Training and Outreach
  First Semester

Introduction:
I began working at the Office for Sustainability in late August of 2015. My work this past semester involved outreach and getting Western’s community educated about sustainability and RecycleMania. The majority of my work consisted of being trained by Heidi Jimenez in order to fill her position next semester as well as being prepared for RecycleMania. I helped out with many events such as tailgates, open houses, and other outreach projects.

Process/Procedure:
I began my work during Fall Welcome Week for the incoming freshman. During Fall Welcome, while the new students were moving into the residence halls, I, along with other members of the Office for Sustainability, and green team members who were the student ambassadors, monitored the giant recycling bins. Our work was very effective because many students and parents neglected to read the informative signs depicting what belongs in each bin. We went from bin to bin, taking out contaminates and breaking down boxes for more space. While many of the green team student ambassadors were helpful, a few were ineffective. Some of the ambassadors deserted their position as green team members or simply didn’t know what exactly to recycle. Others did a great job helping the office out.

Because this was my first year, a large portion of my fall semester work consisted of training. Heidi Jimenez wrote extensive notes regarding RecycleMania and the outreach plans for the event. She showed me how to register for RecycleMania and sign up for tabling at certain buildings around campus. I was also trained to give the FYS (First Year Semester) presentation regarding the office, sustainability, and recycling. I only gave the presentation once, but hope to improve my speaking skills and present it to another class in the near future.

I helped out with several tailgate events in which members of the office monitored the recycling bins within certain sponsored tailgates. We labeled each bin listing the proper materials belonging in each bin, and then removed any contaminates. Our work at these events is very important because many of the recyclables would be thrown in a landfill without our help.
Attending Open House events was one of my tasks where I spoke with many potential students and workers. When I was a junior in high school I attended an Open House and that was when I was first made aware of the Office for Sustainability.

Pictures:

During the semester, I attended Open House tabling events in which high school juniors and seniors have the opportunity to meet teachers and advisors from certain departments and receive information. Heidi and I represented the Office for Sustainability and spoke with many students while promoting our mission and recruiting possible future students. At these events we spoke with many students, but mostly interested parents.

The first Open House was October 2 of which Heidi, Marissa, and I attended. At this event we spoke with 13 students and parents, and only 4 of the total were interested in the office. The next Open House was November 13 where Heidi and I spoke with 12 students and parents. Half of those students were intrigued in our conversations, which was a great turn out. The last Open House was December 4, of which the functions attendance seemed lower than the ones previous and only 3 students appeared to be engaged.

Commentary/Reflection:

In regards to Fall Welcome Week, I spoke with a few of the green team members about why they believed many of their co-workers were not doing their job correctly or at all. The ambassadors stated that our boss, Carolyn Noack, spoke to the student ambassadors at the end of a long day of training and many students weren’t paying attention to Carolyn. This information is very helpful, next year we could send several workers from the office to speak in the morning or mid day in order to ensure the students understand what the mission of green team is. Another alternative could be to hand out fliers to the students which state how to perform their green job.

Despite our dedicated work to help recycle at tailgates, many people at the events paid little attention to the labels depicting what waste belongs where. To discourage users from depositing all their waste in just one garbage bin, we group two recycling bins with one trash bin, which is a great help. In order to make the signs more visible, I think it would be more ideal to post the labels on paint mixer sticks above the recycling and trash
bins. I also think it would be a great idea to have a banner or poster near the food distribution areas stating something such as “Please recycle all materials properly when finished. Thank you.”

Social media and posters around campus are the best way to communicate to the student body. During the semester I contacted many directors and clubs to help advertise for RecycleMania as well as worked to create ads for the event. A great idea would be to hang posters around campus of President Dunn recycling or promoting RecycleMania. President Dunn is widely liked and appreciated on campus and he would be an effective endorsement of the event. Other ways to reach out would include dining hall table tent advertisements or showing an informational video at Miller Movie Nights.