

Best Management Practices for Colleges and Universities



Waste Management

RESCUE – Recycle Everything Save Colby's Usable Excess

Updated January 2007

Summary: The Environmental Advisory Group (EAG) at Colby College is a working committee open to suggestions from the college community. One environmentally active employee suggested the *Dump and Run* program to the EAG. [*Dump and Run* is a Massachusetts not for profit organization dedicated to serving the college and university community in waste prevention techniques.] In response, a sub-committee was formed to evaluate the suggestion. The committee determined that there were already fairly successful programs on campus that handled unwanted clothing and furniture from student dormitories. The bigger problem was with general household items such as lamps, appliances, dishes, sporting goods, etc. These items were still being discarded by the students. The committee decided to work with the existing successful programs and expand them to include the general household items as well. The major differences in the RESCUE program and the Dump and Run program are that Colby (1) directly *donates* clothing and furniture to local non-profit agencies and (2) stores household items over the summer for resale to students and employees in the fall.



Campus Profile

Colby College
Waterville, ME
UG Students: 1,800
Grad Students: 0
Resident Students:
approx. 1,700
Faculty and Staff: 650
GSF of all buildings:
2.8 million
Annual Budget: \$94
Million

Project Goals

- Keep usable materials out of landfills and raise awareness to students on their consumption habits;
- Donate clothing and furniture collected to needy local non-profit agencies;
- Sell household items at yard sale prices with an objective to simply cover the expenses of the program;
- Provide students with usable items in the fall to set up their dorm rooms.
- Benefit non-profit agencies, the students; and most importantly.... benefit the environment too!

Green Activities

The campus has an active "Environmental Advisory Group". Information on this group can be found at www.colby.edu/eag/ and it works toward greening the campus. Subcommittees of this group include the RESCUE program, Green Building, and Alternative Vehicles. There is student, faculty, and staff involvement on the committee. The committee reports directly to the President. Colby won the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence in September 2002, for dining services composting programs, the co-generation of electricity at the campus steam plant, the RESCUE program, and several others.

U.S. EPA New England Best Management Practices Catalog for Colleges and Universities.
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<http://www.epa.gov/region1/assistance/univ/bmpcatalog.html>

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Description

As at many colleges nationwide, students at Colby discarded useful items in their rush to leave campus in the spring. These unwanted items were typically found in dumpsters at the end of the school year. Students discarded clothes, refrigerators, TV's, furniture and many other items. The campus and the local community were upset about this waste. Colby also found people going through dorms and dumpsters in the spring to recover unwanted items going to landfill which caused many other problems.

Pre-Project Considerations

- Look at the culture of the institution and tailor the program to the culture.
- Advertise and provide program awareness for a successful program.
- Find the best ways to get the word out about the program.
- Convey enthusiasm...it's contagious.

Steps Taken

At the end of the academic year, orange RESCUE boxes were placed in the dormitories where small furniture and household items were collected. Outside drop-off locations for larger items - furniture and carpets - were set up. Clothing and furniture were donated and the remaining items were cleaned, sorted and stored in trailers over the summer. At the beginning of the fall semester the college held a sale for the entire community. All items were sold or donated.



The Major Steps included:

1. Obtained a commitment from the school's administration.
2. Developed a working subcommittee – Colby had a total of six employees and students on this committee.
3. Designed a marketing program. The subcommittee felt an important aspect was advertising. The college already had two successful programs dealing with clothing and large furniture; however, many people were unaware of them. They had to reach a larger audience that would improve upon the existing programs, as well as address the problems with household items that had not been previously addressed. The RESCUE program was a combined program to "rescue" all types of items from the waste stream and put them to use. The logo was developed by the committee and the color orange was selected (mostly because it was highly visible). The committee used many methods to get the word out about the program - personal calls to employees and students, electronic notices on the campus listserv, weekly electronic newsletter, and table tents in dining halls.
4. Held a painting party to paint all the boxes orange.
5. Distributed boxes in all the dorms and in the student center.
6. Held a yard sale at the beginning of the fall semester.



“The word seemed to spread like wildfire and the boxes overflowed within days. Student and employee volunteers (and sometimes their children) helped to empty the boxes and bring the items to a central location to be cleaned and sorted.”



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Participants

Students – most were volunteers. There were three paid student employees who coordinated activities, scheduled the volunteers, tracked hours, and contacted non-profit agencies to coordinate donations. (Needs were identified and each agency received items to meet their specific needs).

Physical Plant The RESCUE program was home-based out of the Physical Plant due to the nature of the work. Staff from the Physical Plant, as well as many other areas, were key in making this program successful.

Colby Volunteer Center. The CVC was used as the contact point for students interested in volunteering for the program. The CVC was an instrumental part of the volunteer program.

The EAG Subcommittee included two staff members from the Physical Plant, one from the Volunteer Center, the employee who made the original suggestion, and two students.

The Dean of Students' Office and the student hall staff were key in helping to reinforce the program. The hall staff helped the custodial staff put up posters. They also helped get the word out to the students. In preparation for the sale in the fall, the Dean's office included the RESCUE sale in all their publications to encourage students and parents to take advantage of the sale.

Three paid student coordinators worked a total of 164 hours. An additional 27 people volunteered more than 400 hours. There were also many people who "jumped in" for short periods of time. People who donated at least five hours of their time were given an orange RESCUE T-shirt. There were 17 people who were in that category.

Performance and Benefits

- Reduced waste sent to landfills.
- Increased usable items for students, employees, and the local community.
- Better community relations.
- Alleviated the amount of time grounds and custodial staff needed to clean up rooms and move items into dumpsters at the end of the spring semester.
- Students were able to set up their dorm rooms in the fall using "recycled" items at yard sale prices.

Lessons Learned

People want to do what is right; you just need to make the opportunities available to them. Colby is extremely pleased with the response from the students and campus community, especially at the RESCUE sale. It is a great part of the program. The program started just this past year (2001-2002), and it went very well. Important items to remember in going forward are: 1) involve the resident hall staff 2) open the sale up to the college and the local community, and 3) designate a large area to hold the sale.

For Further Information

Patricia Murphy, Director of Physical Plant, Colby College, (207) 872-3350

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Financial Info Initial

Costs: \$2,200 for advertising, trailers for storage, paint for boxes, T-shirts, and salary costs for student coordinators.

Funding Sources:

An account was set up to track expenses and credits. The program was expected to cover its own expenses. Had the program not covered its expenses, it would have been covered by the College's operating budget.

Savings: Tipping fees from the dumpsters going to the landfill were saved; however, equivalent trucking fees taking the items to local non-profit agencies were incurred. Other savings included time for custodial and grounds crew staff to remove the material.

Profits: The only financial objective was to cover the costs of running the program. When all was complete, the program covered expenses and made a net profit of \$125. For Colby this was a resounding SUCCESS!

Donation: Clothing and large pieces of furniture were donated to local charities. This past year hundreds of furniture items and thousands of articles of clothing were donated.

Other Recycling Programs

Vassar's SWAPR (Students with a Purpose Recycling) Program. Vassar College is located in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. with a student population of 2,470. They started the SWAPR program four years ago. SWAPR costs approximately \$5,000 annually (initially funded by the Dean) to purchase tents and rent trucks, however, the goal is to develop a self-sustaining program. The college has seen savings at about \$6,000 a year in dumpster costs and fees, and a decrease in manpower to move unwanted items out of dorms for cleaning. This past year (2002-2003) a workstudy student was assigned to the project along with some hours from a college employee. The rest of the people working on the project are student volunteers. This year, the college was approached by a corporate sponsor to help fund the project. This sponsor is also providing free cell phones during the "give-away" to help in organizing. The "give away" of items occurs at the end of spring semester. The college calls in needy organizations that go through the items and take what they want for free. The remaining items are sold to students in the beginning of the fall semester. The contact at Vassar is Mr. Leonard Angelli at 845-437-7463.

Dump and Run: This program is dedicated to serving the University and College community in waste prevention techniques. The goal is threefold. First, to reduce the amount of waste generated at C/U by extending the useful life of items no longer needed by the student community at years end. Second, to generate capital for non-profit environmental and social groups. And finally, to educate the public about problems regarding consumption of natural resources and the need to conserve those resources for future generations. *Mission Statement of Dump and Run.* Institutions that have participated in this program include Tufts, Brandeis, Bates, Bowdoin, Skidmore, Columbia, and Appalachia State. Contact Lisa Heller at 508-579-7188 or log onto www.dumpandrun.org or email at info@dumpandrun.org.