

The University of Florida Center for Training, Research and Education for Environmental Occupations (UF/TREEO): A Model for Sustainable Economics

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UF/TREEO has always been committed to maintaining a healthy environment through various efforts including sustainable measures in their processes and operations. Recently, the Center improved upon their sustainable practices, which has also helped their bottom line.

UF/TREEO began making changes to its everyday operations to reduce waste in March 2009. This includes the reuse and recycling of paper products, composting of organic waste by the staff, streamlining marketing activities and ceasing the purchase of water bottles. Through these initiatives UF/TREEO found significant money savings.

Since March, over two thousand pounds of paper have been recycled or reused, saving significantly on the amount of paper used and purchased. Additionally, UF/TREEO has cut its paper usage by one-tenth in their printed promotional pieces. By purging their mailing list and adding notes to mailed items asking recipients to inform UF/TREEO if they receive duplicates or would prefer to have the item emailed, they were able to print and mail fewer pieces creating a savings of over \$1500.

UF/TREEO used to spend \$957 a year on 720 gallons of bottled water. In March a special water fountain was purchased for \$1,800 and \$1.65 is paid to the city of Gainesville for the first 1000 gallons of drinking water used. This will allow a payoff in savings to be seen in only a year and a half.

In recent renovations to the facility's auditorium money was saved by using recycled carpeting. The old carpeting and 175 chairs went back to UF to be reused; contributing to the university's zero-waste efforts.

"Here we teach great classes that encourage environmental responsibility," said Associate Director, Carol Hinton. "We need to be sure that we're really living it in our own facility."