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Environmental sustainability through waste minimization: case study of a successful program at a U.S. university

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Environmental sustainability calls for a balanced approach to environment, economics, and social justice [1]. Besides social and economic factors, efforts to preserve the quality of air, water and land; resource conservation and waste minimization comprise key elements of a sustainability program. An effective first step to attain sustainability at an institutional level would be to develop a sustainability plan aimed at resource conservation and recycling. One of the proven ways to reduce energy and water consumption, transportation cost, and “going green” has evolved at a university in the United States in recent years. The University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC)—a public higher education institution, located in the U.S. Midwest—through a collaborative approach, involving students, faculty, administrators, and staff, formed a sustainability team with clear and achievable annual goals toward greening the campus [2]. This initiative has resulted in remarkable progress in meeting the university’s goal of zero-waste, campus greening, lower energy and water use, and significant reduction in waste quantity. These efforts also led to UMKC’s ranking as the top school in 2013 in the U.S. in the annual *Recycle Mania* competition, and its listing among the top 100 *Cool Schools* in the U.S. by the prestigious *Sierra Club* magazine. Details of the UMKC sustainability program and the role played by the campus community in achieving national honors, along with recommendations on how to design a similar program at other campuses, are discussed in the presentation.

References:

[1] IUCN (2006) *The Future of Sustainability: Re-thinking Environment and Development in the Twenty-first Century*, 18 p. Available at: http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iucn_future_of_sustainability.pdf Accessed January 16, 2016.

[2] Hasan, S.E; and Johnston, R.K., 2010, Waste audit and recycling at university residence halls, *10th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Geoconference and EXPO, SGEM 2010, Vol. 2*, p. 957-964.

