



Sustainability

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UNH Students Advocate for Sustainable Residential Communities

MONDAY, MARCH 28, 2022

by Cassie Hollasch '22 | *English, Writing and Business Administration*

The [Sustainability Advocates](#) program is a residence hall peer-to-peer education and engagement program that aims to encourage sustainable thought and action across campus.

The program is managed by Alexis Eaton '24, [Environmental Engineering](#) and [Sustainability Dual Major](#), and intern at the Sustainability Institute. Alexis manages 11 Advocates within the residential halls, there is one Advocate per dorm.

Before her managing role, Alexis served as an Advocate in Handler Hall where she planned a reusable utensil sale to fund the “adoption” of a wild animal through the World Wildlife Fund, which now serves as the hall’s mascot.

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Alexis has been the Sustainability Advocate Intern for two consecutive semesters. Last semester she worked to create a Sustainable Living Certification. The certification is



earned by completing a survey that allows

students living in residential halls to assess their living habits and make positive changes to reduce their waste footprint. Alexis also

collaborated with the Sustainability Institute's Zero Waste Interns

(George Anderson '22 and Chloe Gross '22) to conduct a mini waste audit. Through this audit, she collected meaningful data on the types of

things students are throwing away and recycling on campus. The data showed that the majority of an individual's waste was packaging, such

as food wrappers or mail packaging. A major takeaway from her research was that students often misplace trash thinking it can be recycled, but UNH only accepts containers marked #1, #2, or #5.

Overall, Alexis noted that her team was pleasantly surprised that the amount of waste generated was less than expected. It's important that

UNH students continue to make a conscious effort to keep the waste they generate to a minimum by using reusable bags, bottles, etc. and to

follow UNH recycling rules to the best of their ability. If UNH recycling rules are not followed, bins are deemed contaminated and cannot be accepted by recycling plants.

This semester Alexis continues to be hard at work to address

sustainability challenges on campus. For example, she cites, "winter weather has made campus extremely inaccessible for handicapped

students; handicapped parking spaces are not shoveled, and the sidewalks are extremely dangerous." She is working on a solution to

help residential halls stay up to date on their snow removal. She also plans to get more recycling bins around campus, as well as advertise

how to minimize COVID-related waste such as masks and testing kit bags.

Outside of her internship, Alexis is passionate about water quality

research. Last summer, she participated in the [Research Experience](#)

[and Apprenticeship Program](#) to study the removal of several types of estrogenic compounds in wastewater treatment. She looked at how estradiols and ethinyl estradiols, both of which are types of estrogen found in oral contraceptives, move through wastewater treatment plants. Alexis emphasizes, “Birth control pills are becoming increasingly popular, but the estrogenic compounds in them can wreak havoc on aquatic ecosystems if they are not removed properly during wastewater treatment. For example, male fish that are exposed to such compounds have developed eggs in their testes and have lower sperm counts. Through my research, I was able to look at how these compounds move through wastewater treatment facilities, allowing me to better understand how to remove them.” Alexis’ research will be published in [UNH’s Inquiry Journal](#) on April 11th.

Alexis is proud that UNH has so many opportunities for students to get involved with [sustainable initiatives](#). **She advises underclassmen, “Don’t be afraid to seek out opportunities that interest you! With that being said, this abundance of opportunities can lead to feeling overwhelmed. Pick a few to focus on and invest your time in.”** She is grateful as well for her academic course study and credits her classes for “opening my eyes to the fact that there are people out there doing what’s right in terms of sustainability. While becoming discouraged is easy, I realize that we do have the potential to solve social, environmental, and economic issues through collaboration and innovation. What makes my work with the Advocates so great is that everyone comes from different majors and has had different experiences; we can pool our individual skills and ideas to address sustainability issues in the residence halls.”

To learn more about becoming an Advocate click [here](#) .

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