



Spring 2011

HWS 10% & 10%: Using Social Networking to Begin Increasing Student Awareness and Involvement

*Made facebook & twitter
so what?
did it improve anything?
pollution energy!*



twitter

Toss It In!

10
Recycle %

10
Energy

Turn It Down!

HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

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Senior Integrated Experience -
Research Paper

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Abstract

The HWS Goes Green Program exists to serve as a comprehensive program that interacts with the entire HWS Community to advance environmental sustainability, reduce the Colleges' impact on the environment, and work toward "Carbon Neutral by 2025: HWS's Climate Action Plan." The objective of this Senior Integrated Experience project was to try to take advantage of popular modes of social networking to benefit these causes, and we wanted to begin laying the groundwork for future students to take over and use even more effectively. Our results for this project showed that there is great potential in taking advantage of social networking among students, but we also discovered that there are external factors that hindered the progress we were able to make in just one semester. The conclusions are: students need incentives to continually revisit the Facebook fan page and come to events; social networking would be increasingly effective if tied in to other forms of advertising; and professors from all departments should somehow encourage student participation in this campus-wide effort.

The Goal

(As seen on flyers and in emails regarding 10% and 10%): "10/10 is an 11 week environmental sustainability competition between 597 colleges and universities nationwide. Our goal is simple – to increase campus recycling by 10% and decrease campus energy consumption by 10%." The kickoff began on February 1st, 2011 and continued through Earth Week. The two primary goals were to raise the recycling rate to 33% (a 10% increase from last year's 30% rate) and to host an energy competition during the cold season where we would monitor weekly energy consumption by meter.

Introduction

Our project serves the purpose of doing the legwork for future classes of students by figuring out what works and what does not work to increase student awareness. We had not been involved in an ongoing study such as this before, and it offered us a great opportunity to interact with our peers on a completely different level. Working under the guidance of James Landi, the Sustainability Coordinator here at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, we began a semester of social and technological research.

The importance of the work we took on this past semester cannot be overlooked, because there was a multitude of challenges and problems we had to overcome that will allow for the smoothest transition of our work to the hands of future students. We came to several conclusions after working on this project, and we also have derived some suggestions for areas that we felt could greatly benefit the cause of this continued research.

Our belief when beginning this project was that social networking, being as popular as it is, would help to increase student involvement in sustainability events on campus for the semester. By increasing involvement, we believed students would be more aware of the impact an individual can have, thus promoting more environmentally friendly habits and encouraging people they know to follow their lead. We feel that even at such a primitive level the social networking was a success and a step in the right direction for sustained success.

Discussion

General Overview

Over the course of this Spring 2011 semester we took a look at how student involvement might potentially increase by using social networking devices, like Facebook and Twitter. Teaming up with James Landi gave us a chance to help partake and assist in running some of the sustainability events. Taking on this assignment offered us a chance to get a behind-the-scenes look at the planning that goes into a semester-long project such as 10% & 10%; we were able to challenge ourselves by managing a Facebook community fan page (called “The HWS Goal: 10% Energy Reduction”) throughout the semester even though neither of us had the technological prowess going into this. Along the way, we constantly had to do research and watch numerous videos in order to get a general idea of the way to tackle problems we continually encountered.

This semester’s project felt very rewarding for both of us, even if we were not able to complete 100% of our own personal goals. We feel that we made great strides in areas that we knew nothing about previously, and we hope that the foundation we have begun to lay will be a launching point for future students to reach long-term goals. This project was not only about the social networking aspect of the 10% and 10% goal, but it was a personal project undertaken because we both very strongly want to see positive changes taken here on campus. Getting to work side by side with other students at the various events gave us a sense of pride and we were motivated by the other students as much as we were trying to motivate them. In the end, we are pleased to have been able to get our hands dirty in the field and then come back and report our findings.

Problems Encountered

Prior to Facebook Launch

Originally, we were put under the care of a Facebook group, not a fan page, that was already made, and everyone was under the assumption that this was the best route to take for networking with students. The first problem we came across after inviting 149 HWS students to the Facebook group was that when we later went back on an alternate account to search for the group it did not show up. The purpose of the networking was supposed to be that anyone from HWS who has a Facebook account could go online and like our page, without us having to specifically invite them all by hand. If you were not friends with someone in the group already, it was as if the group did not even exist, clearly the first sign of trouble with the group we inherited, but we did not want to close the group after just inviting all of those people.

Trying to make the best of the situation, we began brainstorming ideas with James to come up with a list of things we could all agree would be good to include in the Facebook group. The top priority on our list was to get a Twitter account working and link it to so that tweets (Twitter posts) went straight to the wall of our Facebook group. This was the point where technology showed us the importance of keeping up to date because of just how fast it evolves. Within the last six months, Facebook has undergone a series of changes, some big and some small, but all together the old platform had been overhauled and there was an entirely different user interface in place. Items and lists that used to be available were erased, moved, or had their functionalities changed. We struggled for a week doing things such as: watching a series of obsolete instructional videos that led us to dead-ends, trying to download Facebook apps, creating accounts on websites that

supposedly linked social networks together, and read through a large number of online tech forums. It was at the end of this week that we finally decided we would try to start from scratch, hoping a clean slate might fix the problem.

When we were going to create a new group, we realized that we had the option to create a fan page instead of a group. We decided that it was worth a shot since we were starting over anyways, and we made a hidden Facebook fan page that allowed us to work out technical issues ahead of time in order to remove the threat of creating a public fan page that might be permanently destroyed because of testing that went awry. Right from the beginning we realized that this switch was invaluable: the group was a community page that let us choose the admins (to monitor/control all user posts easily), anyone could search for the fan page and “like” it without us having to invite them, and we were finally able to solve the Twitter problem. Once our test fan page proved successful, we duplicated all of the work on a fresh and polished fan page, a giant success of which we are very proud of still to this day because of the new dimension it allows for at sustainability events.

Compacting for Efficiency

While trying to work out all of the problems we had come across, we decided to create a single Yahoo mailing account that would bring together the Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as the various other website accounts we had signed up for to make the group page work, and this email can be passed on with future students since it was a good way to corral all of the accounts in case of troubleshooting. Also, in doing this, we hoped to someday have future project leaders be able to receive emails at this one account and answer any questions or send out updates/reminders of things without cluttering social emails with project emails.

After Facebook Launch

We created a Twitter account, but neither of us (or James) had ever used the website, so we took some time to peruse it and get comfortable with everything. Until the very end of the semester, we were not able to properly include blog posts from Professor Magee's class onto our fan page. Neither of us have had any experience with blogs, and as we have stated, the type of problem solving we tried gave us no success. It seemed a lost cause, but we wanted to try just one last time this week to solve a problem for future project leaders, and we were finally able to get a feed going that publishes the five most recent blog posts every few hours from an external blog. This was the final hurdle we would overcome before we pass the fan page over to James (until the next set of students come along).

The fan page was launched in time for the Sustainability Sweep (also known as the Recycling Hunt) and we took a two sided approach to the event. We did not have a fan base on this page yet, but we wanted to be able to have tweets popping up on the fan page as the event's teams got people to become fans. The Sustainability Sweep brought in about 40 participants, despite the less than desirable weather, and the social networking reception was great. Incentives sparked a great deal of competition for both the recyclable side of the event and the Facebook side. The importance of incentives is a key issue we recognized from doing this project, and we were able to come up with some ideas for future success.

Doing the sustainability sweep was a fun chance for us to get the best of both worlds of a sustainability event. One of us took a Blackberry phone and tagged along with a team to tweet about what was going on for participants while also becoming a participant in the Sweep. The other one of us stayed at the starting spot and had a laptop in order to post

frequent updates about the teams seen running around and checking in to drop of recyclable bags they could no longer carry. We both came together and made sure teams had everything weighed in and recorded to allow for a smooth ending to the competition. Overall, 1100lbs of recyclables were collected from the 1 hour event, with 180lbs collected by the winning team. This year's Sustainability Sweep produced greater results than last years, and the positive energy the students brought made the weather seem less harsh.

The fan page and Twitter added a feeling of modernity to the whole 10% & 10% competition, and while we really wanted to meet every single goal, we knew that one semester was not going to be enough time to accomplish it all. Optimism with a tinge of realism caused us to go into every event with a sense of ambition. The rough data for this semester seems to be that the overall recycling rate for the semester is at 25.4% at the beginning of April. If this is close to what the full semester's recycling rate actually turns out to be, then it will be somewhat disappointing, but we look at the positive sides. Recycling for the week of February 6th through 12th was at a rate of 42.14%, and this was the week that included the Sustainability Sweep. It makes us believe that this may have had a big impact, and it could mean events similar to this should possibly be done more frequently in the future. Also, from February 20th to February 26th the recycling rate was at 36.57%, and this was the week of the Dorm Storm (aka Hall Call), which could correlate to increased recycling due to the event. While the side by side comparison of weekly recycling rates in 2010 and 2011 seem to show a decrease in recycling on campus, we feel that seeing what worked versus what did not work is good for improving in the future.

Ideas for Future Success

Funding for Incentives

When we think about what we have done this past semester, we of course realize that there are things we never thought of coming into the project, but they are problems that would repeatedly occur as the social networking project continues in the future. As we began the semester and started doing the events, we noticed that we were not able to get cooperation from places like the College Bookstore or Dining Services to receive donations for event prizes. It was a lesson we had to learn the hard way, but we marked this down as a big “must do” for next year’s students. The particular instance we remember where the student turnout was great, meaning a good number of students and a more diverse crowd of people, who were not normally at events, was the Sustainability Sweep on February 7th.

When we were able to have the two different prizes, for the most recyclables collected and getting the most people to like our Facebook fan page, it really encouraged participants to be enthusiastic. Despite the weather being rather damp and cold, students were having fun being competitive and got very involved in the whole process. We were there throughout the event and we recall tweeting out in the field and at the starting area, and the teams were running around and getting very creative with where they found recyclables. Additionally, our idea of doing a weekly random question on the fan page would increase the student traffic there, and being able to win prizes for being the first person to answer a question correctly would be a good reason for people to check the page frequently (possibly every time they log on Facebook). Funding for both events and fan page- based mini events would greatly increase the awareness and involvement of students.

One of the options we were unaware of was a possible chance for an Environmental Research Grant. If future student leaders wanted to get funding for the social networking project, then the work could be done to apply for a grant (and meet all of the requirements). James Landi could potentially be a faculty advisor if one is needed. Also, the students in the future could take this project and use it to stem off other research, if they would like to, and they might be able to use funding to do both things together. If this is not a viable option, potentially making the Eco-Reps a club or organization might allow for funding from the Colleges' BAC, and the project could go from being run by a couple of students to a large group of students who come together to collectively make decisions.

Supplement Fan Page with Various Styles of Advertising

When talking with random students around campus, we began to see that there were other things we might have been able to do to increase awareness about 10% & 10%. Students seemed to know the general idea about 10% & 10% if they were Environmental Studies majors or they were close friends with the majors. The people who were more unaware of the competition seemed to be majors from other departments. They stated that they would have liked to see posters around campus in various places so they would be sure to come across them.

We did spend time at a table near the entrance into Scandling Center, and we were able to increase the number of fans on our page by doing this. This requires spending a window that was usually about 4 hours to cover all of the "rush hour" times for student dining. Not everyone wanted to log in to their Facebook and "like" our page, even though we had laptops right there for them to do it. Often we would just be asking the same people

who were coming in and out of Scandling, so we did not want to annoy people to the point where they were signing up just to make us leave them alone. For all the time we spent “tabling” (as some call it), we could have produced posters and maybe just hung them up around campus to encourage people to visit our fan page on their own time.

Tabling was not a bad method for interacting directly with students from all class years, but to have more permanent recognition posters might have helped. Also, we thought that students next year could talk with Dining Services and get napkin holder flyers made up so that throughout SAGA and the Cafe people would find out about the fan page while they eat every day. The final idea we had was to begin a video series that might be able to be published on the HWS website. The video could help promote greener habits on campus, especially if it could catch some time on the main page of the HWS website and include a link to the fan page right below the video. Overall, social networking can be improved through these, and other, forms of advertising.

Increase Professor Involvement across All Departments

As we mentioned earlier, the awareness of students outside the Environmental Studies and Geosciences Departments was much lower according to our random interviews. While these departments actively encourage students to partake in the sustainability events, other departments completely ignore anything having to do with life outside of their classes. I have taken a variety of courses outside of Environmental Studies, and professors seem to be so disconnected from what is going on here at the Colleges.

If HWS wants to get more serious about reaching its carbon neutral goal, then professors should have to start including the HWS Goes Green Program somehow into their

courses. It could be just one class spent each semester that is dedicated to going green, or giving extra credit for attending an event or liking the fan page. There are a wide variety of ways professors can incorporate something like that into their syllabus each semester. If there are approximately 2,100 students and (as an example) they are all taking 4 one-hour classes each, then that's 8,400 total hours of campus-wide involvement in going green. That is a lot more participation than approximately 10-40 students attending the semester's events. If the semester's events have a combined total of 20 hours, then that is only 200-800 hours of student involvement. It seems that the proposed idea will not only increase the cumulative hours of student involvement, but reaching the entire campus, instead of only a small group of the same people at each event, means that the impact could be substantially greater.

Snapshots from the Project

A Look at the Facebook Fan Page

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the Facebook fan page for 'The HWS Goal: 10% Energy Reduction'. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php?fbid=109553915786854>. The page title is 'The HWS Goal: 10% Energy Reduction'. The Facebook interface includes a search bar, navigation links (Home, Profile, Find Friends, Account), and a page header with the name 'The HWS Goal: 10% Energy Reduction' and an 'Edit Page' button. The main content area features a 'Wall' section with a 'Write something...' prompt and a 'Most Recent' tab. Below the wall, there are several posts, including one titled 'One Idiot's Trash...' and another titled 'The HWS Goal 10% Energy Reduction'. The right sidebar contains 'Admins (2)', 'Use Facebook as The HWS Goal: 10% Energy Reduction', 'View Notifications', 'Promote with an ad', 'View Insights', 'Suggest to Friends', 'Quick Tips', and 'Sample Ad: The HWS Goal: 10%...'. The bottom of the page shows the URL <http://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=pa.109553915786854> and the status 'Internet | Protected Mode: On'.

Figure 1 – This is the home page that pops up when you search for our page. At the top there are recent pictures and charts we posted to the fan page and below that is the “wall” where status updates, tweets, comments, and even the blog post feed shows up.

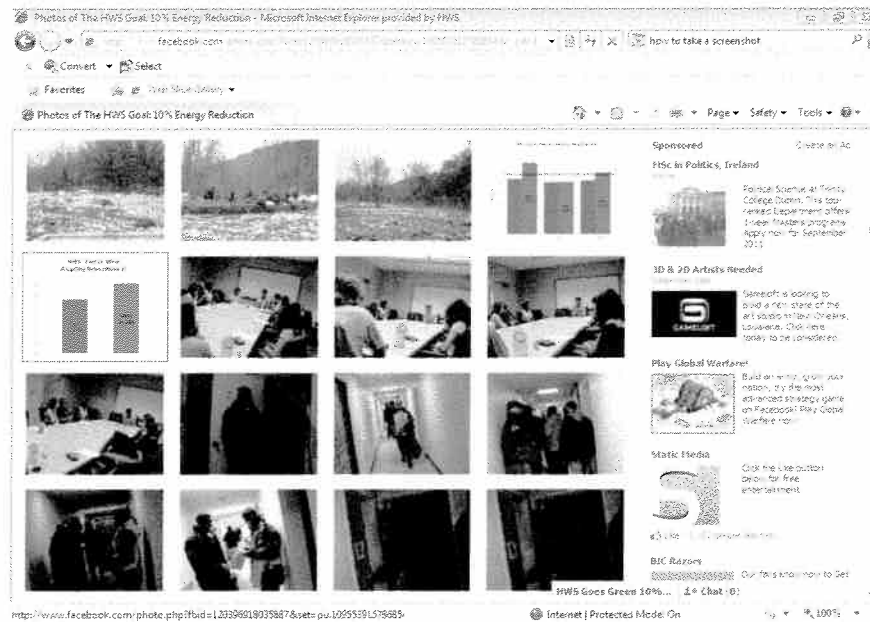


Figure 2 – Visitors to the fan page could click any of the photos at the top to look through the various albums that we uploaded to the site. Being able to publish graphs directly to the page gave us a chance to show raw data to our fans, and one of the graphs even went on to be posted on the HWS website, as seen in this image below.



Figure 3 – Visit <<http://www.hws.edu/about/green/>> to see this page.

Conclusion

Despite all problems, this project seemed to be successful for helping prepare for long-term sustainability using social networking. The Facebook fan page reached 252 members, on top of the 149 members the original Facebook group had, so approximately 400 students were theoretically reached out of a student body of a little over 2,000 people. The graph below shows the 2010 recycling rates compared to 2011, and the trend lines demonstrate the change over the course of the semester.

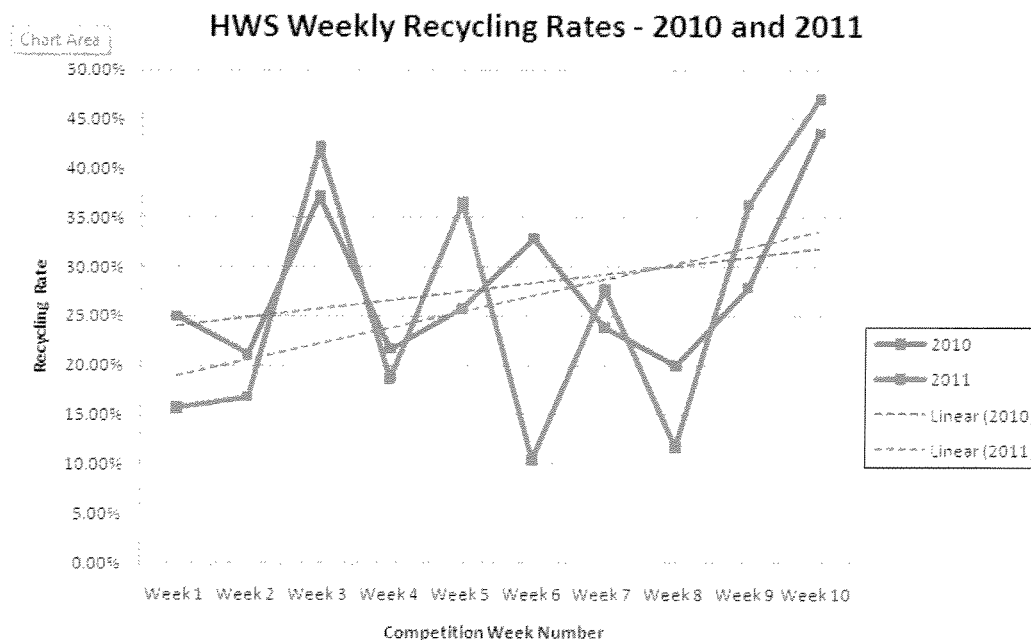


Figure 4 – The recycling rates for 2010 and 2011 along with their linear trend lines.

While the approximate end result for recycling this year seems to have fallen short of our goal, the trend shows a steeper increase in semester-long improvement. We believe our research has brought Hobart and William Smith Colleges closer to achieving carbon neutrality by reaching out through current social networking outlets to increase student awareness and involvement.

Bibliography

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(image of Twitter logo for cover page)

http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://images.androidcentral.com/sites/androidcentral.com/files/articleimage/27426/2010/05/facebook.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.androidcentral.com/facebook-lets-android-join-club-androids-own-facebook-sdk&usg=__MftBSY2od5Jxl3mNUmBULqaH3zA=&h=301&w=800&sz=50&hl=en&start=0&zoom=1&tbnid=jGTeQeE8hvY07M:&tbnh=79&tbnw=200&ei=oDzCTej_AcmatwfXoaCxBQ&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dfacebook%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26sa%3DN%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft:en-us:IE-SearchBox%26rlz%3D1I7SKPB_en%26biw%3D1899%26bih%3D907%26tbm%3Disch&um=1&itbs=1&iact=rc&dur=166&page=1&ndsp=66&ved=1t:429,r:1,s:0&tx=139&ty=35
(image of Facebook logo for cover page)