



END OF YEAR REPORT 2023-24

Introduction

The Cal Poly Green Campus program, established in 2007, transitioned to a College Corps funded, student-led model in 2022 under the oversight of the Energy, Utilities, and Sustainability department. This year, the team has expanded to a team of 17, increasing their capacity and impact. The Green Campus program focuses on sustainability education and awareness on campus, implementing conservation projects, and working with other campus entities to enhance campus sustainability.

Impact



800+
attended Earth
Week events



19,856
kWh of
electricity saved



100+
attended Sustainability
Month events



150+
gowns rented
out



180,811
gallons of
water saved



9
guest speakers at
Eco Reps



\$9900+
saved through water and energy
conservation



80+
hours of volunteer service for
the Zero Waste Ambassadors

Digital Outreach



475
Newsletter clicks



225
Instagram followers gained



414
People reached for each campaign sent via MailChimp

Energy and Water

Shut the Sash

Shut the Sash is an ongoing educational campaign that aims to teach students, staff, and faculty about the importance of keeping the sash on fume hoods closed. Laboratories on campus are the most energy-intensive buildings, with fume hoods—ventilated enclosures that remove hazardous gases and vapors—being significant contributors to this high energy consumption. In the 2022 -2023 school year, Green Campus created magnets with the slogan, “Shut the sash, reduce greenhouse gas” and worked with equipment technicians to install the magnets by placing them on a total of 108 fume hoods across campus. In 2023-24, to continue to promote the initiative, the Green Campus team set up a table in front of Baker (Building 180) during the first few weeks of each quarter, engaging students with trivia and discussions about the importance of shutting the sash. The tabling successfully reached approximately 85 students in the fall, 90 in the winter, and 150 in the spring quarter.

SLO the FLOW

SLO the FLOW, Cal Poly’s water and energy conservation challenge, took place from February 5-25th, 2024. This year, the challenge expanded to include tracking energy usage, in addition to water usage that was tracked the previous year, for students living in all first-year residential communities. This challenge aimed to educate students on water and electricity-saving tips and encourage long-lasting, sustainable living habits. Green Campus members kept students engaged by tabling in front of Vista Grande for the entirety of the challenge; this allowed students a place to ask questions and learn more about their water and energy use through interactive games, such as a trivia wheel and Pictionary. The challenge led to a 44.54% decrease in water usage and a 16.5% decrease in electricity usage compared to baseline levels. Gathering feedback from residents was a new strategy this year, and survey results showed that 48.6% of students implemented water saving practices and 43.2% adopted energy saving practices into their daily routine after learning about the challenge. The majority of students said that saving money and saving the planet were the main motivators behind their adoption of sustainable living practices. Green Campus partnered with Inter-Housing Council to reward the winning living community with free cookies.

Green Labs Program

The Green Labs Program is a certification designed to assess and enhance sustainability practices in laboratory spaces across campus. The program measures a lab’s current sustainability status using a detailed spreadsheet and ranking system. Labs are awarded a bronze, silver, gold, platinum, or green ranking based on the number of Green Lab assessment actions they implemented into the lab. Planning for this initiative began in late Spring 2023, and now after several iterations, the program is now ready to certify the first labs.

Green Living Guide

Green Campus updated the Green Living Guide, which was last revised in 2018, to be used as an educational resource for on-campus residents. This guide aims to help readers understand community sustainability efforts and how they can implement practical, “green” living practices into their everyday lives. It focuses on six key areas: community engagement, energy, food, reuse, transportation, and water to create a comprehensive resource for sustainable living.

Reuse

Grad Gown Reuse

Every year, thousands of graduation gowns are discarded after a few hours of wear. To address this, Green Campus has an ongoing program that collects donated gowns and rents them out to graduates. This year, over 150 available gowns, as well as sashes, tassels, and caps, were rented out to graduating students. Students part of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) were given priority sign-up before the form was made available to the wider campus community. In addition to the EOP, the Cal Poly Food Pantry emailed the gown sign-out form to their subscribers directly. This ensured that students most likely to benefit from a free gown had the opportunity to sign up, as the limited supply was quickly claimed once made available. Due to the success and demand for gown rentals, the Green Campus team is aimed to heavily increase the number of gown donations. To increase awareness about the program, small flyers with donation information were included in every graduate’s gift bag. Green Campus members also hosted an educational booth at commencement to inform students on how they can donate their gowns, either [in person or by mail](#).

Permanent Reuse Station

The Green Campus Team continued its efforts to push for a Permanent Reuse Station (PRS) to be included in the new housing project in 2030. Set to function like a thrift store, this station would provide an opportunity for students, staff, and faculty to donate and retrieve clothes and other items at a low or no cost. Additionally, the space would act as a center for reuse initiatives and collaborations with clubs, individuals, or organizations involved in the culture of reuse and waste reduction. In the fall, the Inter Housing Council voted to approve the initiative, and in the winter, a team of students in the EDES class developed recommendations for design and store structure. These were considered when writing the preliminary MOU between Energy, Utilities, and Sustainability and University Housing, tentatively set to be signed over Summer 2024. Additionally, a PRS resolution was written and submitted to ASI for the board of directors to approve. Green Campus garnered general support for this initiative from many entities and clubs on campus, including the Honors Program, Food Pantry, the Inter Housing Council, and the Sustainable Fashion Club. A petition to collect official signatures from these entities and from the general student, staff, and faculty community in support of the initiative is underway.

Electronic Waste in Housing

In collaboration with Distribution Services and University Housing, Green Campus contributed to the installation of e-waste drop-off receptacles in the three main Housing mail centers: Pacheco Post, Canyon Post, and Trinity Hall. Previously, on-campus e-waste had to be dropped off at the Environmental Health and Safety building, far from residence halls and unknown to students. This program not only educated residents on the importance of properly sorting and disposing of waste but also helped manage the e-waste stream during move-out by providing accessible drop-off points throughout the academic year. The e-waste receptacles were made from repurposed waste receptacles with new decals.

Lab Supply Exchange

Green Campus partnered with Distribution Services and Surplus to start a no-cost, excess lab materials exchange program. Staff, faculty, and students with faculty approval can visit the [Cal Poly Lab Supply Exchange website](#) to view what's in stock, request to borrow, or donate. Through this program, excess lab materials like pipette tips and test tubes are diverted from landfills and reallocated to other campus labs, while reducing costs for research.

Library Furniture Pickup Events

Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, the Campus Reuse team partnered with the Kennedy Library Transformation team and JackRabbit, a material reuse platform, to coordinate volunteers and assist in giving away old furniture removed during renovations. The first free item pickup occurred in late August and was open to both the Cal Poly and the greater San Luis Obispo community. Through online Green Campus social media postings, Green Campus newsletters, and formal University Marketing and Communications, substantial reach to the greater SLO community was achieved. This ensured a large turnout of community members eager to take home used furniture. There were two additional free furniture pickup events in October and March. In total, these events prevented over 400+ chairs and 120+ tables from going to landfill, alongside dozens of other items such as bookshelves, couches, and various office supplies.

Sustainable Transportation

Green Commuter Challenge

The Green Commuter Challenge aimed to promote sustainable commuting options for Cal Poly students, such as walking, biking, taking the bus, and carpooling. These eco-friendly transportation methods are crucial for our journey toward carbon neutrality, as commuting contributes to nearly half of the campus's total carbon emissions. Each month from March to May, students were encouraged to log their commutes on the iRideshare website or app, which tracks how many trips and miles an individual commutes sustainably. Every month, the two commuters with the most trips logged won prizes, funded by ASI Student Government.

Bike Month

Green Campus Bike Month was held for the first time in May 2024. The initiative included a kickoff festival, a documentary screening, and three collaborative events. Partnering with the Cycling Club, Transportation and Parking Services, and ASI, Green Campus offered a bike repair workshop, educational outreach, and biking safety supplies, respectively. Over 200 students, staff, and faculty participated across these five events. The events aimed to provide students with access to cycling guides, necessary supplies, and the education needed for safe and effective biking.

Bike Rack Occupancy

Bike rack occupancy data was collected from October 20 to November 30, 2023. The entire campus was divided into 15 areas, with each team member tracking the rack locations, dates, number of slots in use, available slots, and empty slots. This data was used to assess rack utilization. Verification was done for the three resident areas of concern in March 2024, confirming the accuracy and representativeness of the data collected in 2023.

Social Media Outreach

With the intention of encouraging students to use sustainable transit, the Transportation team filmed videos and designed posts covering a variety of relevant topics: bike hand signals, riding transit, registering bikes with the Cal Poly Police Department, and using ZipCars. All content is available on the Green Campus Instagram account, and the videos garnered over 2,000 plays in total.

Visibility

Sustainability Month

Sustainability Month is held every October on college campuses around the world. This year, Green Campus celebrated by organizing a variety of events including a plant identification hike, beach cleanup, transportation trivia, and upcycled art crafting! Many events were held in collaboration with other groups on campus, such as the Surfrider club, Distribution Services, and the Biology department. Engagement was tracked through online photo submissions, with each photo counting as one entry into a raffle for merchandise and goods donated by local businesses.

Earth Week

Earth Week, held from April 17-26, featured eight events organized by Green Campus and twelve by campus partners. Between all 20 events, it is estimated that over 800 students were engaged with 22 sustainability-related organizations. Groups from on campus and in the SLO community were present at the Earth Week Kickoff Festival, which provided opportunities for students to learn about a variety of efforts relating to social, environmental, and economic sustainability. Green Campus' Earth Week received media attention from [Mustang News](#) and received marketing support from multiple sources, including ASI's Instagram and the faculty sustainability newsletter.

Swap n Shops

For the second year, Sustainable Fashion Club (SFC) and Green Campus' collaborated on Swap n Shops, held the third Thursday of every month. In total, seven Swap n Shops were held with an estimated 150+ people engaging with the event each time. SFC organized vendors for the event, which consisted of students selling their handcrafted jewelry, thrifted clothing, or upcycled art. Green Campus managed the swap portion of the event, which allowed students to bring clothes they no longer wore and exchange them for clothes other students had donated. Swap n Shops were also used as an avenue for the Green Campus Reuse team to give out rescued water bottles, excess office supplies, and items abandoned in lost and found – preventing them from going to landfill. Leftover clothes from each event were donated to local thrift stores.

Eco Reps

Eco Reps, a general sustainability club led by the sustainability visibility team, aims to increase awareness of green living and expand foundational knowledge on different sustainability sectors. This year, an average of five students attended each club meeting, which featured guest speakers from various entities, including the SLO Beaver Brigade, Cal Poly Ethnic Studies Department, and the Morro Coast Audubon Society. Meetings without guest speakers included documentary viewings, eco-friendly crafts, and trivia.

Social Media Engagement

Green Campus runs an Instagram account that acts as a central form of communication and education to the campus community. Monthly campaigns illustrated ways to incorporate more sustainable habits and infographics highlighted local green groups. Instagram was used to market all Green Campus events and programs, as well as upcoming sustainability events put on by other groups. Since the beginning of the school year, the account gained 225 new followers and reached over 2,500 new accounts. More than 60 posts were made, each reaching an average of 2,000 accounts.

Zero Waste Ambassadors

Waste Sorting at Campus Events

Large food-serving events on campus often result in heavily contaminated compost and recycling bins. The ZWA team volunteers to sort waste at these events, correctly disposing of hundreds of pounds of compostable and recyclable materials that would otherwise end up in landfills. This year, the team sorted food waste at events serving over twelve thousand people. The team enlisted more than 25 unique volunteers, who collectively contributed over 80 hours of service.

Composting in Housing Initiative

In the past, Cal Poly has struggled to offer composting to students living on campus. Contamination rates are high, since plastic and other non-compostable waste are often incorrectly put in compost bins by students. The Zero Waste Ambassador team has spent the past year developing educational materials and working out logistics to bring back compost bins in select locations. Tentatively, in Fall 2024, ZWA will launch a program to educate students on correct composting habits and provide compost bins in Poly Canyon Village (PCV).

Green Event Certification

In Spring 2024, ZWA launched the [Green Event Certification program](#), with the intention of creating a measurable way to determine the sustainability of a campus event. Events are awarded bronze, silver, or gold certifications based on their efforts. To make the process easier, the certification form includes tips for making more sustainable choices, such as the Sustainable Swag Guide which outlines general guidelines for preventing waste from unwanted or low-quality giveaways. One recurring event is currently undergoing the certification process, and there are plans to expand the program next year.

Reusable Utensil Program

The ZWA launched a Reusable Utensil Program in Spring 2024, allowing students, faculty, and staff to rent silverware sets for free for events and meetings. Currently, sets are available for up to 30 people at a time. This program aims to reduce the need for plastic, single-use utensils at catered events.

Zero Waste Education

Throughout the 2023-24 school year, the ZWA team hosted various educational and tabling events about how to correctly sort waste, with the goal of reducing waste contamination caused by students and staff. The popular waste sorting tabling game, where students sort pictures of waste items into landfill, recycling, or compost categories, was a highlight. Between tabling and educational presentations, the team reached an estimated 300 people, successfully informing them about correct composting and recycling.