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Dickinson College

Day 22 Greener

Dickinson College is ranked number 11 on bestcolleges.com's greenest campus list and has set a goal to be carbon neutral by 2020.

Of course, there is always room for improvement. While energy has been one of the Center for Sustainable Education's (CSE) top priorities there are many other areas of campus that still need improvements to become more sustainable.

One area is the waste produced by science classes. In one three-hour block of microbiology lab about twenty students will often use at least two to three sets of rubber gloves. Include the numerous chemistry classes, other biology classes such as genetics, environmental science classes and more. Now also consider how many single use plastic pipette tips and plastic flasks and PCR tubes are used in a single semester. While many of these items are necessary for safety and need to be single use they do not necessarily need to end up in the trash. There have been groups, such as Terracycle, that have found ways to recycle these items. About a year ago terracycle had a plastic glove campaign. Dickinson had previously considered running terracycle campaigns but decided not to because it became complicated for students and required shipping. However, I believe that if this campaign was used in science classrooms success would be high and the reduction of plastic in the landfill would offset the issues of shipping.

Another area of improvement involves are school store and convenient store. When I enter our convenient store, the Dden, to buy some eggs my only option is a Styrofoam carton. An environmentally orient school selling eggs in Styrofoam. Not to mention, I highly doubt our college apparel is made sustainably. I have one sustainably made eco-shirt from the Eco-reps program. I believe that changing what is sold in our campus stores can drastically reduce the impact Dickinson has on the environment even though this area is often overlooked. Dickinson apparel is very expensive but I know plenty of people on campus who would pay a few dollars more for an organic, fair trade and sustainable Dickinson t-shirt. Not to mention, I really want to be able to buy eggs and other items on campus that are not producing such harmful waste.

The third change that should be implemented at Dickinson is related to dining on campus. While all food waste in the cafeteria and most of the food waste in other eating areas and residence halls on campus is composted at the farm, dining still produces tons of waste. This has been an area CSE has been working on for a while, we have eco-containers which can be purchases to use, we have compostable wrappers new this year. However, I want to focus on the cups and straws on campus. Between the two smoothie places on campus and the three takeout food stops on campus students are using tons of single use plastic cups, lids and straws. Often times people grab them without thinking. At Dickinson there is a discount for bringing a reusable cup, its 10 cents. It actually is not a true discount we are charged ten cents for a single use cup. Most people do not think about it. I believe if campus started

advertising this "discount" as a ten cents charge for a single use cup many students would view it differently and more consciously use a reusable cup. And this would involve basically no change for the school. I would also like to see an introduction of an eco-container that is a reusable cup since we already have meal and soup containers.