

Best School Recycling Program University of Iowa

The Best School Recycling Award is awarded annually to an educational institution or organization that looks beyond the **3R's** of reading, writing and arithmetic and purposely introduces attending students, faculty, staff members and visiting guests to the **4R's** – reduce, reuse, recycle and renew by interjecting these elements into existing curriculums and campus activities. This year's proactive recipients, representing a cross-section of environmentally minded campus organizations, departments, and students have been *greening* up the black and gold by launching an onslaught of exciting on-campus initiatives that have undoubtedly assisted in bringing environmental awareness to the forefront of campus life at the University of Iowa.

Monitor, Measure, Materialize

In their continuing mission of raising environmental awareness and providing ease and convenience of recycling to students, faculty, staff members and visiting guests, recycling bins are located in all academic buildings, sports complexes, residence halls and recreational facilities. Currently all academic and research facilities have desk side recycling. Central recycling stations and desk side recycling are also incorporated into all new building schematics.

The extent of their environmental endeavors does not end there. University of Iowa faculty, staff members, students and area businesses continuously monitor their environmental impact and based on findings expand and enhance their already successful recycling programs. For example, recent waste sorts performed by University of Iowa Environmental Science students and the University of Iowa Environmental Coalition, area businesses and other organizations revealed that 50-percent of their waste stream was made up of recyclables. A majority of which was attributed to plastic materials. What materialized from these findings was the initiation of an aggressive on-campus plastics collection program. With financial assistance provided by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Solid Waste Alternatives program and the National Recycling Coalition's Bin Award, containers were purchased to facilitate the program.

The College of Pearly Whites Goes Green

In addition to addressing and providing programs for the "low hanging fruit" or waste streams that have a campus wide commonality, the University of Iowa has also been investigating ways to reduce, reuse, recycle and renew waste streams that are somewhat unconventional. For example, the University's College of Dentistry created a "Go Green" task force and with the University of Iowa's Environmental Coalition, the Engineer's for a Sustainable World and the assistance of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and City of Iowa City Landfill and Recycling Center a comprehensive waste sort was performed. The baseline audit revealed that the Dental Science building had a unique waste stream, consisting of disposable lab gowns, rubber and plastic gloves, sterilization pouches and plaster and wax castings. Members of the task force are currently working with students, dental clinic staff members, City Carton, Inc., and

the City of Iowa City Landfill and Recycling Center in brainstorming innovative ways to reduce, reuse, recycle and renew materials specific to the College of Dentistry.

Tangible Results and Other Innovations

The University of Iowa is generating 11 percent less total waste than they were a decade ago. In addition, they have a pilot project underway to compost 52 tons of food waste annually from Hillcrest's Food Services. Other proactive initiatives include carpet recycling and conducting move-out day recycling activities. Because of the high visibility of on campus recycling programs, corresponding marketing and educational initiatives are estimated to reach an astonishing 50,000 students, faculty, staff members and visitors on the University of Iowa's campus per day.

Erin Novak, President of the Iowa Recycling Association commented, "It is truly an honor to present this year's Best School Recycling Program award to the University of Iowa. Environmental initiatives such as these are unquestionably raising the bar and driving momentum in providing quality environmental education and action within our state."