June 29, 2020

Re: Recycling Initiative in the Residential Halls

This letter is to affirm that the Recycling Initiative in the Residential Halls is a grass roots effort by sustainable-minded students. Ms. Anna Browne is a member of my Alternative Energy and Sustainability Class and a Residential Advisor in the Wadsworth Dorm. It was her tenacity and inspiration to improve recycling in the dorms. She, and a number of other students leaders, met with Residential Life coordinators and myself over the summer of 2018 and started planning this effort. She was frustrated with the lack of participation by students in our current recycling program and came up with a plan to jump start our program.

I had just submitted a grant request to the State of Michigan Energy, Great Lakes, and Environment Department (formerly the Department of Environmental Quality for infrastructure to improve composting and recycling at Michigan Tech. The grant request included a dehydrating compost system and recycling bins. I offered the bins to be part of Anna’s project if she would organize their distribution, labeling, and training of the students. The value of recycle bins for the project was $10,000.

The Sustainability and Resiliency Tech Forward Initiative started soon after this. One of their first programs was to distribute funding to worthwhile projects that would enhance sustainability in some way at Michigan Tech. The projects had to include students, Faculty, and staff members. I served as the Faculty member and a representative in Residential Life, Courtney Archambeau, served as the staff member. The project was selected as the top of five projects selected out of 15 that were submitted. $5,000 was awarded to fund the project.

Anna felt that if the project needed student buy-in to be successful. Student organizations are given money from the general fund, but don’t always spend it in the current year. Knowing this, Anna and her team went to several student org meetings and requested them to be part of the project by contributing so we could have more recycling bins. Three different orgs contributed a total of $2,800.

In summary, Anna raised $17,800 for her project through a combination of funding mechanisms. Facilities Management (Ground and Custodial Services), Residential Life, and my office, the Office of Sustainability combined ideas and funding mechanisms to make this project work. Anna’s innovative ideas and tenacity hits many of the requirements of being an innovative project in Coordination and Planning, Waste Management, Grounds participation (who services the recycle bins), and Campus Engagement.

I believe this is a project worth recognizing in the STARS tally.

Jay S. Meldrum

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