



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND


DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE

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MEMORANDUM

To: Peter Weiler
Vice President, University Relations

From: Carlo Colella 
Vice President, Administration & Finance

Date: December 3, 2014

Subject: Sustainable Ideas / Maryland Day

Maryland Day is a showcase event for the University of Maryland and our opportunity to engage the community in learning, exploration, and discovery. The day offers more than 400 festivities including exhibits, workshops, hands-on demonstrations and performances that highlight the exciting and unique work in which University of Maryland staff, students and faculty participate.

An event of this magnitude, with thousands of visitors each year, can have a significant environmental impact. Over the years, the Maryland Day Steering and Planning Committees have adopted many practices that have reduced the environmental impact of this event. But, as the university works towards meeting its carbon neutral goal by 2050, we must continually find new ways to reduce our energy, waste and water footprints. To that end, and on behalf of the University Sustainability Council, we wish to provide you with a number of recommendations for the continued greening of Maryland Day:

1. Continue to provide adequate alternatives to bottled water.

Issue:

Bottled water is primarily a waste issue. It is commonly sold at Maryland Day and its purchase popularity increases with the outdoor temperature. While plastic water bottles are recyclable, about 70 percent end up in the trash. Almost 40 percent of bottled water actually started out as tap water, but costs 1,000 times more for consumers. Bottled water could become an image issue for the University of Maryland as increasing numbers of people, especially students, associate bottled water with unsustainable behavior.

Opportunities:

- Advertise the network of more than 80 bottle filling stations in academic and administrative buildings on campus. Detailed map can be found at http://www.sustainability.umd.edu/content/culture/filling_stations_map.php
- Continue to provide and refill portable water bottle filling stations on McKeldin Mall and Hornbake Plaza. Work with Dining Services to ensure that portable filling stations are staffed with volunteers and refilled on a regular basis. Work with the Student Sustainability Committee of the SGA to tap into student volunteer resources.

- Encourage visitors to bring their own bottle and refill at our many indoor and outdoor filtered water stations. Maryland Day committees can find creative ways to incentivize this behavior.

2. Identify alternatives to traditional cotton volunteer t-shirts.

Issue:

On average, 8,000 traditional cotton t-shirts are produced and handed out to volunteers for Maryland Day. Traditional cotton is a resource intensive fabric that uses 713 gallons of water, generates 8.8 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions and creates about a pound of solid waste for each shirt. The distribution of traditional t-shirts could also become an image issue for the University as visitors, students and staff become more informed about their environmental impact.

Opportunities:

- Print t-shirts without a date on them so that one shirt design could be used over multiple years. New volunteers could be given a shirt as required, but returning volunteers could wear their shirt from the previous year.
- Provide recycled cotton blend t-shirts to volunteers. Recycled cotton blend shirts have a significantly lower environmental impact than traditional cotton shirts but have a higher cost.
- Develop and print Maryland Day buttons/badges that can help identify Maryland Day volunteers. These can be collected at the end of the day and used in subsequent years.
- Provide an alternative "thank-you". Examples include: a free ice cream from the Dairy, a coupon for a free coffee, or an entry ticket to win a larger prize.

3. Minimize the impact of volunteer lunches.

Issue: Roughly 5,000 volunteers received lunches for Maryland Day. These lunches are provided in a plastic bag and include: a plastic-wrapped sandwich, a single use water bottle, individually-packaged cookies and pretzels. A significant waste footprint can be attributed to these lunches.

Opportunities:

- Provide buffet lunches for volunteers in multiple, centrally-located spaces.
- Offer a lunch voucher for volunteers to select a lunch from one of our many Dining Services locations. Most food packaging on Maryland Day is compostable.
- Allow larger volunteer groups to pick-up lunches as pre-prepared platters, minimizing the need for individual packaging.
- Provide alternative volunteer compensation.

4. Enhance profile of green initiatives at the Maryland Day.

Issue:

The green initiatives undertaken for Maryland Day do not receive the profile they deserve. Higher education is often seen as a societal leader in making sustainability a business priority. This is a prime opportunity for the University of Maryland to showcase its efforts to host a green event. The general public who receive the printed program or visit the website

may be unaware of green initiatives such as the bike valet, water filling stations, composting, and more. Environmental information is fragmented and often incomplete.

Opportunities:

- Highlight sustainability initiatives in the Maryland Day printed program.
- Create a webpage (with its own tab) on the Maryland Day home page to highlight our green initiatives. This page can become a model for other organizations planning large events. Extend this information to the Maryland Day app.
- The Office of Sustainability can provide "Get Caught Green Handed" volunteers who will recognize and reward visitors who are taking environmentally-friendly steps. Over time, green behavior can become part of the culture of this event.

5. Embrace the spirit of Maryland Day and minimize giveaways.

Issue:

Many visitors have adopted the behavior of coming to Maryland Day with an empty bag, hoping to fill it with a variety of small, often disposable, giveaway items. The true value of Maryland Day is the interactions between visitors and our students, staff and faculty. Our exhibitors often feel like they must provide a giveaway item for our visitors in order for them to have a great Maryland Day experience.

Opportunities:

- Through Planning Committee meetings, promote experiences rather than giveaways.
- Work with the Office of Sustainability to provide a list of environmentally-friendly and minimally packaged giveaways or prizes for planning committee members.
- Consider more durable promotional items that directly connect to the mission/goals of each college or department.
- Encourage exhibitors to enhance language in their program write-ups to showcase their learning opportunities or interactivity, rather than prizes.
- Offer a prize for most sustainable or most interactive Maryland Day exhibit.

Maryland Day is also a wonderful opportunity to share our campus with prospective students. Research, in Princeton Review's 2008 and 2009 College Hopes & Worries Survey as well as from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, shows that a significant, and growing, proportion of prospective students are making decisions about where to apply and attend based on campus sustainability performance. The University of Maryland can demonstrate its sustainability performance to prospective students on Maryland Day by showcasing our green initiatives.

Many campus events are now waste free, from the annual Crab Feast to football and basketball games. The University Sustainability Council encourages you and your Planning and Steering Committees to continue to find ways to make Maryland Day a showcase of learning and sustainability. The Student Sustainability Committee of the SGA and The Office of Sustainability can provide you with other suggestions and opportunities and can assist you in executing the suggestions listed above.