



Overview

The University of Northern Iowa has been involved in a variety of waste diversion efforts on a campus wide scale. From the early recycling efforts focusing on cardboard and office paper to the partnerships with the city of Cedar Falls, UNI strives to efficiently utilize our resources and operate in an environmentally responsible manner.

Single Stream

Numerous waste sorts have been conducted around the UNI campus over the last five years. A coordinated effort focusing on academic buildings in 2012 indicated 50-70% of the material from these buildings that was being sent to the landfill could have been recycled. As a result of these findings, UNI implemented a mixed recycling pilot program in two buildings in 2014.



Students engage in waste sorts across campus.

Implementation

Based on the positive reviews from the mixed recycling pilot project, UNI has partnered with Cedar Valley Recycling to accept mixed recycling products from across campus in the fall of 2015. There is now a uniform look to recycling containers across campus. Containers in public areas of buildings are all now dual stream units with a black side labeled "Landfill" and a blue side labeled "Mixed Recycling". All containers also have uniform signage to maintain a consistent message across campus.



Left, Signage used on recycling units. Right, recycling containers used at UNI.

Logistics

All of the recycling efforts at UNI are managed and executed by UNI staff. This hold true up until the point when recyclable materials are delivered to Cedar Valley Recycling. Custodial staff handling the recycling stream inside the building provide quality assurance to make sure that there is minimal contamination entering the recycling stream prior to disposing the recyclable materials in our labeled

recycling dumpsters. In addition to transporting waste to the Blackhawk County Landfill, the UNI refuse truck also carries recycling to Cedar Valley Recycling.



Outdoor dumpsters, clearly marked to minimize contamination.

Data

Early results on the campus wide single stream recycling effort are promising. September 2015 was the first full month of data on the new effort. When comparing this month with the same month last year, the single stream resulted in 8580 more pounds of recycling

Recycling rates have increased by 23.2%

being collected across campus. To date, recycling rates have increased by 23.2% since the implementation of single stream on the UNI campus. This is significant, considering that the cost of recycling for UNI is \$30 less per ton than disposal of waste at the landfill.

Partnerships

Through partnership with the city of Cedar Falls, UNI is home to the largest satellite recycling station in the city. The Panther Parkway recycling site is conveniently located at the edge of campus near the UNI sports complexes. Over the last three years, an average of 300 tons of recyclable material has passed through the facility annually.



The Panther Parkway Recycling Station.

Future considerations

In order to continue to improve recycling efforts at UNI, numerous items are being considered. These include improvements to the recycling infrastructures in Maucker Union and Rod Library, moving signage from the front of recycling units to their top, and evaluating outdoor recycling options. Additionally, consideration is being made to remove waste containers from classrooms, forcing users to take their waste into common areas and consciously make a decision to put their waste into the "Mixed Recycling" or "Landfill". These changes will continue to improve our recycling efforts.



Updated recycling signage.