

Move-out Program Recommendations: Executive Summary

By: Elizabeth Elliott (PLU '22), DJS Fellows

Introduction:

This report provides recommendations to Pacific Lutheran University's (PLU) Move-out program, as a place to start for re-evaluating campus-wide waste-diversion projects and education materials. This report is informed by both the current (2021) Move-in and Move-out guides, supplementary Move-out dumpster signage, and my own student perspective of experiencing both programs to provide feedback on how to move forward into the upcoming 2022 Move-out.

Problem:

The Move-out program involves multiple campus departments that have worked independently of one another for the past few years on this project. The current guide continues to articulate the waste diversion objective, but is missing the reason *why* students should participate in the current Move-out practice. Students' attitudes towards this program is often not tied to DJS values but to moving constraints. The current program is lacking a purpose linking the practice to sustainability and begs the question: Why is this practice important both at PLU and beyond? The same can be said with the partnership between the Rescue Mission and NW Furniture Bank, which is understood by the waste diversion objective but feels disconnected to how students support these organizations through the Move-out practice.

In the physical Move-out guide that outlines the Move-out program, the current guide does not include any waste diversion graphics or signage which makes it difficult to understand what can be placed where without close reading of the guide or in-person viewing of each bin. Although the current move-in guide does include graphics, these are graphics from the Tacoma waste diversion program signage and not PLU specific signage or campus-wide waste location graphics. This can be difficult for students to fully understand the location of waste bins especially during their first campus move-in and move-out when they still may not be the most familiar with campus.

As students go through the end-of-the-year transition process, the Move-out program we currently have only addresses waste diversion, not the entire transition. The Move-out guide needs to be easily accessed by Residential students. The current Move-out guide is located on a google document, which is a good idea to quickly edit the information year to year, but is not the most readable for students who are often accessing the information on their phones. Additionally, the current Move-in and Move-out guides are emailed out by Residential Life but not found on the Residential Life website. The Waste Diversion website houses both the Move-in and Move-out guides, but they are respectively mislabeled (labeled as Move-in 2020 but for the 2021 year) and outdated (Move-out 2018). The separation of information from the two websites and departments illustrates a re-evaluation of supporting student needs as they enter and leave campus.

Analysis and strategy:

There are multiple challenges with the Move-out program which I have provided feedback and possible next steps under three major sections:

1. General program Recommendations
2. Program Management
3. Guide

General Program Recommendations

Why

This section is built under the question: Why should students participate and care about our current move-out practices? The first step I identify would be to begin to develop a campus “why” for move-out with the use of donation drums, recycling and trash dumpsters. Perhaps it would be helpful to review the campus mission statement and see how this action can align with the stated values. An example of this could be “We are committed to diverting our waste because we care about the environment and want to educate the lives of students beyond PLU.” This example clearly communicates the waste diversion objective with a purpose of educating students. This cannot be the only way the program’s why must be evaluated but also to the two partnerships between the Rescue Mission and NW Furniture Bank. It would be helpful to explain the purpose for the partnership and although their mission statements are identified a sentence or two should be shared on why they are connected to the move-out process. An example could be “We hope to teach students ways to serve and care for transitional community members through donation practices by partnering with Rescue Mission and NW Furniture Bank.” Perhaps this could also be shared under the language of “Where is away?” which is already used in the waste diversion website.

Program Management

I. Project Management Team

The Move-out program requires a project team working together several months in advance with individuals from the campus departments of Residential Life, Waste Management, MarCom, and the Office of DJS. As this event continues, I highly recommend a collaborative and interdependent project team that manages the Move-out program to increase communication and intentionality of this program. A project management team could help solve the current challenges in the planning process of the Move-out program which has become each department playing an independent role with lack of communication.

A project management team would help with the coordination of the pieces each department contributes to the Move-out program as well as continue to support key knowledge of the program even as departments lose important move-out management individuals. The knowledge would not be housed in only one individual but would be known within the project team. This team should collectively contribute to the updating of the move-out guide each year and interact with the student audience that this will be shared to.

I suggest considering student input and leadership on the Move-out Program. One question that has been raised is “What would this program be like if students were situated as leaders in it?”.

As this program considers its relationship to the campus mission statement, there needs to be a consideration of the student audience. One way to do this is to situate students as leaders within the program of Move-out. On-campus students directly experience the Move-out program year to year and could provide valuable feedback and insight into what works and doesn't work. Off-campus students should also be leaders and considered in this program as many are transitioning from homes near campus back home. If students were situated as leaders, they provide both their experience and questions to challenge the Move-out Program to be more impactful and valuable for their peers year after year.

II. Event Planning Form

I suggest that an [event planning form](#) be used as the program continues. The event is repeatedly planned and needs to have yearly documentation that can be referred to. Using this form each year also gives accountability as it identifies a point person for this project and helps facilitate a timeline of and delegation of tasks. As this program continues, it is important that the Residential Life and Waste Diversion Departments have a shared 'why' for move-out and I would suggest that this upcoming guide is not only a transactional action for students but transitional.

The frame of transition is built from the support the partnered organizations extend to people as they have challenging life situations that are places of growth and strength. Moving forward, Move-in and Move-out as transitional states for students centers PLU as an opportunity for growth during and after their time living on-campus.

The current Move-out guide only refers to the waste diversion process and does not include other elements that are elements of student move-out which are room check-out and end of the year meal plan balance. I recommend creating a single guide that tackles these end-of-the school-year needs for students to refer to. This suggestion would streamline the move-out process for students and support them during their end-of-the-year transition.

Guide

I. Content & Design

The content and design of the upcoming Move-out guide must be connected back to the identified purpose. I suggest working with the PLU MarCom team to develop a brand and tool kit of images that then can be used and referred to as needed. For MarCom's role to be the most effective, it needs to be accessible in the different capabilities of the PLU departments. MarCom contains skilled storytellers, which is necessary to utilize as the story and purpose of waste diversion through move-out is crafted and defined. As a whole, the waste diversion brand needs to still be consistent with the Tacoma waste diversion images to support students as they enter and exit PLU.

I would suggest developing accompanying images for the upcoming Move-out guide. It would be helpful to understand the images for the associated bins and for these bins to have a consistent appearance and brand with the rest of the waste diversion brand. The content can become shorter if there are images of the described locations and if there is still a need to

describe locations could be based on the type of waste disposal location. Some of the images I would suggest are of the location of the dumpsters onto the [PLU campus map](#) either in a printed/static format or through the map's built in toggle features. It would also be helpful if there was a checklist of the items possible to donate to the organizations rather than having to be in-person to see the bins.

II. Accessibility

The current Move-out guide is located on a google document and should retain this format internally for flexibility and accessibility. I would suggest this information moves onto the PLU website for more adaptability and mobile phone access. It should be on both the Residential Life and Waste Diversion websites and updated annually as it concerns both departments. It can also allow features such as video content from partnerships which are not possible from a Google document. I have shared some suggested videos below for both organizations:

NW Furniture Bank:

[City of Tacoma](#) (January 2021)

[Pacific Lutheran University Students](#) (January 2021)

Rescue Mission:

[City of Tacoma](#) (October 2020)

Conclusion:

This report provided recommendations on the PLU Move-out program with hopes to better align to the PLU mission statement to support students during their end-of-the-year transition. A good Move-out program provides the opportunity to connect our students to DJS values in their end-of-the-year transition and a practice they use beyond PLU. The Move-out program is the first step to re-evaluating campus wide waste-diversion programs and rebuilding and developing campus relationships. Moving forward a project team is working on this program on the document: [22 | Move Out Planning Form](#) to identify the logistics of the event. This event requires the continued collaboration and communication between campus departments to sustain and update move-out practices.