

Reducing Move Out Waste Through Sustainable Supplies Project

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Every year, as the new RCs arrive to HBS campus, they face an inconsistent situation when they try to get supplies for their new lives as students. On one hand, RC students need to spend too much time and money buying new supplies and furniture for dorms or apartments. And, on the other hand, just a few months prior, graduating ECs couldn't get rid of their household goods fast enough, having to discard them and increasing the total amount of waste the University produces. This timing gap of supply and demand leads to an incredible amount of waste and was the spark for our project idea.

That's how our Sustainable Supplies Project was born. We were originally planning to collect used supplies by the end of the EC year, store them, and then conduct a sale of these reused items, using the proceeds of these sales for donation purposes. Our goal was to reduce waste of outgoing students and decrease costs for incoming students by increasing availability of low-cost sustainable supplies. This project fits within the Harvard Sustainability Plan goal of reducing waste per capita 50% by 2020 from a 2006 baseline, with the aspirational goal of becoming a zero-waste campus.

As we investigated the problem and interviewed various stakeholders, we realized our biggest constraint to addressing the timing issue was storage space over the summer. However, in the process we discovered many other on-going initiatives which address our problems in other ways. These include the annual (back-to-school) Habitat for Humanity "stuff sale" at the Science Center, freecycle events hosted through Harvard University Housing and the Graduate Commons Program, Harvard Student Agency's (HSA) dorm equipment rentals, and HBS housing recycling/reusing efforts. We realized instead of building a new initiative, it would be more prudent to connect current initiatives to enhance their effectiveness and increase their reach across the HBS community.

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Our current efforts are to that aim. We are connecting:

- The HSA to HBS Operations, to offer HSA equipment and services to students
- Graduate Commons Program to the Habitat for Humanity for possible collaboration on donations from freecycles as well as marketing their late-summer sales as an option to buy household items
- Graduate Commons Program to the Harvard Energy & Facilities for additional Freecycles near One Western Avenue and Soldier's Field Park

Through organizing and marketing these events on student friendly channels (housing, Facebook, premetric blog) we aim to increase awareness and participation and to help HBS take a step towards meeting Harvard University's goal of a zero-waste campus.