

January 30, 2009

Working 'green' is smart, efficient

By Caitlin Cobb

"Going green" is a concept that has become popular throughout the UC Davis community. More and more people and units are making an effort to adopt environmentally friendly practices and to work toward reducing their carbon footprints.

There are several campus projects and resources to help faculty and staff gain a better knowledge of green practices, and how they can participate in making UC Davis an eco-friendly establishment.

Campus Events and Visitor Services is one such group. Kelly Harris, marketing analyst with CEVS, said it is important for UC Davis to know how to successfully organize events in environmentally sound ways.

"We offer resources to show people how to host sustainable events and plan accordingly for them," Harris said.

The PlanGreen Conference, put on by CEVS, is meant to show faculty and staff how to plan green events. The conference will be held Feb. 18 in the ARC ballroom. Any person or unit can register online to attend the conference—to do so, see plangreen.ucdavis.edu.

Speakers will address everything from general sustainability practices in event planning to specific things that you can do when planning your event, Harris said.

One topic will include sustainable food and beverage planning, such as switching from Styrofoam cups to something that is reusable or compostable, she added.

Also, the conference will introduce habits such as using audiovisual presentations rather than printing handouts, and using postconsumer recycled paper if you must print.

Sodexo, campus audiovisual experts and Repro Graphics will all work together to host the conference, Harris said. Additionally, R4 Recycling will help with this event.

"R4 is basically our support department on campus to help all departments learn about sustainability," she added.

CEVS wants to encourage as many groups as possible to participate in the conference, Harris said. It is increasingly important for organizations to know how to plan green events, and practice environmentally friendly habits.

"This is our first official PlanGreen conference, and we hope to make it an annual conference," Harris said.

Aside from attending the PlanGreen conference, there are many things that faculty and staff can do to reduce their waste and live eco-friendly, said Lin King, manager of R4 recycling.

"We want people to understand that trash does not come free and that we need to reduce the amount of trash that we produce," King said.

Toward this aim, R4 Recycling created a pilot project with the Human Resources building on campus, King said. That building is now a completely zero-waste facility, and R4 would like to see more buildings move in this direction.

"Faculty, staff and students will need to change their behaviors, which is the hardest part," he said.

'A constant reminder'

As a way to encourage people to reduce their individual waste, R4 has created a "minibin" system, where faculty and staff are given a (very) small trash bin for waste. This small bin is placed inside a larger, normal sized bin that is only to be used for recyclable paper products.

"These small bins are a constant reminder that we want to try to reduce our individual waste," King explained.

Another key way to reduce waste is to think of things as recyclable and reusable, King said. If people start reusing more of their everyday products, they will reduce the amount of waste they ultimately produce.

"'Rebuying' is a key component also—this means buying recycled products," he added. "We want to make sure offices do that."

Composting is another way to reduce a building's overall waste output, King said. Everything from food waste to paper towels from the bathroom can be composted.

The HR building that has gone zero-waste has a composting system that works well and drastically reduces the waste put out by the building, he added. The HR team has been receptive to the new policies and practices implemented in their office.

For example, David Ritz, vocational rehabilitation counselor with Human Resources, brings his lunch to work in environmentally sustainable containers and produces only compostable waste each day.

Finding out what you can do personally to help reduce waste is helpful to the building as a whole, King said. Ritz is a great example of having a personal waste-reducing attitude.

King said that the main goals of R4 are to reduce costs caused by waste, to reduce the carbon footprint of UC Davis faculty and staff, and to instill a sense of social responsibility among colleagues.

"Everyone needs to take ownership for their building," he said.

One way for faculty and staff to get involved on campus is by participating in RecycleMania. From Feb. 1 to March 18, Davis will compete with other universities to see how many recycled products the campus can collect, King said. (See story, page 3.)

R4 Recycling is not the only organization involved in the attempt to help staff and faculty live green throughout the workday.

Camille Kirk, an environmental planner with the UC Davis Office of Resource Management and Planning is helping to organize an "office pilot greening project" on the third floor of Mrak Hall, where her office is located.

Making a building "green" is no easy feat, but if accomplished, it saves energy and reduces waste, Kirk said.

Bill Star, senior project manager at Architects and Engineers, explained that the term "green building" is a "a broad and generic reference that is used to cover everything from typical office buildings with minimally improved energy systems to 'living buildings' that are designed to generate and recycle much of their resources on site."

Kirk noted that making a building green is a process, and it will have to start with behavioral changes on the part of staff members in the building.

"We want to find out what we can do that's effective, and to measure if we are being effective," she said.

Kirk and other project collaborators will look at energy conservation and waste reduction, among other measures for the office greening pilot project. Some practices may require changes in purchasing decisions, as well as behavioral changes by staff.

"We are looking into ways of finding alternative transportation for faculty and staff," Kirk said. Taking alternative transportation can save people money and reduce their carbon footprint in the long run, she added.

"We will have to look at what is easy to change," she said, "and what is hard to change."

R4 Recycling: r4.ucdavis.edu.

Caitlin Cobb is a Dateline intern.

[Return to the previous page](#)

[Current News](#) | [UC Davis in the News](#) | [Publications](#) | [Broadcast](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [Related News](#) | [News Service Resources](#)
[Search/Archives](#) | [Facts & Figures](#) | [UC Davis Experts](#) | [Seminars/Events](#)