

Waste in Architecture

Overview

For my Climate Action Plan, I wanted to target and start a conversation surrounding waste in architecture schools and the industry. In order to achieve this, I began brainstorming with my mentor and ambassador about different ways to engage student bodies in sustainability when a culture like it doesn't really exist. As a result, my project began a pilot program/initiative, and I was able to talk with my classmates about the impact of our waste as architecture students on the real world.

Reflection

Starting the Climate Action Project, I was really excited because I've always struggled starting my own passion projects in the past, and this pushed me out of my boundaries, as well as giving me a great support system, Nolan and Ashley. I really love the mentors I got paired with- I think our interests aligned so well, and they were so supportive and persevering in my project, sometimes even more than I was. I will admit, it was really tough juggling my CAP and its obstacles, with two jobs, and my architecture workload, but I managed through the nights. There were a lot of hindrances when implementing my CAP, and that created redirection. I do think my CAP was more a niche plan targeted at a certain community compared to others, but I'm happy that I did it, because with the time and resources I had, it was pretty feasible and successful.

Goals

My original goals included starting a social media page dedicated to stirring up a conversation around waste in architecture, specifically at architecture colleges. In addition, I wanted to increase the usage of the Materials Exchange, and also find a way to negotiate prices for cheaper materials and less waste. However, my goals have shifted, in that promoting content surrounding waste in architecture became the primary focus of my plan, and that was due to unforeseen circumstances.

Challenges

I wanted to initially make the Materials Exchange, a system where students can leave unused materials in a certain area so that other students can take it without cost, a more lively and used

place due its numerous benefits. However, while talking to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, Charleton Lewis, who is also the head of the Materials Exchange team, we realized that the materials bin only really fills up at the end of semesters. However, they had never implemented a waste bin in the first year studio, where I reside, so we implemented that pilot program, and I realized I couldn't conduct the waste audits I had initially wanted to conduct, because students would (and rightfully so) hoard the materials they bought until they knew it had no use for them anymore. In addition, many of the price negotiations were unfeasible because there was no accessible pickup system, and since one store in the UT Austin area dominates the material supply, it was the most convenient.

Process and Impact

In December, I was able to get in touch with Dean Lewis about my CAP, and since we had a month of winter break after finals, I just worked on setting up my social media account and sending out the first few posts. Around January, I had gained more momentum on my social media account, and posted more about different materials, as well as getting in touch with the student team for the Materials Exchange. By February, I was able to get the first materials bin up in the studio ever, and I got to interview someone who went to one of the top zero-waste campuses in the nation, thanks to my mentor! However, in March, I started getting really busy, and prioritized my school work over most things, including my sleep, but I focused on pushing out more content on my social media account as I cold-emailed many school accounts for their sustainability curriculum. At the end of my CAP, my biggest impact was installing the first materials bin in the first year studio, which can be used to assess if one is needed for other years. In addition, I was able to educate many of my peers on the recyclability of materials. Going forward, I think the materials bin will become a permanent part of the studio community, and I will continue to work on my social media content.

I think the highlight of my niche CAP was when I heard one of the student leaders in architecture mention a fact that I had posted on my CAP social media. I was really happy that someone was reading and citing my content, making the effort worth it. Throughout this process, I've had such great support from my mentors, and although we were all super busy, they never failed to spout out new ideas whenever old ones got hindered.