to institutional identity (list below).

Programs including, but not limited to:

- Orientation/Move In
- Convocation
- SoHOP
- Hoptoberfest
- Lighting of the Quad
- President's Day of Service
- Spring Fair
- Alumni Weekend
- Commencement
- Home Sporting Events
- Staff Milestone Recognition Events
- Staff Picnic

Best Practices

1. Integrate educational resources into existing platforms for a consistent exposure to concepts of sustainable event planning.
2. Outfit commonly used event spaces with permanent compost and recycling bins.
3. Ensure marketing materials, event signage and other visuals reflect a coordinated message and initiative to foster cohesion and comprehension.

4. Set the example for events, so others follow suit, such as students, staff planning smaller scale events or meetings, and faculty.
5. Share successes and lessons learned with other JHU event planners to accelerate change and create a network of knowledge.
6. Leverage influence where possible: with vendors and contractors, student coordinators, & university administrators.
7. Encourage selection of local and/or sustainability-minded businesses through consistent use of green preferred vendors.
8. Dedicate enough time and resources to proper coordination and sourcing of services/materials at the earliest stage of planning.
9. Continually pursue interesting and innovative ways to involve others in the initiative to include and showcase sustainability in programming.
10. Conduct post event evaluations and solicit feedback from planners and participants for continued reflection and revision.

Implementation Plan

In order to achieve a goal of zero waste university hosted events, there are a number of actions and strategies to implement immediately, and others to explore, evaluate and accomplish over the longer term. The below outlines short term actions – those to be completed within a two year time frame from setting the goal – and mid to longer term actions – those to be completed by the year 2020 in compliment to the stated goal.

Short-Term Actions

1. Construct system for sponsoring or supplementing cost of bins for student groups, to make more affordable.
2. Design seal/stamp for branding materials associated with green events.
3. Develop a consistent campaign and outreach materials for bring your own bottle efforts, in conjunction with Take Back the Tap initiative.
4. Develop resources to make planning easier, including:
 - a. Catering tips cheat sheets
 - b. T-shirt sourcing guide
 - c. Expanded Green Caterer directory
5. Implement reusable to-go program within dining facilities.
6. Recognize groups through existing awards/mechanisms: i.e., Student Activity Awards
7. Integrate into trainings and process (i.e., Programming Seminar)
8. Assess opportunities for attendees to participate in the process (i.e. offset travel)
9. Survey student needs & desires in regards to green events, to identify opportunities, issues and allies.
10. Identify infrastructure (locations for filling stations, bins, etc.) and shared resources opportunities (i.e., filling station fountains, water coolers, tablecloths)

Mid to Long Term Actions

1. Identify, fund and install bins in common event space locations
2. Install infrastructure and implement shared resources system, including process for rental, suitable sites for storage & maintenance parameters

3. Identify and pursue opportunities to negotiate contracts or deals with vendors for preferred pricing (leverage scale)
4. Migrate toward more options where reuse comes before recycling and compost.
 - a. Reusable To-go boxed lunches: evaluate opportunity/identify process and restrictions
5. Develop a mechanism for event planners to purchase compostable supplies at a discounted price on campus

Next Steps: Structure & Schedule

Following the initial three meetings of the task force, the group will divide into three sub-committees, so that smaller factions of stakeholders can discuss and tackle specific areas of opportunity. These groups will each have specific focus areas, with particular outcomes that when combined, lead the university toward more comprehensive and consistent sustainable event planning at all levels.

Sub-Committees

1. Outreach & Education
 - a. Green Event branding & marketing; promotion of Green Events holistically
 - b. Green Event recognition criteria
 - c. Promotional and on site materials and signage
 - d. Coordination with other campaigns (facilitating synergy; develop of marketing materials)
2. Resources & Infrastructure
 - a. Sustainable sourcing
 - i. Preferred vendor lists
 - ii. Pursuit of preferred pricing with new/modified contracts
 - b. Compostable supplies for purchase on campus
 - c. Green Event “Library”
 - i. Water coolers/H2) station check outs
 - d. Reusable container promotion/logistics at events
3. Planning & Coordination
 - a. Training and other protocols
 - b. Giveaways
 - i. Reduction opportunities with production (programs and printed materials, t-shirts, other giveaways)
 - c. Revising green event planning guide and distribution strategy
 - d. Day of event support

Schedule

Sub-committees will begin meetings as groups during spring 2015, and will continue conversations throughout the term of the implementation plan. Moving forward, the full task force will convene three times a year, the end of fall term, the end of spring term, and in the middle of the summer, to keep each other abreast of accomplishments. There is no minimum or maximum number of required meetings for sub-committees: each group according to the demands and preferences of its members will determine this. Each group should provide updates to the task force chairs at least halfway between the full task force group meetings, and as requested.