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Becoming a Fair Trade Certified Campus

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The UNH Fair Trade Campaign came about in the fall of 2019 when Net Impact was seeking a new project to take on within our structure of being a sustainability organization seeking to enact systemic change on campus rooted in considerations for people, planet, and profit. We brainstormed with our faculty mentor, Fiona, who had encountered it through her network. Fair Trade Campaigns are overseen by an established organization that targets towns, colleges, universities, and congregations, so it was an opportunity being shared throughout the higher education space. Being run by an overarching organization and made it easy to get on board with this endeavor through the clearly outlined structure for requirements. Within this, campaigns require four outreach events, three offices or events to

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commit to using Fair Trade offerings, two Fair Trade products to be offered at every dining outlet, and a Fair Trade Resolution to be passed by UNH Administration. Overall, the process incorporates all facets of sustainability (people, planet, profit) through supply chain engagement and transparency, which are areas that Net Impact focuses on in other projects as well, so it seemed like a good fit for our next area of focus.

Additionally, this campaign allowed for the cumulation of many personal and professional skills throughout our collaboration with multiple UNH departments. The experience itself solidified concrete capabilities for members to bring forward in their careers regarding small team projects and project management. Personally, I feel that leading the Fair Trade Campaign has bolstered my skills in professional communication, time management, meeting facilitation, small group leadership, task delegation, data entry and tracking, public outreach and engagement, and stakeholder engagement. With all of this, I have enjoyed leveraging these toward a cause that I care about while also growing personally as a leader. Through this outlet, it has been so rewarding to know that we have been completing impactful work and are able to enact real systemic change on campus. This speaks to the agency of students on campus at UNH, and the drive and thoughtfulness between so many stakeholders toward pursuing an overarching goal that is a big part of the culture of sustainability we continue to build upon.

Within our work with the Sustainability Institute, Hospitality Services, Dining Services, and Catering, I was so impressed by how collaborative and engaged each of the departments was. In this, the Sustainability Institute was integral to leveraging existing connections between these departments, and helped to streamline the effort, as much of the food data and tracking was already occurring to due STARS rating requirements. Therefore, instead of reinventing certain efforts, we were able to synthesize new subsets of data and build upon the specific area of Fair Trade products that we were interested in to clarify the necessary information and move forward with campaign details as students. This collaboration further demonstrates the opportunities for

student organizations to collaborate with departments across campus, and how much power this can hold, as students can offer different capacity to the ongoing efforts from the departments while also learning from the departmental operations.

This departmental work can also serve to benefit the University as a whole. Because the campus-wide Fair Trade certification serves as 1 out of 74 credits and 1 out of 201 points that UNH is pursuing for our STARS rating renewal, the Fair Trade Campaign has merit in multiple forms: intrinsically for the sustainable impact, and credit and recognition. The fact that this 2-year endeavor serves as simply one point within STARS, and that all other points are as involved as this effort, UNH's achievement of maintaining Platinum status under this rating system is one reason why I'm very proud to be at UNH as a student in general, and proud to be involved in the sustainability space here as well. Platinum status is a very large accomplishment in my eyes and speaks to the rigor and far-reaching impact of each pursuit while also underscoring UNH's overall commitment to sustainability. This type of work is complicated, detailed, and collaborative, and requires the help of many different people and their perspectives, which strengthens our community even more.

This is also notable to me due to the power UNH holds to make a large impact in our larger community due to the sheer size of our campus operations and the quantitative improvements that we can account for. Implementing these types of programs at the scale we are can hopefully serve as an example for others to follow and empower other institutions to take on similar efforts. Sustainability has become a defining characteristic of the identity of the university as a whole and is something that should be continued to be celebrated through accomplishments such as Fair Trade Certification.

For those looking to continue sustainability efforts through outreach and education of sustainability topics, which was a decent portion of this campaign, I also wanted to address my learnings about effective engagement at UNH and extend my advice to upcoming future leaders

for some methods to reach the UNH student body. Many formats of outreach have changed significantly throughout COVID as many students have come saturated with virtual opportunities and messaging. In this way, even with likely returning to in-person operations in the fall, I would recommend finding ways to stay creative, and reaching out to students in a way that is as interesting and new as possible, both through messaging and interactive events, especially if they are virtual. I think it is also important to provide opportunities to underclassmen early, as much of the downfalls from attempting to reach people is from a lack of awareness or knowledge about how much is truly happening around campus. Events such as U-Day and other opportunities early in the semester are integral to gaining traction, as many students are actively looking for opportunities. And, finally, it's also important to make sure you are reaching your target audiences of who might be most receptive! Maintaining open communication with your networks and making your work known to those you already have relationships with is a good avenue not only to reach more people but also to identify areas for collaboration, as many other sustainability organizations may be pursuing similar goals.

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