

Water Conservation at UH

A public outreach guide to promote
on-campus water conservation education





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Making the Case for Water Conservation Education

Colleges and universities are inextricably woven into the communities in which they live, and their actions are important to the environmental health of the broader society. As a leading public Tier One research university in the state of Texas, the University of Houston has the potential to expand its water conservation efforts and strengthen its performance and reputation in sustainability efforts.

Water covers two-thirds of the Earth's surface, yet only 2.5% of it is freshwater, most of which is locked up in glaciers and icecaps. As a society, we utilize freshwater in crop cultivation, industrial processes and everyday household practices, but because municipally treated freshwater is very inexpensive, people often ignore the implications of wasting it.

Conservation is a cost-effective means of securing future water supplies in Houston, and public awareness is necessary to increase people's knowledge of water resources, water use and the need to conserve water. Research has shown that the more people know about their water resources, the more likely they are to participate in water conservation programs. The responsibility for ensuring a sustainable water future lies with the community as a whole; everyone has a role to play. Thus, education, outreach and public awareness are essential prerequisites to the successful adoption and implementations of conservation practices in a university's water management system.





Developing a UH Water Conservation Education Program

For Facilities Services employees:

When implementing a water conservation education program, it is important to establish good relationships and an understanding among faculty and staff. Building water conservation awareness and education among employees saves not only water but operational and production costs; educated employees will be able to identify problems before they exacerbate and think innovatively about ways to conserve water within the facility.

Steps to build conservation awareness among employees:

1. **Adopt a water conservation policy or incorporate water conservation practices into the official standard operation procedures.**
2. **Conduct regular water audits.** Audits conducted regularly can inform water providers and end users systematic ways to improve or eliminate water lost to leaks and aging equipment, appliances and infrastructure.
3. **Offer educational material and advanced training opportunities for facility managers and staff leaders.** Available upon request, the Texas Water Development Board offers professional development workshops on topics of water resources and water conservation.





Developing a UH Water Conservation Education Program

For the general campus community:

It is important to emphasize the importance of water conservation in the home, in school and in the community at large. Strong relationships must be developed and nurtured within the university to ensure the successful integration of conservation ethics in traditional and non-traditional education efforts.

The American Water Works Association Research Foundation describes ten general steps to designing and implementing an effective public involvement program. In this context, these ten steps can be catered to water conservation efforts.

1. Frame the problem
2. Identify constraints
3. Identify and describe decision steps and project milestones
4. Identify and understand potentially affected stakeholders
5. Determine vulnerability and must-resolve issues
6. Determine the appropriate level of public involvement
7. Select processes & techniques appropriate to achieve the first six steps
8. Develop a public involvement plan using information from step 7
9. Implement and monitor the work plan
10. Manage change





Building Interdepartmental Collaborations

Developing an on-campus water conservation education program depend on critical factors like shared aims, accountability, good information sharing and communication. Interdepartmental collaborations are crucial to the success of the program.

Steps to increase conservation awareness among the campus community include:

1. Collaborate with the UH School of Art, Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture & Design, Jack. J. Valenti School of Communication to create water conservation educational posters to be displayed throughout campus. Print posters on Forest Stewardship Council certified and 100 percent post-consumer content recycled paper, or go digitally by posting the infographics via social media.
2. Partner with the Office of Sustainability and UH Energy to facilitate educational and outreach events that will expand the campus dialogue about water conservation.
3. Work with the Student Housing & Residential Life department and Division of Student Affairs & Enrollment Services to actively engage and encourage residents to incorporate water conservation habits in campus dormitories and at social events.



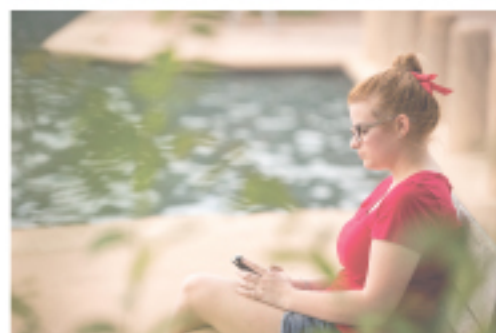


Creating a “Sustainable Coog” Culture

In 2015, the UH Office of Sustainability launched a “Sustainable Coog” campaign to strengthen a collective culture across the university’s schools and departments that embraces sustainability as an integral part of its academic work, institutional practices and daily life.

By following key water conservation tips, individuals become a part of the Sustainable Coog culture. Incorporate these water-saving habits below:

1. Cut a couple of minutes off your shower.
2. Turn off water while brushing your teeth .
3. Rinse your razor in the sink instead of under running water.
4. Only run the clothes washer and dishwasher with full loads.
5. When washing dishes by hand, don't let the water run while rinsing.
6. Ditch the plastic and carry a reusable water bottle instead, as tap water provided by the government is tested regularly.
7. Keep your eyes open: report broken pipes, leaky faucets, open hydrants, etc.





References

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