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Systems Analysis to Improve Sustainable Event Management at Florida Tech

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Systems Analysis to Improve Sustainable Event Management at Florida Tech

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Introduction

The Sustainability Program at Florida Tech has over thirty requests for participation at events annually. This project brings a systems perspective to organizing and implementing for these dense event management tasks, with a focus on the busy spring semester at Florida Tech. Planning the timing and obtaining the resources in people-hours and expenses is challenging, particularly due to the high density of sustainability events in the spring, which terminates with Earth Day, which is celebrated across Earth Week at Florida Tech

The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education sponsors the premier campus sustainability certification program, the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS). Florida Tech could receive credits towards this certification from improved event planning. Florida Tech currently does not have a Sustainable Events Plan, although such a plan would improve coordination of events.

The project goal is to build a systems-based approach to improve coordination and execution of sustainability events. This goal will be achieved by these objectives:

- To inventory and tabulate the metrics for sustainability related events both on and off campus to improve system efficiency.
- To apply findings from Objective 1 to improve best practices for Earth Week at Florida Tech.
- To apply Florida Tech student event activities to achieve credits for up to 10 STARS green campus certification points.

Methods

Improving Sustainability Event Planning:

In efforts to organize and begin to optimize the coordination of sustainability related events on and off campus, tools such as a dynamic group calendar and survey have been used. The calendar is detailed with each event, along with the place and time and who will be attending. The calendar is maintained online using Google Drive and can be edited and kept current by multiple sustainability students.

A debriefing survey is now also used after most sustainability-related events. At least one student or staff member who attended the event is asked to fill these out. There are 12 questions on the survey including the name of the event, the focus, the number of attendees, and what can be improved in the future.

Improving Best Practices during Earth Week:

Earth Week 2015 is being sponsored by the following Student Organizations: Student Organization for Sustainability Action, Florida Tech Environmental Club, and Squamish. The variety of student organizations allows for maximum human resources and marketing, as well as brainstorming for new ways to incorporate best practices into Earth Week activities. With any event, especially one at this scale, it is important to do our best to coordinate among all perspectives and provide the most informative experience that current resources allow.

Applying Events to STARS Credits:

We have begun needed sustainability event documentation to position Florida Tech to achieve up to 10 points within the following STARS credit categories: AC 5- Immersive Experience, EN 3- Student Life, EN 4- Outreach Materials and Publications, EN 5- Outreach Campaign.

Results

Improving Sustainability Event Planning:

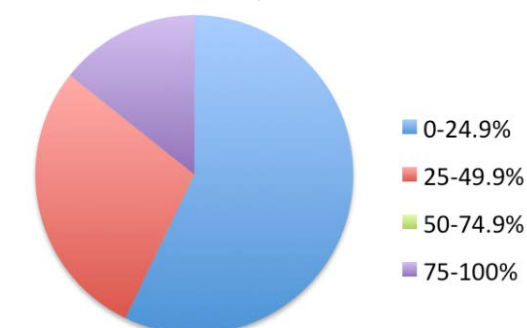
Diverse themes are present at differing sustainability events, often with complex logistics required to manage the event (Table 1).

Table 1. Post-event Survey Results, 2015.

Event Name	Location	Sponsor	# Florida Tech Reps	# Materials Handed Out	# People Stopped By Table	# People at Event	Focus of Event
SOSA Event	On-Campus	FIT SOSA	6	10	30	30	SOSA Recruitment
Roberts Hall Event	On-Campus	FIT ResLife	4	30	45	100	Sustainability
Organization Fair	On-Campus	FIT Student Life	3	20	35	200	SOSA Recruitment
Discovery Day	On-Campus	FIT Undergrad Admissions	1	10	20	250	Academic Programs
Botanical Fest	On-Campus	FIT Development Office	3	25	100	750	Plants and Gardening
LagoonFest	Off-Campus	Marine Resources Council	2	75	150	500	Indian River Lagoon
Ron Jon Beach and Board Fest	Off-Campus	Keep Brevard Beautiful	2	20	72	3,000	Surfing

To examine relative engagement, Figure 1 shows estimates of many people stopped at the sustainability table compared to how many came to the event as a whole. At the 4 out of 7 events that have been surveyed so far, less than 25% of the people at the event stopped by the sustainability table. The drivers can be very specific to the event theme but presence of 3-D displays at the table clearly draws visitors.

Figure 1. Percentage Who Stopped at Table vs. Total People at Event.



Improving Best Practices during Earth Week:

Best practices for Earth Week 2015 will include: proper disposal of all materials, recycled/recyclable materials when available, and organic snacks and drinks. Information from past sustainability events will be used to provide only the needed amount of materials: fliers, snacks and drinks, paper products, garbage bags, and gloves. Figure 2 shows the timing of Earth Week events, Apr. 19-23, 2015.

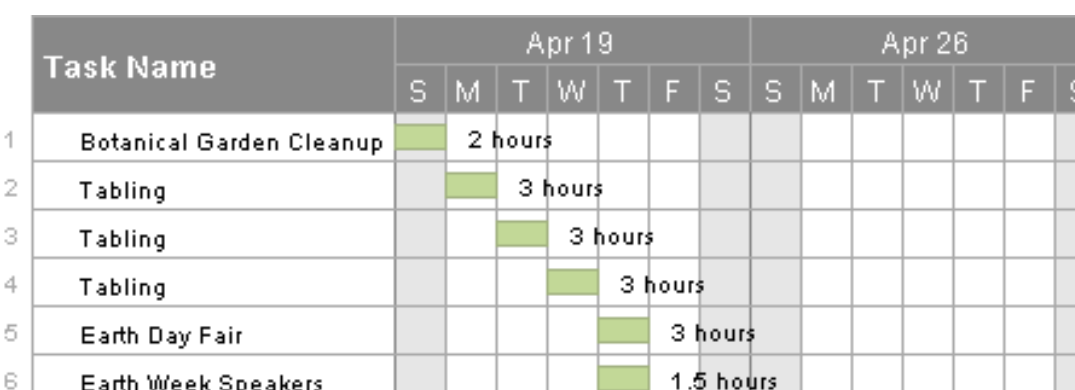


Figure 2: Gantt Chart of Earth Week Events Including Duration.

Applying Events to STARS Credits:

Credit AC 5: Immersive Experience - requires having community-based sustainability student internships available. Florida Tech already has three, multi-yr sustainable internships with the following: Keep Brevard Beautiful, Smooth Running, and Marine Resources Council (2 points).

Credit EN 3: Student Life - requires programs in which students can get involved in sustainability outside of the classroom, of which Florida Tech has the many academic and organizational program examples. With these programs, Florida Tech could earn 0.5 points, but would need to focus on other aspects of Student Life to earn the full 2 points.

Credit EN 4: Outreach Materials and Publications - requires materials and publications on the topic of sustainability to be available to the campus community. Florida Tech currently has the following: a sustainability website, a sustainability blog, and signage and fliers at sustainability events. These could earn 0.75 points; more materials and publications would need to be put into place to earn the full 2 points.

Credit EN 5: Outreach Campaign - requires some sort of campaign to be held for either students or staff in order to advance sustainability. Earth Week 2015 serves the purpose of targeting students, and would earn a total of 2 points. However, to earn the other 2 points, a program would need to be put in place to target faculty and staff.

Table 2 shows the available credits, their point values, and when it would be feasible to start and finish applying for these credits. Florida Tech can realistically receive up to 10 credits towards STARS certification through optimized event and internship planning.

Table 2: Available STARS Credits Derived from Event Optimization.

Category	Credit	Name	Points Worth	Planning	Start	Finish
Academics	AC 5	Immersive Experience	2	Current	Fall 2015	Spring 2016
Engagement	EN 3	Student Life	2	Current	Fall 2015	Spring 2017
Engagement	EN 4	Outreach Materials and Publications	2	Current	Fall 2015	Spring 2017
Engagement	EN 5	Outreach Campaign	4	Current	Fall 2015	Spring 2017

Discussion

The many events that the Sustainability Program participates in are an opportunity for students to show off their accomplishments and to educate the community on how they can benefit and take part. With these events, it is important to know certain limitations. The limits in this project include available people, time, and resources. The biggest issues were trying to get people to volunteer for events, scheduling meetings that everyone could attend, having the time to plan events, and a lack of resources and funding. Overall, the goal of improving sustainable event coordination and execution has been advanced, and can continue to be improved upon.



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