USU recycling becomes more efficient

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by Roman Heindorff

Recycling on campus is now easier thanks to efforts by the Utah State University’s Sustainability Council — part of USU facilities.

Last week, standardized recycling bins were set up throughout campus. They are clearly marked “waste only,” “paper only” and “cans and bottles.” On top, there are different shapes that correspond to what goes inside.

Nate Schwartz, recycling coordinator at USU, said the intention of the new bins is to eliminate confusion. He said the old bins were different sizes and not marked very well.

“When they’re that way, people aren’t sure sometimes what to put in them when they’re in a hurry,” Schwartz said. “When you standardize them all, they see a paper bin in one place or a container one in one place.”

Camilla Bottelberghe, a senior majoring in environmental studies and intern for the sustainability council, said the idea came from the fact that other universities have standardized bins that are easy to read, which USU lacked.

“We kind of had random bin sizes and they weren’t well labeled,” Bottelberghe said. “And so we really wanted to get bins that would basically be consistent throughout all the buildings on campus and very easy to use.”

Bottelberghe said having these new bins takes away barriers that prevent people from recycling.

“I think a lot of people don’t recycle because it’s inconvenient or it’s hard to understand,” Bottelberghe said. “But these bins will just make it a lot easier.”

Alexi Lamm, sustainability coordinator at USU, said facilities was able to fund certain buildings but not others.

For places that facilities did not have funding, Bottelberghe and Sara Simmons, a junior in environmental studies, applied for Blue Goes Green grants during the spring semester.

Blue Goes Green grants are funds students can apply for if they want to do a sustainability project. According to the USU sustainability website, they are paid for by students in fees of $0.25 per credit hour.

Simmons, who was an intern for the sustainability council when she and Bottelberghe applied for the grants, said Blue Goes Green funded the new bins in the Taggart Student Center and the Merrill-Cazier Library.

Simmons said not every building on campus got the new bins, but the sustainability counsel tried to put them in places that had the biggest flow of students.

Bottelberghe said she thinks increasing recycling on campus will make waste management more efficient.

“I think that having all the students on campus recycling and kind of making that the new norm will have a huge impact on the amount of waste that USU puts out,” Bottelberghe said.

Lamm said recycling on campus is a conservation issue as it saves space in landfills, but it is also a financial issue. She said aluminum and white paper can be sold, and the school has to pay a fee to put anything in the landfill.

“So we’re kind of taking a double hit,” Lamm said.

Simmons said recycling is a small thing everyone can do to make an impact.

“It’s an easy way that we can kind of make a little difference or at least feel like we’re making a difference, not only for the university but just for the well-being of our community,” Simmons said. “And I think if we are responsible enough to go out and buy waste, we should be responsible enough to dispose of it the right way.”

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