Campus Council SMM White Paper

Improving Collaboration with Higher Education Institutions

This white paper identifies strategies that promote greater collaboration among higher education institutions and the Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) industry. It recommends additions to the National Recycling Coalition's National Sustainable Materials Management Action Plan on behalf of campus organizations nationwide.

Background

Sustainable Materials Management (SMM) represents a new means of elevating sustainability and student leadership at the nation's 4,000 colleges and universities. Colleges and universities have unique, even decisive, roles and responsibilities towards reducing, reusing, recycling, and rethinking materials. Schools' valuable waste streams, significant purchasing power, and academic potential, position higher education institutions to advance SMM.

Increasingly, colleges and universities are addressing the climate challenge through better material use- demonstrating leadership in their operations, procurement, curriculum, even career placement. These schools are optimizing materials, influencing products, developing new sources of funding, attracting excellent students and faculty, and increasing the support of alumni, local communities, and corporate sponsors.

Much more needs to be done. Many schools fall below national recycling averages and lack basic policies and programs for sustainable materials management. Academia is just beginning to explore this rapidly growing industry; resulting for instance, in the relative absence of applied research and development centers. Simply put, we are missing benefits that higher ed's operations, purchasing, education and research are ready to provide.

National SMM Plan Recommendations

Campus organizations support these strategies and actions:

1. Increase communication. Expand intra-collegiate and external networks.
2. Include campus SMM infrastructure, operations, and outreach in funding priorities.

3. Develop and implement campus procurement policies: restrict materials entering campus, etc.
4. Fund and promote student-led projects and student leadership trainings to advance SMM infrastructure and program development.
5. Support local and national intern recruitment and referral programs.
6. Fund and promote student scholarships.
7. Renew the Jobs Through Recycling grant funding program.
8. Accredit SMM coursework and advance training/certification programs.
9. Facilitate campus workshops and training at state and regional conferences.
10. Fund university research and development programs to investigate problem materials, improve product design and develop recycling sector innovation.

A 2023-24 survey project to update these recommendations is underway, for more information, contact project manager, Jack DeBell: **debellP3@gmail.com**