

# Points of Intervention Campaign Case Study

Spring 2019 | By Makayla Salas

## Project Overview

Every Spring semester, the UVM Eco-Reps carry out a campaign related to the main theme of Earth Week. This year, that theme was 'Points of Intervention' (POI). Points of Intervention are physical or conceptual places within a system where pressure can be put to disrupt its smooth functioning and push for change. This theme was inspired by the fact that the Post-Landfill Action Network (PLAN), whom UVM is a member school with, was currently on a POI tour, providing students with skills and information to implement zero-waste initiatives on their campuses. In being a member with PLAN, UVM receives online resources and digital seminars for zero-waste event planning, discounts on zero-waste conferences and zero-waste products, and leadership development training. This Spring, they visited UVM on their tour, and provided support for our campaign.

## Background

The points of intervention in a linear consumption economy are (chronologically) extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal. The way this system is currently designed encourages people to constantly consume (to keep up with the latest trends, or because they do not know how to repair their broken items) and remain ignorant of the questionable practices that happen when making products (such as using dirty resources, damaging communities around the site of production, or exploiting labor). This model of consumption is unsustainable, as currently, each year, we create 18,433,770,281 cubic feet of trash.

Strategies to combat this model include:

- Resist: not supporting products that rely on dirty resources or damage the communities and habitats they are extracted from
- Redesign: buying things that are meant to last, or using things in a way that will increase their lifespan
- Regulate: voting for legislation that caps or limits movement in the wrong direction
- Redistribute: working towards equality of distribution of wealth and production
- Reuse/Repair: supporting companies that champion repair programs; learning to reuse and repair your items so that you can avoid buying replacements

## **Goals**

In partnering with on and off-campus groups who could provide resources, information, and marketing help for Earth Week events and POI initiatives, our goal in this campaign was to inform the UVM Student Body about the dangers and impacts of the linear consumption economy, and give them the knowledge and resources needed to intervene with this model in their daily lives.

## **Implementation**

The UVM Eco-Reps program consists of 20 students that are divided up into five community teams, with each team assigned to a specified residential area on campus. Efforts included a campus wide intervention as well as smaller events held in residential locations.

### **Full-team events/initiatives:**

1. Presentations from relevant resources: To equip the UVM Eco-Reps with the relevant knowledge to tackle the concept of POI, presentations were given to the by members of ReSource, Foley Distributing, and the UVM Assistant Director for Sustainable Campus Operations.
2. POI Tour: PLAN visited UVM on their POI Tour, and were present at Earth Week to provide materials and information for combating the negative impacts of the linear consumption economy.
3. Keynote Jill Albers: Designer and Account Executive Jill Albers, presented about the sustainable business model of Interface Carpets. A raffle was held to win a Burton backpack and a stuffed animal made from recycled materials from Interface Carpets. All attendees received pencils that could be planted into trees when finished using.
4. Art Show: Student art made from upcycled materials was featured in an art show immediately following the keynote speaker.
5. Ideathon: UVM Students collaborated in teams to solve a sustainability challenge. This event had a 400\$ prize for the winning solution.
6. Daily Earth Week Tabling: UVM Eco-Reps tabled daily during Earth Week. Items given out included reusable sandwich bags, DIY toothpaste, information about POI, Zero-Waste guides, Earth Week stickers, and more.
7. Farmer's Market: UVM Eco-Reps coordinated their annual Farmer's Market with local vendors.
8. Springfest: UVM Eco-Reps pushed for vendors at Springfest to use compostable materials, and were present at waste stations to help attendees sort their waste correctly.

- Hall Council Block Parties: UVM Eco-Reps were present for their respective reshall's block parties to provide help with waste-sorting and zero-waste measures.

**Community team events/initiatives:**

- Earth Hour Party: In one reshall, UVM Eco-Reps tabled to advertise an 'Earth Hour Party', and had students pledge to communally turn off their lights and reduce their energy consumption for one hour.
- DIY Crafts: Many DIY events were held in reshalls, where UVM Eco-Reps helped students make their own face masks, toothpaste, and beeswax wraps.
- Clothing Swap: Students brought any clothing they no longer needed or wore to trade with other students. Anything not traded was donated.
- T-shirt Tote Bags: UVM Eco-Reps helped students learn how to make their own reusable bags out of materials they already owned, such as t-shirts.

**Timeline**

3/18/19-4/1/19

- Presentations from relevant resources
- *Community team events/initiatives implementation*

4/1/19-4/15/19

- *Community team events/initiatives implementation continued*

4/16/19-4/30/19

- *Community team events/initiatives implemented*
- POI Tour
- Keynote Jill Albers
- Ideathon
- Daily Earth Week Tabling
- Farmer's Market
- Art Show
- Springfest
- Hall Council Block Parties

**Financing**

<u>Expense</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>In Kind</u>	<u>Description</u>
\$48.65			DIY event ingredients/materials
\$64.90			Earth Hour food
		\$20.00	Beeswax wrap materials

Most Community Team events were around creating DIY zero waste products and the ingredients/materials to do these workshops were very inexpensive (\$0.45/person) for the number of event attendees. The Earth Hour event was organized last minute and didn't get the attendance we hoped for, resulting in a \$13/person cost for the 5 highly engaged participants, which is much higher than we would like. There were 30 lower engagement interactions but those people did not come to the part of the Earth Hour event that had the food.

## **Results**

Overall, this campaign made 1187 impressions between community team events and full-group Earth Week initiatives, and another 3710 between our Springfest and Hall Council Block Party presence.

UVM Eco-Reps' Earth Week tabling was very successful with high levels of meaningful engagement from participants. Throughout the week, our tabling gathered 400 participants, with at least half of them highly engaged. The POI Tour also had high levels of engagement, with 205 attendees and 75 highly engaged participants. It is likely that the presence of DIY toothpaste and reusable sandwich bags at the UVM Eco-Reps tables, along with the DIY sewing kits at the PLAN table incentivized people to stay at the table longer and chat about our initiatives. Many people were very excited about the materials and resources we had to offer, and our Zero-Waste guides were particularly popular. 400 reusable bags were distributed at these events. The Farmer's Market was located in the same highly-trafficked area as the Earth Week tabling and POI Tour, and had 130 attendees.

34 people attended the keynote speaker's presentation. This presentation was especially valuable because the presenter was not as directly related to sustainability; this helped draw in attendees from different majors. The concept of the Ideathon had a similar effect, and 71% of colleges at UVM were represented in this event that 33 people participated in.

The art show following the keynote speaker retained attention of most who attended the speaker, with 30 attendees. There were 3 submissions from the UVM Eco-Reps to this gallery, which overall had a good number and quality of submissions. Having the art show immediately follow the keynote speaker was successful in that people did not have to go out of their way to view the artwork; this style of one event succeeding another immediately after in the same general area could help us gain more attendees at future events.

Both UVM Eco-Reps and students were especially excited about the community team DIY events, with 189 DIY zero-waste products being made across 7 events. Partnerships with ResLife were valuable and easy to find during this time of the year, since most RAs program around Earth Week.

Our presence at Springfest and the Hall Council Block Parties was successful in spreading the norm of proper waste-sorting and composting practices to well-attended, annual events. It would be worthwhile to continue supporting both of these events in the future, for the sake of greening the events and building our ties to ResLife staff and the UVM Program Board.

## **Lessons Learned**

Being that POI is such a complex topic, it was not always easy to communicate the information we wanted to share during what are typically brief interactions. Change Agents felt that many of the community team events were more focused on the zero-waste part of the DIY activities than explicitly explaining how DIY intervenes at a certain point of the linear consumption economy. If we are to pursue the topic of POI again, some ideas we have for making the components of POI more intelligible and articulable are:

- Making the campaign a full-semester initiative, focusing one month on each point of intervention
- Changing the campaign to something like 'zero-waste', since that is what most of our events and initiatives ended up coming across as
- Having better resources and materials to share our information (i.e. maybe easy-to-follow charts or diagrams, rather than simply verbally explaining the entire linear consumption economy)

Earth Week was largely successful in gathering enthusiasm and engagement among students. However, some suggestions as to how our partnerships with outside resources could change for next time include:

- Changing the format of the keynote speaker into a panel of speakers to increase audience engagement and include a wider array of perspectives on the campaign topic
- Ensuring that groups who join us for Earth Week take more ownership of their parts of the campaign rather than acting as auxiliary players to something that Eco-Reps is solely responsible for ensuring the success of
- Perhaps choosing a different partnership in lieu of PLAN, who did not end up being as much of an added value as we had hoped

