

Eco-Representative FY15 (third year) Program Report

Purpose and Background

Benchmarking by the OSU Sustainability Office has shown that Eco-Representatives are a growing trend in colleges and universities across the U.S. Their job descriptions vary from institution to institution but generally their purpose is to deliver programming that helps institutionalize sustainable behavior within the student body and across campus. Eco-Reps at OSU tend to support more collaboration and better cross-departmental functionality on sustainability related projects than other volunteer or paid student positions that focus within a single department.

In the summer of 2012, Andrea Norris, Outreach Coordinator from Campus Recycling and Surplus Property, proposed that OSU pilot an Eco-Rep program in a select subset of residence halls. Stakeholders involved in the initial discussions and development of these positions included Residence Hall Association, University Housing and Dining Services, Student Sustainability Initiative, Campus Recycling, Student Leadership and Involvement and the Sustainability Office. Together, these stakeholders developed the Eco-Rep position description, provided funding to support the pilot and hired three students for the first year. A brief description of the Eco-Rep position is below:

Eco-Representatives (Eco-reps) are responsible for advancing and institutionalizing a culture of sustainability in the residence halls in which they live. Overall, this position is responsible for (1) educating residents about sustainable lifestyles and resources, (2) assisting with marketing and outreach efforts for sustainability programs, and (3) planning and executing sustainability-focused events. Eco-Reps report to the OSU Sustainability Office, but work with multiple departments and organizations on campus to meet program goals.

For FY15, four halls had paid Eco-Reps: Bloss, International Living Learning Center, Poling and Wilson. These halls were selected based the most-qualified applicants from an applicant pool that spanned multiple buildings.

Eco-Rep Work Plan

The Sustainability Office has created and maintains a work plan document that has grown and evolved over the years. This work plan serves as a guidance document and general list of events, campaigns programs and projects that Eco-Reps support over the academic year. It is shared via Google Docs with each Eco-Rep and updated as needed. An updated FY16 Work Plan document is attached.

Outreach Totals and Methods

While some outreach methods and tactics vary from Rep to Rep, a large core of tactics are standard and required for all Eco-Reps. At the beginning of the year each Eco-Rep establishes an "Eco-Rep board" to help communicate their presence, purpose, events and programs. They also establish personalized door markers to identify their location for other residents. Social media posts and presence was emphasized heavily during year three and varied depending on the activity and popularity of each outlet in each hall. Traditional poster, tabling and flyering appear to remain effective communication outlets and were all conducted repeatedly and throughout the year. For the first time, during year three Eco-Reps were

provided business cards and nametags. Attending hall staff and hall council meetings also assists in making Eco-Reps’ presence known, and seemed to be a very effective way to reach residents.

Eco-Reps are required to maintain an Outreach Log. The Log tracks contact counts, notable results and “takeaways.” The Outreach Log is useful for assessment purposes but also helped Eco-Reps identify patterns of effectiveness to improve outreach and share information between themselves in an electronic forum and a way that doesn’t require meeting time. Effective use and tracking results within the Log, however, varied greatly between Eco-Reps.

Precisely quantifying the number of times an Eco-Rep interacted with a stakeholder is difficult. Generally, outreach numbers are underreported since some Eco-Reps tracked outreach more thoroughly than others and it is unreasonable to ask Eco-Reps to report on every casual conversation, although two of FY15’s Eco-Reps did track at that level of detail. Differences in reporting were most prominent for quantitative metrics like number of personal contacts, meeting attendees, number of flyers distributed, etc. Qualitative elements, including successes, challenges and recommendations for future activities, were tracked adequately by all four FY15 Eco-Reps.

Below is a table of the number of people reached by the Eco-Reps. Contacts were mostly with resident students, but also includes some staff, faculty and community members.

Eco-Rep Building	Contact Type with Largest Reach	Number of People Reached
Bloss	Tabling, social media, flyers	Not reported
ILLC	Bookmarks, floor or hall meetings, tabling	379
Poling	Door white boards, flyers, door to door contact, email	1,068
Wilson	Flyers on doors, Eco-Rep initiated events, social media, face to face contact in hall	1,375

As mentioned above, Eco-Reps use multiple modes of communication. Below is a non-exhaustive list:

- Eco-Rep outreach board in each Eco-Rep’s hall
- Posters and handouts
- Residence hall Facebook pages
- Ecologue posts
- Casual interactions with other residents
- Tabling events on campus and in residence halls
- Networking and announcements at Hall Council, General Assembly, hall staff meetings and at other group meetings where Eco-Reps were involved outside of their Eco-Rep employment.

Outcomes from these and other outreach methods are detailed later in this report.

Orientation, Training and Support

During FY15, OSU’s four Eco-Reps were supervised by Brandon Trelstad, OSU Sustainability Coordinator, a shift from previous years. Some of the most notable changes for year three include better tracking program effectiveness, a more engaged and professional level of supervision, clearer expectations,

prescribing more specific programming (particularly fall and winter quarters) and generally taking a more systematic approach to Eco-Rep support. During the third year, Eco-Rep position descriptions included a requirement to meet at least monthly with the resident director.

As with previous years, Eco-Rep training and orientation mostly took place in the fall, but more extensive training resources were offered throughout the year. The Eco-Rep Lesson Book, created and maintained by the Sustainability Office exclusively for the Eco-Reps program, is a compilation of articles from multiple sustainability related discussion books published by the Northwest Earth Institute in Portland. The lesson book provides an introduction on basic sustainability philosophies and definitions and aligns subject matter within the context of Oregon State University so that Eco-Reps are equipped with information, facts, resources and the vocabulary to communicate effectively. Eco-Reps reported that the trainings and lesson book were very helpful and they all felt knowledgeable about sustainability related subject matter.

At the end of FY14 and her Eco-Rep tenure, one Eco-Rep was hired by the Sustainability Office to continue work on transportation programs. This afforded the team the luxury of a former (and very high performing) Eco-Rep continuing to train the incoming cohort. This Eco-Rep's presence at meetings throughout fall quarter helped quicken the learning curve on job effectiveness and tips for new Eco-Reps in a way other members of the support team could not. At the end of FY15, several of the Eco-Reps were specific in their offer to provide some time during fall quarter to pass on their knowledge and pay forward the assistance they got early in their experience.

Each year, the Sustainability Office and Campus Recycling take the lead on Eco-Rep orientation. Since year two, they have also been required to attend an orientation with SSI Student Sustainability Advisor Jen Christion Myers and the SSI student staff. Other orientation activities include attending an RHA General Assembly Meeting, meetings with Residence Hall Directors and attending Hall Council meetings. During year three, Eco-Reps were included in training, orientation, interdepartmental meetings and social gatherings between the Sustainability Office, SSI and Campus Recycling.

Budget and Wages

Funding for FY15 wages was provided as follows:

Department	FY15 Budgeted	% cost share	FY15 Actual
Sustainability Office	\$500	9%	\$490.11
Campus Recycling	\$500	9%	\$441.09
Pepsi Sustainability Fund	\$2,800	53%	\$2,597.09
UHDS	\$1,000	19%	\$931.04
SSI	\$500	9%	\$440.99
Total	\$5,300		\$4,900.32

Eco-Reps are compensated at minimum wage. Eco-Rep average hours worked per week varied greatly from person to person, as it has in past years, with a low of 2.9 hrs/week and a high of 9.8 hrs/week (averaged across all weeks Eco-Reps worked). Later-than-anticipated hiring in fall 2014 delayed the

start of work to early December, leaving only two weeks of working time fall quarter. Most Eco-Reps worked a total of 23 weeks. In addition to the actual wage expense, printing, supplies and miscellaneous other materials were provided at each department's discretion.

During the academic year, staff and faculty support for the program includes training; one on one consultation, coaching and problem solving; meeting attendance; payroll and hiring. Tasks typically conducted in the summer include budgeting, program planning, assessment, reporting and recruitment.

Outcomes, Successes and Challenges

As with any similar program, quantitative assessment can be a challenge. Quantitative results were tracked for the composting program and via Outreach Logs. Qualitative findings were derived from feedback and discussion from the Eco-Reps and other stakeholders.

Although intended for three of the four Eco-Rep halls, because of personal health issues, only two of the three intended halls offered composting programs. Numbers for the compost program are below.

	FY15	Poling	Wilson
Hall Info	Floors	5	6
	Residents (fall)	321	350
	Occupied rooms (fall, est.)	141	172
	Participating rooms (# pails issued, est.)	56	32
Weights	Compost weight - winter (lb)	264.7	507.0
	Compost weight - spring (lb)	229.0	242.5
	Total weight (lb)	493.7	749.5
Averages	Avg. weight/week, 21 weeks (lb)	23.5	35.7
	Avg. weight/participating room/week (lb)	0.4	1.1

Combined, the two halls composted **1,243 lbs.** in winter and spring quarters. Although down from the FY14 total of 2,797 lbs., last year's total was elevated by the exceedingly high performance of a superstar Eco-Rep in West Hall, where an amazing 1,744 lbs. of compost was collected. When removing West Hall from the calculation, Poling and Wilson's FY15 totals were on par with Halsell and Wilson's FY14 totals of 360 lbs. and 693 lbs., respectively. **When looking on a by-building basis, FY15 collected compost exceeded that of FY14 by 18%.**

An important factor in the management and success of the composting program, aside from the weekly clean out of the compost bin, is educational outreach on compost management and the day-to-day oversight by a paid resident. Eco-Reps report and act to alleviate regular misuse of the compost bin. In most cases, misuse requires immediate attention to avoid contamination of the compost or surrounding area. Without this daily oversight of food waste and accountability by a paid employee, compost would become problematic to the indoor environment, possibly attract pests and send a signal that contamination of compost by non-compostable material is ok, or will be sorted out later.

Some notable benefits of Eco-Reps can be seen beyond the boundaries of the Eco-Reps program. During the 2015 RecycleMania inter-hall competition, ILLC took 3rd place, formerly always ranking toward the bottom. This is likely mostly due to the reopening of the recycle rooms, which the ILLC Eco-

Rep was instrumental in making run smoothly, reporting issues to Campus Recycling and assisting in spreading the word about the change in how recycling would be handled. The Eco-Reps also participated in many other programs and projects over the academic year. A high level summary is available in the Work Plan, but detailed notes were kept during each weekly Eco-Rep team meeting in a Google doc that can be made available by request.

While some events were greatly successful, others were less so. Successes were attributed to each Eco-Rep's organizational skills, understanding of program planning and tailoring outreach/communication methods specific to the unique culture of their individual residence halls. Ideal resident-to-resident contact times were typically noted to be when halls are mostly occupied, during early morning or mid evening hours. While the skills and focus of individual Eco-Reps heavily influence event and program success, some factors impacting performance outside the Eco-Reps' control include competition with other events, programs or academic schedules; lack of responsiveness of another organization; and others' unsuccessful program planning or management.

Previously, during FY14, when Eco-Reps tabled they noted students from other halls were largely unaware of sustainability events in spite of the posters hung in their halls. Eco-Reps concluded that many students become oblivious to the many posters in residence halls and the overwhelming exposure to printed messages on a daily basis. Anecdotally, residents in halls where Eco-Reps reside are more likely to be aware of events and programs. One important marker of success in the institutionalization and support of Eco-Reps in residence halls is the amendment made during FY14 to the West Hall constitution to include the Eco-Rep position, an important function of the West's Hall Council.

Increasing program quality can be seen as the academic year progresses and spring quarter typically brings very high output. Here are some highlights of Eco-Rep-generated programming from FY15:

- Poling "Choose to Reuse" event, focused on reusable water bottles, May 2015
 - 76 people attended
 - 30 water bottles distributed
 - Showed Story of Stuff video and shared other stats and info
- Bloss Environmental Awareness event, May 2015
 - 25 people attended
 - More open event flow than other events with specific schedule
 - Pizza and plants were provided to resident participants
- Hawley & Buxton Sustainability for Stability event, May 2015
 - ~60 people attended, some people left early/event went late
 - We learned some halls have reusable plates that can be checked out; varies by hall - some happen in the form of a miscellaneous equipment room with pots, pans, etc.
- Wilson Sustainability for Stability event
 - 40 people attended, 33 people stayed for the whole event
 - 100% of attendees said they learned something new
 - **People were upset to hear there will not be composting if there's no Eco-Rep**
- Poling Think Sustainability for Stability event, April 2015
 - Over 20 people attended, 5 were not from Poling
 - Food and prizes were provided
 - Event questionnaire revealed

- 100% of attendees said they learned something new
- 100% of attendees said they would change their actions in some way
- Eco-Rep made and posted event graphic showing results
- Wilson Eco-Rep conducted similar event soon after, with similar results.
- Custom ILLC recycling signage, February – May 2015
 - Delivered informational bookmark regarding new recycling rooms to all doors and spoke to 40 rooms directly
 - Collected information on common recyclable and trash items found in recycling rooms
 - Customized signage for each of eight recycling rooms. Design put greater emphasis on photos over text, included photos of the common waste items found in recycling room bins, and key text was provided in English, Mandarin Chinese and Arabic.
- [Self-produced Eco-Rep video](#), highlighting what the job entails, what an average day looks like, why they chose to be Eco-Reps, their favorite parts of the job, what challenges they face and how their work impacts their residence halls.

All of these events received funding from hall councils. **It is particularly noteworthy that Hawley/Buxton chose to fund an event coordinated by Eco-Reps from other halls, and residents from other halls are attending events, speaking to the high demand for this type of programming within UHDS.**

Conclusion and Summary

The support team feels Eco-Reps year three was a success and the team continues to learn ways in which it can better utilize Eco-Rep time and resources to support sustainability related events and programs on campus as well as assist in the institutionalization of sustainable practices in the residence halls. Below is a list that highlights some of the benefits and successes of the Eco-Rep program.

- Institutionalization and support for the Eco-Rep position in the West Hall constitution
- General acknowledgement and support of the Eco-Rep position by multiple stakeholders
- When looking building by building, compost collected increased by 18% from the previous year
- Eco-Reps reported high levels of satisfaction with the amount and type of training and orientation resources provided.

Possible changes for FY15 include:

- Refinement and reorganization of the Lesson Book
- Creation of a volunteer Eco-Reps “alumni” position to help train new Eco-Reps
- Expand the Eco-Rep program to more (5) residence halls.

Eco-Reps are effective at furthering sustainability goals in their residence halls and, therefore, campus at large. Eco-Reps fulfill an important and unique need at OSU; Eco-Reps work in the same place where they live and play and therefore are able to reach their peers more effectively than posters, handouts or regular staff. Only someone living on-site would understand ideal timing and the culture of communication unique to their hall.

Keeping the Eco-Reps as paid positions is critical to the quality of this program. Years prior to the Eco-Rep program have not produced similar levels of participation or quantifiable data in support of sustainability programming in the residence halls. The relatively very small financial investment in this program furthers important and shared goals amongst Eco-Rep partners and well beyond.

Eco-Rep Work Plan FY16

Training and Orientation

- Attend General Assembly meeting to introduce Eco-Reps to rest of RHA – late Oct. or early Nov.
- Campus Recycling and Surplus Property Training – late Oct. or early Nov.
- Sustainability Office Training (Northwest Earth Institute modules, general student employment orientation, etc) – ongoing throughout the year
- SSI Training -

Fall

- Focus on training and orientation
- Energy Civil War outreach – late Nov (SSI)
- Planning and volunteer recruitment for compost pilot – timing TBA (Campus Recycling and SSI)
- Possible end of term Drive Less Connect and Transportation Options outreach (Brandon, Sustainability Office)
- Other projects and outreach, as needed

Winter

- January and February Repair Fair outreach – TBA (Andrea, Campus Recycling)
- RecycleMania – All term long plus hall competitions – late Jan., 10 weeks long, Res Halls competition 3 week period (Andrea, Campus Recycling)
- Campuses Take Charge (tentative) (SSI and Sustainability Office)
- Earth Week Planning – Actual events April ~17-23 (Andrea, Campus Recycling)
- Composting Pilot – Ongoing (Andrea, Campus Recycling)
- Farm to Table Dinner – (tentative) March (SSI)
- SSI Open Spaces - TBA
- Other projects and outreach, as needed

Spring

- Earth Week - April ~17-23 (Andrea, Campus Recycling)
- April and May Repair Fairs outreach - TBA (Andrea, Campus Recycling)
- Move-Out Donation Drive – May (Andrea, Campus Recycling)
- Composting Pilot – Ongoing (Andrea, Campus Recycling)
- Transportation Extravaganza – TBA (SSI Transportation Coordinator and Transportation Services)
- SSI Open Spaces – TBA
- SSI End of Year Celebration – TBA
- Other projects and outreach, as needed

Meetings

- Weekly Eco-Rep meetings with Brandon, Andrea and other necessary staff
- Meet with RD (at least once per month)
- Attend weekly Res Hall Council meetings
- UHDS Sustainability Meetings – as needed
- RHA General Assembly meetings as needed or desired, but likely at least once per quarter

Ongoing Projects

- Recruit volunteers
- Social media updates and Eco-rep Message Board updates
 - Res Hall FB page, Recycling FB Page, SO FB page, Twitter
- Weekly Reports
- 1 Ecologue post per month
- 1 Facebook post per week
- Recycling projects/compost in the halls