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Sustainability Intern Supports Offices Across Campus to Enact Change

MONDAY, MAY 16, 2022

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

Maddy Smith '24
Environmental
Conservation and
Sustainability, works
as UNH's



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Sustainable Office Intern. As an initiative of the Sustainability Institute, the Sustainable Office Program aims to professionally mentor on-campus faculty and staff on methods to make their work environment more sustainable. Participants will have the opportunity to enact changes around their office and make choices to support equitable,

environmentally conscious, and socially responsible decisions around office culture, purchasing, training and operations. The program was designed based on UNH's Platinum rating in sustainability according to the [STARS AASHE](#) reporting system.

In conjunction with previous Sustainable Office Intern, Kyana Burgess '22 Anthropology and Sustainability, Maddy has worked with Career and Professional Services (CaPS), the Theater and Dance Department, Housing and ResLife, Human Resources, and Health & Wellness. She has provided these campus branches with resources on administering sustainable practices in their offices and worked closely with each office to meet their specific needs. Through weekly prompts relating to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Maddy has fostered conversation around sustainability to keep the program on track.

In collaboration with UNH Housing Maddy has revised UNH's sustainability education materials and created a master list of waste-conscious socials and how to run them. During the week of Earth Day, RAs and CAs have been instructed to make their socials waste-conscious and thus reduce the flow of garbage produced by ResLife. With Maddy's support, the UNH Theater Department has also been working diligently to reduce their waste production by transitioning to paperless scripts, upcycling when crafting stage props, and planting resilient plant species for the Theater Education department to use for storytelling.

UNH Career and Professional Services (CaPS) has also collaborated with Maddy to create new methods to improve their office sustainability. Maddy helped facilitate a "swagless" career fair with Cayce Jones CaPS Senior Career Counselor. Cayce organized the annual career fair on February 22nd and made a conscious effort to make this year's fair as sustainable as possible. To do so he used tactful messaging – advising employers to limit their handouts, connect via email to future employees, and revise their marketing tactics. Cayce has elaborated that much of the "swag" employers hand out (such as keychains, etc.) ends up in the garbage on the way out of the fair. Cayce noted that he

was present at the fair to help mitigate companies' concerns, but overall the new attempt to reduce waste was handled very well by employers. 99 employers adhered to it and significantly reduced the giveaways they usually brought. Instead of luggage bags and huge boxes of handouts, employers were encouraged to only bring in what they could carry.

Another key component of Maddy's work has been with UNH Facilities to implement a pilot program called Trash Buddy. Trash Buddy is a project launched by [Recycling @ Work](#) that aims to promote recycling via visual aids. Trash Buddy is a smaller bin that attaches to the recycling bin to help users understand that most of the waste they produce can be recycled. Maddy emphasizes, "Trash Buddy puts more responsibility on the individual to deal with their waste production and empty the bin themselves rather than having it taken out every night by a housekeeping crewmember, even when the bin is not full and could hold more." The program requires offices to take responsibility for their own waste production and be mindful of their impact on the environment. Some benefits of the program are that it reduces the number of plastic bags thrown away by cleaning crews, reduces the amount of paper trash to almost zero, reduces the number of recyclables in the trash from 29% to 13%, and increases recycling from 65% to 85%.

Maddy has presented the program details to CaPS and HR, who are planning to participate in the pilot, and is now working to order and distribute the Trash Buddy Bins. In partnership with UNH Sustainability Institute Program Director, Jenn Andrews and UNH Facilities, Jean Mitchell, she plans to conduct a waste audit that would sample the waste from several office buildings on campus to observe the initial impacts of the program.

Maddy states, "I'm hoping to continue to get people involved in discussions surrounding sustainability on campus. Critical engagement with one's own values and



goals for sustainability is so important and I hope that I can get others to see that as well.

I would also like to gain some experience in the field of sustainable education and learn from my peers while I teach others what I know.”

To help employers consider meaningful handouts, Post Landfill Action Network (PLAN) has created the “Swag Hierarchy” to reinforce only giving out useful items. [Learn more](#) about their efforts and resources.

Learn more about the [UNH Sustainable Office program](#).

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