

Elon reduces waste by growing its recycling initiative

Students, faculty and staff promote sustainability by growing new recycling program

Victoria Traxler
Elon News Network | @elonnewsnetwork

Elon University consistently promotes its environmentally conscious initiatives, such as geothermal heating, compost bins, the BioBus system and recycling.

As Elon has been growing as a school, its recycling program has been growing in response. David Worden, director of environmental services for Physical Plant, has worked with the recycling program for more than thirteen years.

"Recycling is important to the Physical Plant because it's important to Elon," Worden said. "The structures and practices put in place for maintaining a sound recycling program come from the make-up of a caring and passionate community."

Last month the office of sustainability initiated a Waste Wednesday campaign active around campus and supported by a social media campaign.

"Once a month on a Wednesday, Eco-reps and volunteers are next to waste receptacles in key campus locations to help students and others properly dispose of their waste," Durr said.

The office hopes this program



Elon continues to improve its recycling program by having blue bins for students to put mixed paper, cardboard and more.

ALEEZA ZINN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

will increase awareness as to what needs to go in each bin on campus. These bins include recycling, compost and waste.

There are also additional bins for materials more difficult to dispose of such as batteries and small electronics.

Durr hopes for additional compost and recycling bins on campus based on further feedback

and use.

"It is comprehensive and has grown from a student initiative to what it is today," Durr said.

The recycling program collects mixed paper, cardboard, electronics, batteries, ink cartridges and compostable materials. Residential recycling is picked up multiple times per day Monday-Friday, and once during Saturday and

Sunday.

"What is unfortunate is to find recyclable material thrown away in trash containers. Though a recycling container and a trash container can be sitting right next to each other, recyclables can be found to have been thrown away," Worden said.

By using colored bags — black for trash and clear for recycling —

Physical Plant is able to identify materials by viewing the bags and disposing of them accordingly.

Trash and recycling are picked up at the same times and carried together to the disposal site. For some, this process looks less like recycling and more like waste.

"There is a misunderstanding from those viewing this pick-up process and thinking Elon doesn't recycle," Worden said. "Once recycling is picked up from any location on campus, whether it is tossed in with trash bags or not, will end up in the designated recycling container."

Worden said all materials are brought to drop point dumpsters with specific assignments for either trash or recycling. Recycled materials are then brought to a sorting facility.

"We will always continue to look for ways to improve," Worden said. "Whether through the addition of more containers, better signage or possibly through the addition of a Waste Reduction and Recycling office."

Physical Plant will continue to monitor recycling collection through weight feedback.

"As Elon grows, so grows recycling methods and collection," Worden said.

Elaine Durr, the director of sustainability, says that waste reduction and recycling is a major part of Elon's sustainability initiative and included in the Sustainability Master Plan.

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