

**Increasing Campus Recycling and Waste Reduction Program – not only the environmentally right thing to do, but done right, a cost saving program.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Crucial in an age of dwindling resources and skyrocketing disposal costs, reducing the amount of waste being sent to landfills through a planned, dedicated effort has become an important priority for Georgia.*

## **INTRODUCTION OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Kennesaw State is a proud public university in the University System of Georgia with nearly 18,000 students, located in the rapidly developing northwest region of greater metropolitan Atlanta. Chartered in 1963, KSU serves as a highly valued resource for this region's educational, economic, social and cultural advancement. This institution shares with all other units in the University System of Georgia the following characteristics:

- A supportive campus climate, necessary services and leadership development opportunities, in an effort to educate the whole person and meet the needs of students, faculty and staff;
- Cultural, ethnic, racial, and gender diversity in the faculty, staff and student body, supported by practices and programs that embody the ideals of an open, democratic, and global society;
- Technology to advance educational purposes, including instructional technology, student support services and distance education;
- Collaborative relationships with other system institutions, state agencies, local schools and technical institutes, and business and industry, sharing physical, human, information and other resources to expand and enhance programs and services available to the citizens of Georgia.

Kennesaw State University is a progressive and exemplary educational institution, respected for its excellence and leadership in teaching, service, research and

environmental stewardship. The university is committed to continuous improvement in an increasingly diverse and constantly changing learning community.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM/INITIATIVE**

*An aggressive recycling campaign....*

Kennesaw State University's aggressive, proactive approach to waste reduction has earned praise from the highest levels of state government, recently receiving Georgia's top award for waste reduction from Governor Sonny Perdue's Keep Georgia Beautiful program. Thanks to careful planning and dedicated leadership, Kennesaw State's new, award-winning, comprehensive recycling program not only cuts down on the amount of waste being sent to landfills by recycling 15 separate product materials, but it also engages the participation of university faculty, staff, and students throughout all phases of the process, including design, construction, and implementation.

## **DESIGN**

Environmental responsibility has long been a part of Kennesaw State's priorities; yet a university-wide survey two years ago revealed that the campus community would more likely recycle if doing so were made convenient. About that same time, a service-learning survey project by an accounting class determined that 859,000 beverages packaged in plastic bottles were being sold annually on campus and subsequently thrown away. This revelation, along with university initiatives, led to a proposal by KSU's Environmental Health & Safety Department to install Mini-Recycling Centers (MRCs) across campus. The proposal would invigorate already existing recycling efforts and lead

to one of the most aggressive recycling programs in the University System of Georgia — while budgetary constraints would dictate continued campus collaboration.

*Staying within a shoestring budget...*

With plans calling for 40 recycling stations across campus at an estimated cost of \$1,100 per unit, purchasing bins proved cost prohibitive. As an alternative, the university's Plant Operations' Carpenter Shop was tapped to build containers for recycling that would feature four separate receptacles, one each for aluminum, plastic, mixed paper, and trash.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

*A smooth transition to a substantial change in service...*

On Earth Day 2002, six months after the initial survey was launched, attractive gray recycling bins were unveiled at a ribbon cutting ceremony. Campus-wide announcements and educational efforts followed. Buy-in from faculty and staff was essential as the university was experiencing budgetary reductions that resulted in restrictions in office cleaning, trash pickup, and night custodial staff positions. The Building Services Department reduced office cleanings to one night a week and encouraged occupants to take their own recyclables and trash to the new recycling centers, resulting in participants' increased interest in sorting the recyclables from the trash at the source.

Today, Kennesaw State University recycles approximately 11½ -12 tons of material per month, double the amount it recycled before the program. Since July 2002, we've recycled 5.5 tons of plastic bottles and cans — that's 115,000 bottles and cans.

The faculty, staff and our students continue to be environmentally conscious as we strive to do the right thing. Kennesaw State University recycles in an effort to curb substantial land loss due to the practice of burying trash.

## **BENEFITS**

### ***Recognized leader in environmental responsibility...***

This aggressive campaign has cut in half the amount of campus recyclable material the university formerly sent to landfills in the state of Georgia. The Mini Recycling Centers have become an essential component in the university's comprehensive waste management plan — gaining statewide attention, reducing costs, requiring fewer manpower hours, and re-focusing the campus community's environmental attention on recycling.

Institutional budget savings since the program was rolled out have been significant. The increase in process efficiency has allowed a reduction through attrition of the custodial work force with the savings having been applied to the state budget reductions. Not only does the university experience direct cost savings to its trash removal service, but direct income is generated as well — a result of rebates that are received for recyclable items, including plastics, aluminum, laser/inkjet cartridges, and paper. Manpower hours are saved with fewer trash pickups in the buildings; some buildings have gone from picking up trash 5 times a week to, now, one time a week, because of the MRCs.

This project has promoted collaboration and participation from various areas of the university. The Environmental Concerns Committee supports the project and encourages faculty, staff, and students to recycle. University Relations promotes the

program through publications and communications efforts. Faculty, staff, and students alike receive recognition for their efforts. Externally, KSU has partnered with the county Georgia Beautiful.

In April 2003, as Gov. Sonny Perdue honored individuals, organizations and businesses for their part in improving Georgia's environment at the Keep Georgia Beautiful 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary awards luncheon, Kennesaw State's recycling program received the "Waste Reduction Award" in the non-profit organization category. This award recognized the efforts KSU made to provide environmental education, change attitudes, and promote responsible waste handling.