

USAC Student Groups ACTION RESEARCH TEAM



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Executive Summary

Our project started out as a way to bring sustainability to a wider audience than just the Institute of the Environment or students that already had an interest in sustainability, such as the students in the Action Research Program. We decided that the best way to reach a wider audience was to begin by educating the student leaders on campus, who would in turn be able to educate the students in their respective student groups. We also estimated the amount of waste that the typical student group creates, and realized that together, the 800 student groups on campus use about 400,000 flyers, 16,000 posters and 240,000 sheets of paper per year.

USAC, the Undergraduate Student Association Council, holds thirteen student-run offices that not only count as student groups themselves, but also are involved with all of the other student groups on campus. We focused most of our efforts on bringing knowledge of sustainability to USAC.

We started with a survey of student leaders on campus. Our results showed that the main obstacle of student leaders in becoming more sustainable as a student group was their lack of funding. In order to change this, and publicize funding options, such as The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF), we decided to hold a workshop for student leaders called Being Green and Getting Green. At this workshop, we had presentations from a wide variety of resources on campus, including a presentation from Nurit Katz on general sustainability, presentations from funding resources such as the USAC Contingency Fund and TGIF and a case study of the Theta Xi fraternity, who utilized a TGIF grant for sustainable projects at their home. The workshop also a portion where we had the student leaders analyze their own practices and come up with ways to use the resources from the presentations. We had about 90 student leaders attend the workshop.

To gauge the success of our workshop, we conducted a post-survey of the attendees. Although the knowledge of funding greatly increased, we realized that motivation was still a huge issue in bringing more sustainable practices to student groups. To increase motivation, and truly make sustainability more of an applied proactive concept than just a personal value or knowledge, we planned and held a volunteer day for the USAC Student leaders at the Stone Canyon Creek on campus. The day was a moderate success, and is now institutionalized as a quarterly event put on by BGreen Consulting, USAC's sustainability faction.

As a way to continue the work that our team completed during these two quarters, we created a Student Group's Green Guide, which contains all of the resources we discussed in our workshop and other tips and easy changes to make student groups less wasteful and more proactively sustainable. We hope to get this guide institutionalized by next year, and will put it online as well as handing it out as a pamphlet.

For next year's USAC team, we recommend that the team maintain a close relationship with Bgreen Consulting to further encourage sustainability throughout USAC, and also conduct a baseline survey of student group's current practices to actually quantify the waste created by student groups to better devise ways to change these practices.

Overview

One of the biggest challenges in promoting sustainability on campus is the lack of knowledge about sustainability and resources that are available to apply sustainable practices in one's own life. This is particularly true for leaders of student groups and organizations, who often plan meetings and events but do not know exactly what they can do to make their events more "green." Our goal from the beginning was to reach out to as many student groups as we could and spread knowledge about sustainability, in the hopes that we could reduce their waste and promote sustainable practices. We wanted to empower student leaders with information and motivation for adopting more sustainable practices in their organizations, by helping them to understand the concept of sustainability, know what funding and program resources are available on campus, and know how to apply what they learned in their own organizations and events.

We started out the project with the progress that the last years' group had made, in the form of the Student Green Guide to Living pamphlet; however, since it is geared toward the average UCLA student, rather than student leaders and organizations, we decided that our objective would be to address student leaders directly. Our goal to spread sustainability on campus was divided into three parts: spreading information, increasing motivation, and sustaining the lessons learned. Our goal for the first quarter was to figure out exactly what obstacles were in the way of adopting sustainable practices in club events in order to address these obstacles directly, in the form of a workshop. The second quarter's goals focused more on motivation and providing long-term results that could be used in later years.

Significance/Background

The status quo of sustainable practices employed by students on campus includes a quantifiable resource use level as well as a baseline level of familiarity and passion regarding sustainability.

In lieu an in-depth baseline resource use analysis, we have developed reasonable estimates of the paper products used by student groups use on campus.

- 240,000 for meeting agendas (800 student groups * 30 weeks * 1 meeting per week * 10 meeting agendas per meeting)
- 400,000 for flyers, (800 student groups * ½ hold 2 major events per year * distribute 500 fliers per event)
- 16,000 posters, (800 student groups * ½ hold 2 major events per year * with 20 posters per event)

The USAC ART group has worked throughout the last two quarters in order to reduce the paper waste and other forms of waste that student groups experience in their daily activities. We planned to work towards this goal through educational efforts and direct consultation in a workshop format.

Next, the USAC ART team evaluated the knowledge level and motivation of student leaders and found that funding is self-identified as a major barrier limiting sustainable actions. In fact, 57.5% of respondents of the General survey we conducted did not know about The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF). This low information level was addressed through our “Being Green and Getting Green Workshop” which introduced the attendees to all of the resources they need to successfully plan for and receive funds in order to improve sustainability.

Finally, the USAC ART group evaluated the motivation of the leadership population on campus and determined that the average responder thinks of sustainability

in terms of a personal daily choice to consume fewer resources. One of the goals of our group is to influence these leaders to adopt a more proactive approach to sustainability by integrating the principals into the mission and daily activities of their organizations.

Initial Conditions

Our team was lucky enough to start out with many connections, including with Bgreen Consulting, the USAC sustainability faction. Through this connection, we were able to better communicate with USAC, and also heard about many other great events that we took part in, such as the Green Jobs Fair and the Green Case Competition. Bgreen Consulting co-sponsored our workshop and came out to our Stone Canyon Creek Restoration Day.

We also had a general knowledge and connection to The Green Initiative Fund because of our stakeholder, Patricia Zimmerman, who was able to help us come up with ideas of how to publicize the fund, and also presented at our workshop.

We also had access to ORL's Student Green Guide, which helped us come up with ideas and layout for our own student group guide to being green.

Research Methodology

Our team's goal to bring greater knowledge to student groups of the benefits and incentives of using sustainable practices involved various forms of research. Our research involved creating three surveys, tabling on Bruin Walk, interviewing, and calculating different aspects of student groups.

To start, our group made some initial calculations of the general environmental impact that student groups make. Our estimations showed that the 800 student groups on campus use about 400,000 flyers, 16,000 posters and 240,000 sheets of paper per year (see Overview/Objectives/Project Goals section for greater detail). These calculations helped us put our project into better perspective. When trying to make student groups in general more sustainable, these figures helped describe a more tangible reason why better environmental practices for this aspect of campus should be actively researched.

In the midst of outreaching to all the student groups about the upcoming workshop via Facebook, email list-servers, chalking and handing our flyers, our ART team also drew up a survey for student leaders attending the workshop to fill out before they arrived. The goal of this survey was to get an idea of what student leaders needed the most help with if they so chose to go green. With this information, we could focus our workshop to cater to that need, and provide substantial information for student leaders in the area they need most help with. Using the survey provider website called SurveyMonkey, our questions revealed that the biggest challenge for student leaders that wanted to make their groups more sustainable is funding. Thus, we were able to plan accordingly and have various speakers come and present on that topic. This also provided the basis for why we named our workshop "Being Green and Getting Green."

Following our workshop, we released a second survey to the workshop participants that attempted to gauge how student leaders felt post-workshop and if any improvement had been made. The survey revealed that although the questions concerning funding had been adequately answered and demystified, there was still a lack of motivation to commit to the extra step required to be sustainable. This realization gave us reason to launch our “motivational campaign” for the last quarter, which involved a more hands-on approach to incentivize groups to be environmentally friendly.

Thus, we launched a short, general survey for the entire student population. This survey asked general questions on sustainability and whether or not the student had any knowledge of certain sustainable aspects of campus. For example, one question simply asked if the student had ever heard of The Green Initiative Fund. The purpose of this survey was to try and reveal where motivation was lacking and how that gap could be filled. This survey was launched primarily over Facebook, and was also advertised at our table at the Earth Day Fair.

Data/Cost Analysis

All attendees of the Being Green and Getting Green workshop were sent pre-workshop and post-workshop surveys to gauge the success of the event and any changes in the attendees' knowledge and thinking. (*How many people did we survey/How many responded to the pre-workshop survey? Grab some stats from the results.*) The follow-up survey was sent to 100 people and we received 19 responses. Data from the Being Green and Getting Green follow-up survey showed that a majority of students (80%) consider sustainability to be a priority for their club (see graph below) and most are confident of their knowledge of sustainable practices (73.3% replied their knowledge as 4 or 5 out of 5). However, it seems that sustainability is more of a personal value or concept and fewer people are confident in their abilities to actually implement sustainable practice in their organization's activities. The majority of our respondents (46.7%) chose 4 out of 5 when asked about their confidence in executing sustainable changes.

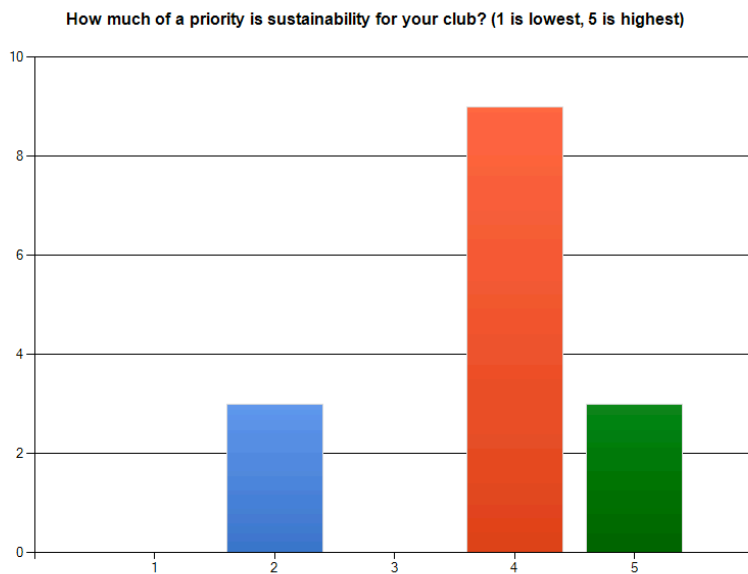


Figure 1: 80% of student leaders chose 4 or 5 out of 5 when asked whether sustainability is a priority for their club.

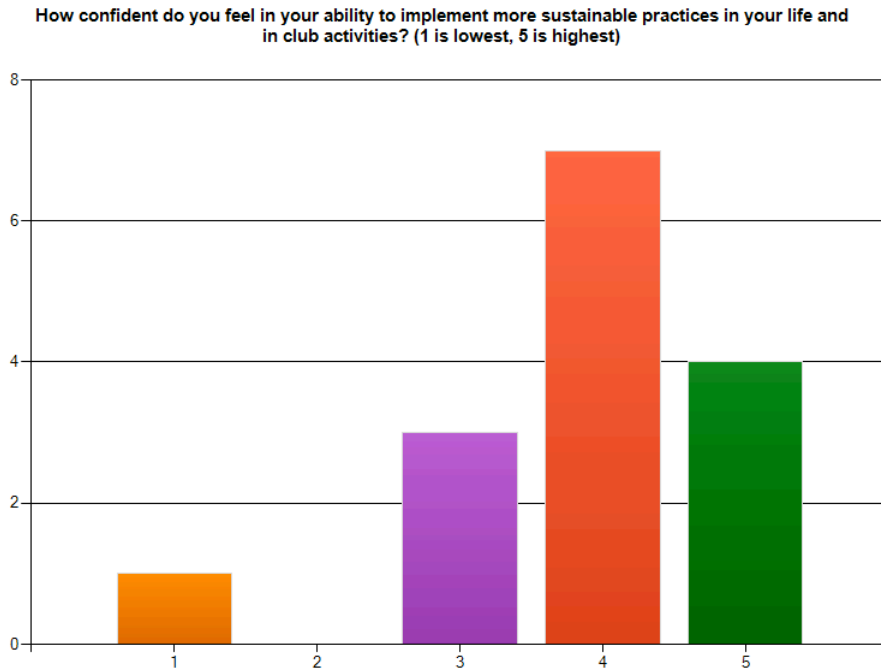


Figure 2: A total of 73.4% of respondents were confident about employing sustainable practices in their club’s activities.

We conducted our general sustainability survey to gauge the motivational level of students on campus towards sustainability. The survey was sent to 841 students and 123 responded. The most interesting question on the survey asked students what they thought was the most meaningful way to be sustainable. 63.4% answered “Be sustainable in your own life” as opposed to “educating others about sustainability” which 30.1% chose (chart is shown below). 65.5% also said their club practices sustainability and 57.4% knew about The Green Initiative Fund.

It is important to note that the data carries inhere biases due to the way it was distributed and who was likely to respond. For example, a disproportionately high number of attendees to the Being Green and Getting Green workshop were from sororities and other green organizations on campus, skewing the sample pool for our follow-up survey. We also had a low number of respondents to the follow-up survey so

results cannot be expected to be completely accurate. The results for the general sustainability survey are more reliable because we had a much larger pool of respondents and the people who received the survey were a range of UCLA students from many different student organizations.

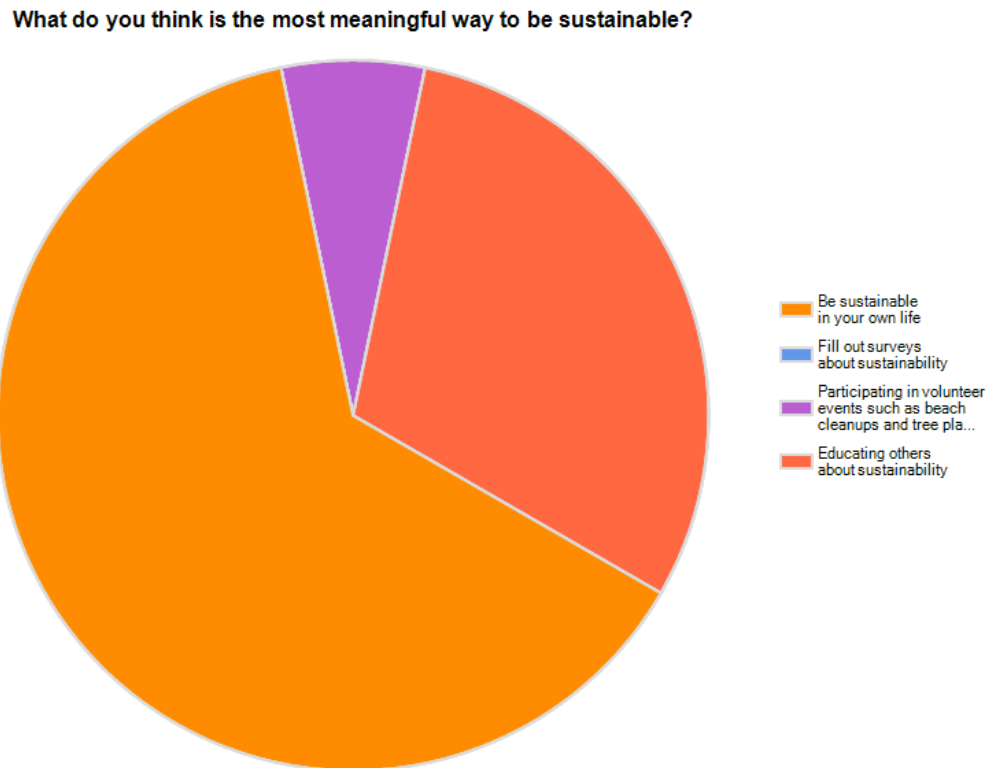


Figure 3: Students are more willing to be sustainable in their own lives than to make the effort to educate others about sustainability.

Costs to put on the Being Green and Getting Green workshop were covered by Contingency Funding of \$1,000. DART funding was used to cover the cost of gift cards that we used as survey incentives. One winner was chosen for taking the Being Green and Getting Green workshop post-survey and another winner was chosen for taking the General Sustainability survey. The USAC ART team also received a TGIF grant of \$1,000 but it was not used.

Key Findings

Our initial survey results, which were gathered from student leaders on campus, indicated that 40% of student leaders believed funding to be the biggest obstacle in implementing sustainable practices in their student groups. After our workshop, our follow-up survey indicated that most people who attended the workshop no longer found funding to be an obstacle, and believed that they had a greater knowledge of the concept of sustainability and how to apply it to their organizations, proving our workshop was a success.

Although general knowledge of sustainability and resources increased, we found that motivation was still an obstacle in the path, and that most people considered sustainability as a personal value rather than an applied proactive concept. The general consensus was that sustainability was best adopted in their personal lives; few considered it outside their own lives. The development of the Student Group Guide challenges this obstacle and provides student leaders with a tangible guide to making their organizations more sustainable. In addition, the USAC volunteer day helped increase motivation for adopting sustainable practices. It will now be a quarterly occurrence, keeping student leaders aware of the importance of sustainability and the effect that their waste can have on the environment.

Recommendations

The USAC ART team has laid the foundation for many changes in USAC and all campus organizations' sustainability efforts. Since one of our key findings is that funding is the major barrier to implementing sustainable practices, we recommend the next USAC ART group continue the TGIF awareness campaign. The student group guide to being green insert should also be institutionalized.

In addition, the next USAC ART group can build on this year's team's estimates of student group waste and systematically calculate this baseline. Our estimates are very rough and a thorough calculation that takes into account large events (i.e. Dance Marathon, Jazz Reggae Festival) and small events (club open meetings) would yield interesting results. Data can be collected using surveys.

Finally, next year's USAC ART team should continue to work closely with the USAC sustainability group Bgreen Consulting to institutionalize any workshops and learning material created by the past and future USAC ART teams.

Conclusion

We believe that our biggest accomplishment as an Action Research Team has been spreading the knowledge and resources for sustainability to a wider audience. Normally, the people who previously express interest in sustainability are the people that attend events like our Being Green and Getting Green workshop, but in our case, many other student leaders came that did not have previous knowledge or much interest in the subject. The only way that sustainability can become a proactive concept is for more people to learn about it and in turn, spread the knowledge to others. Our ART team was able to reach out to a group of people that may not have otherwise even realized that their student group's practices were wasteful or harmful.

We hope that our progress with USAC, both in decreasing their waste and harmful practices and in our connection and relationship with their sustainability group, will continue into future years, and that USAC will be an example for the rest of the campus in becoming greener and more sustainable.

References

Santa Monica Bay Keepers. www.smbaykeeper.org

ORL's Green Guide to Sustainable Living at UCLA.

http://www.environment.ucla.edu/media/files/GreenGuide_UCLA.pdf

USAC Website. <http://students.asucla.ucla.edu/>


USAC Facilities Commission BGreen Consulting. <http://www.bgreenucla.com/>

Appendices

Student Group Guide to Greener Practices (pages 2-4)

Green Volunteer Ideas

Get your student group involved with helping clean, purify and beautify the earth with some of these "green" volunteer groups



Santa Monica Bay Keepers
 -Stone Canyon Creek Restoration (on campus) or Kelp Watch
 -www.smbaykeeper.org

TreePeople
 -plant trees in our community
 -www.treepeople.org

Heal The Bay
 -Santa Monica beach clean-ups
 -www.healthebay.org


Ballona Wetlands
 -help restore the wetlands

Other Simple Changes:

- E-mail agendas instead of using paper agendas (800 student groups X 30 members X 10 meetings per quarter = 240,000 unnecessary sheets of paper)
- Recycle during meetings

2

Alternatives to Flyering



- E-mail list serves
- Facebook Events/Messages
- Write on blackboards/chalkboards in classrooms (before 8 am)
- Tabling on Bruin Walk (use fun activities or giveaways instead of paper!)
- Posters- use CSP's poster service
- Use BruinWalk (bruinwalk.com) or UCLA Happenings (happenings.ucla.edu) to post your group's events online!

3

Make Your Group's EVENTS More SUSTAINABLE

- Sustainable Catering Options from UCLA Catering
- Order organic food, if possible
- Order food in BULK, not wrapped individually
- Get CLEARLY labeled recycling bins from UCLA Facilities Commission
- Use compostable plates and utensils, and cloth tablecloths instead of paper
- Go PAPERLESS! Use e-vites or eventbrite.com for invitations
- Print any necessary materials double-sided

For more information, visit
<http://uclaevents.com/greenevents/>



FUNDING
 (for green ideas, events and programs)

THE GREEN INITIATIVE FUND
 About \$200,000 per year for projects that reduce UCLA's negative impact on the environment
 - <http://www.usac.ucla.edu/tgif/>

THE GREEN INITIATIVE MINI FUND
 -projects needing less than \$1000

USAC CONTINGENCY FUND

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Flyers from “Being Green and Getting Green” Workshop (held on 2/8/2011) and from USAC Green Our Campus event (held on 5/14/2011)



Survey Links

Pre-Survey for Student Leaders

<http://beinggreenandgettinggreen.eventbrite.com/>

Post-Survey for Student Leaders

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/beinggreenandgettinggreenworkshop>

General Survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/studentsustainabilitysurvey>