

CSUDH President's Challenge: Pop-Up Thrift Initiative Summary (Fall 2020)

Introduction: In response to the 2020 President's Challenge to support student success, Sustainability Manager Ellie Perry from the Office of Sustainability, Basic Needs Coordinator Morgan Kirk from Basic Needs, and faculty member Jenney Hall from Interdisciplinary Studies submitted a proposal for the Pop-Up Thrift Initiative. This initiative was designed to engage in-need students in sustainable life skills that would also help them save money, reduce their impact on the planet, and empower them to help meet their own basic needs. The proposal also incorporated an upcycle/thrift component designed to collect second-hand (but good condition) items from the campus for re-distribution to students in need. Based on this proposal, they were awarded \$10,800 towards implementation of this project just prior to the start of the Fall 2020 semester.

Implementation: Due to the virtual environment necessitated by COVID-19, the team adapted the original proposal's focus on in-person events to a wholly virtual platform for outreach and education, and arranging for contactless methods of exchange for the collection and distribution of thrifted items from the campus.

Educational Workshops- In August 2020, the team assembled and distributed 200 kits containing start up materials to encourage targeted student populations to attend and follow along with the virtual September Eco-Living Workshops. These targeted populations included residents in Housing (all 75 occupied units), in-need students attending the Basic Needs pull-up distribution event in August (80 kits distributed), and freshmen enrolled in Dr. Hall's IDS course (45 kits distributed).

Every Tuesday during the month of September, the Office of Sustainability hosted a live Eco-Living Workshop on Zoom. All of the one-hour workshops focused on DIY activities designed to teach students life skills that would help them save money/meet their basic needs while also protecting the environment.

- Week 1 focused on re-purposing and upcycling common containers usually thrown away into DIY food scrap garden planters to enable students to grow their own herbs and vegetables in an indoor environment. The workshop also



Figure 1- Office of Sustainability intern Sophie Wheeler demonstrating an upcycled toilet paper roll activity via Zoom.

featured an affordable salad prep cooking demonstration to teach students methods for eating healthy while also saving money.

- Week 2 educated students on creatively upcycling toilet paper rolls to create their own household items (e.g. cell phone holders, clothing and office supply organizers, etc).
- Week 3 provided zero waste crafting guidance on how to create DIY reusable beeswax wraps as a replacement for plastic wrap, upcycling old t-shirts to create reusable bags, and how to make simple sewing repairs to extend the life of torn clothing.
- Week 4 provided green cleaning guidance, demonstrating how combining

simple non-toxic household ingredients like baking soda and white vinegar could replace costly commercial cleaners and provide an eco-friendly alternative. The workshop also trained students on how to create their own cosmetics and soaps using eco-friendly household ingredients.

- Week 5 demonstrated how to make more sustainable choices when it comes to beverage selection including for coffee and tea. Instead of relying on single-use plastics and coffee cups, students were taught to make more sustainable choices and utilize healthier (and more cost-effective) coffee, tea, and flavored water recipes.

In addition to the live workshops, all content was pre-recorded and made available on the CSUDH Office of Sustainability Youtube channel for those students who could not make the date/time for the live workshops and needed an asynchronous alternative for accessing the content. Additional marketing

was conducted via Instagram and the Sustainability Club to encourage registration from

additional attendees.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the workshops, lecturer Jenney Hall distributed a feedback survey to the attendees. Based on the 34 responses received, the survey indicated the following trends:

- The workshops grew more popular over time, with more and more students joining the workshop over the course of the month.



Figure 2. Flyer used to advertise the September Eco-Living Workshops on Instagram and via start-up kit handouts.

- All students responded that they were at least somewhat likely (with the majority responding very and extremely likely) to use the skills they learned in future, save money as a result of the skills they learned, and be better able to support their health and wellbeing based on these skills.

Thrift Collection/Distribution: For the pop-up thrift collection and distribution component of this project, Basic Needs distributed a survey to their in-need students to determine what type of clothing or household items were most needed. Based on the results from the 39 students who responded, hygiene items and coats were deemed the highest need items for collection, while other clothing items such as shirts, pants, and shoes came in a close second.



Figure 3. Collected coats being stored for distribution to in-need students

Throughout the month of October, the Office of Sustainability provided contact-less drop-off options for donating secondhand coats towards this effort. This included 24/7 mail drop boxes at the NSM loading dock and mail-in service options for donating which were promoted to the CSUDH community via campus-wide e-mails and social media. CSUDH faculty, staff, and students generously donated coats and other clothing items throughout the month of October, netting 109 coats and jackets as well as many other clothing items and accessories (which will be handed out at future distribution events).

In the month of November, the Office of Sustainability developed a reservation survey distributed by Basic Needs to enable students to claim coats based on preferred color and sizes. These reserved coats were handed out along with pre-packaged hygiene kits from



Figure 4. Reserved coats pre-packaged for pick-up at Basic Needs' pull-up distribution event.

Basic Needs (using existing supplies) at the scheduled pull-up distribution events on November 12th and December 3rd.

Outcomes/Metrics: The initiative was able to collect the following summary metrics on the above-listed activities.

- 200 Eco-Living workshop kits distributed
- 184 live attendees at Eco-Living Workshops
- 320 views of Youtube channel content
- 34 workshop feedback survey responses
- 39 high need item survey responses
- 109 coats collected, 35 reserved via reservation forms, 21 picked-up/distributed.



Figure 5. Office of Sustainability VISTA Programming and Development Coordinator Scarlett Zamora and volunteer David Saldaña helping to distribute bags containing reserved coats and hygiene kit items to in-need students.

Future Plans: Based on the success of this initiative, the team will continue to partner to sponsor additional item drives and distributions during the 2021 spring semester and beyond. As the infrastructure and physical supplies needed to effectively continue running pop-up thrift events is now mostly in place thanks to the start-up funding provided by the President's Challenge grant, the Office of Sustainability and Basic Needs will be able to continue ongoing thrift events as a regular part of their ongoing programming. The pilot not only demonstrated that the CSUDH community is capable of providing a sufficient quantity of items to re-distribute to students (even during a pandemic), but that the pop-up thrift initiative can effectively distribute essential items to

students in-need while also contributing to the campus' zero waste goals. Future plans also include engaging Housing to collect additional thrift items for re-distribution during 2021 May move-out week which will help Housing reduce waste costs from disposal of household items that will simply be needed again during fall move-in by future residents and/or other students in need.

Conclusion: The initiative was designed to support student success which the team defined as the idea that students should graduate with an exemplary academic education, a highly respected degree, and a genuine commitment to justice and social responsibility. They should also better understand and embody sustainable environmental, social, and economic practices as a way of life.

The project was designed to support the basic needs of students such that, not only are they getting their needs met so that they can focus on their education and graduate in a timely manner, but that they experience coming together as a community in an act of empowerment to help the planet as well as their fellow Toros. By providing access to high-need items to students who are experiencing insecurities around meeting their basic needs, the initiative was able to provide these in-need students with clothing/housing essentials for no cost.

As 15.6% of our Dominguez Hills student population are homeless, this will provide students a critical ongoing sustainable resource to succeed on campus. Additionally, 64% of students who are food insecure as well as 16.8% of students who are housing insecure are also Pell-eligible recipients. This initiative will continue to provide these students an opportunity to receive items that will contribute to their basic needs and financial security.