

WASTED OPPORTUNITIES

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Background

Since 2012, the University of California Sustainable Practices Policy has been aiming to reach a goal of zero waste, defined as a waste diversion rate of at least 95% by 2020. According to a 2020 UC Sustainability Annual Report, UCLA only reached about a 50% rate in 2020. UCLA has consistently fallen short of its zero waste targets, with more than 1 million pounds of waste being produced on campus each year. With a new target in place: 90% diversion from landfills, and 25% reduction of waste per capita from 2016 FY levels by 2025, we wonder what UCLA is tangibly doing to make these goals a reality. Despite their efforts, community members are still struggling to access sustainable waste practices and tools.

Objectives

We hope to assist UCLA Sustainability's Zero Waste Team in understanding the community's reasons for avoiding sustainable waste practices. We aim to achieve this by:

- Surveying students and community members living on and off-campus about their waste reduction habits and their narratives regarding UCLA's current Zero Waste efforts.
- Creating a website with visualizations that document and highlight community narratives regarding the project.

Community Methods

Our project will empower the general UCLA student community, including both current and future Bruins, as both groups will benefit from increased awareness about waste habits, reduction, and impact. Community members concerned about sustainability and waste reduction, as well as those less aware of the consistent waste problem will have their voices and personal experiences shared. Additionally, students living on and off-campus will be able to share their experiences, accounting for the varying habits and resources available for the two groups.

User Stories

Example: As an off-campus student who is environmentally conscious, I find it difficult to find nearby composting resources and I wish there was somewhere near/on campus where I could take my compost.

As a student who lives on the hill, it frustrates me to see how careless other students are with their waste. I want to share what I've witnessed in hopes that people will start to hold themselves accountable for their actions.

Potential Survey Questions

Since we're creating profiles of members of the UCLA community, the initial questions aim to gather basic demographic and affiliation information. The open response questions aim to gather information about the individual's current waste reduction habits and their perceptions of the topic of waste reduction at UCLA in general.

Background questions:

1. What is your connection to the UCLA community?
 - a. Student
 - i. What's your major?
 - ii. What are your campus affiliations? (i.e. clubs and organizations)
2. Where do you live?
 - a. On-campus
 - b. Off-campus (in Westwood)
 - c. Off-campus (commuter)
 - i. What area do you live in?

Open response:

3. What motivates or deters you from recycling and/or composting?
4. What do you know about UCLA's Zero Waste program?
5. What issues do you see on-campus regarding the Zero Waste program and its efforts?
6. As a community member, what do you think UCLA/LA can do better to encourage waste reduction and make recycling/composting more accessible?
 - a. In description: For example, where do you feel like we need more recycling or compost bins on campus/around UCLA?

Long-term Impact

We hope that this project will bring awareness to UCLA's zero waste goals. Our map filled with waste 'profiles' of the community will provide anecdotes and insight as to why UCLA is missing its zero waste target. By surveying a variety of student community members, we hope to make a diverse map displaying people's perceptions, habits, and relationships to waste reduction, which could help explain the lack of compliance with UCLA's waste reduction efforts and spark more interest in reducing waste. The mapplication could be distributed to UCLA's Environmental Student Network and the sustainability team of the housing association, where it could be shared along with current waste reduction infographics on the hill. We can also provide our mapplication to UCLA Sustainability's Zero Waste team so that they are better informed about student waste habits.

References

<https://www.lacompost.org/start-composting> - map of compost hubs in LA

<https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/ucla-launches-zero-waste-campaign-to-help-clean-up-campus>

<https://dailybruin.com/2021/06/06/opinion-ucla-fails-to-hit-zero-waste-target-must-implement-new-sustainability-practices>

<https://dailybruin.com/2022/04/14/the-quad-ucla-community-members-reflect-on-being-sustainable-during-the-pandemic>

<https://www.sustain.ucla.edu/zero-waste/>