

# Setting up a Green Team in Your Department or Building

## ***What is a Green Team?***

Any group of faculty, staff, and/or students that works together on campus environmental issues at the departmental or building-wide level.

## ***Why a Green Team?***

It's fun and effective! Most decisions that affect the environment at UT are made by offices or individual staff members, so this is where you have a big opportunity to make a difference. A Green Team can reduce paper use, increase recycling, promote energy conservation, and more, making a huge difference within a department or building. Plus, you get to meet other environmentally-minded staff, faculty, and students in your area.

The Green Teams are independent initiatives within various UT departments, but they are also supported by the Staff Sustainability Network (SSN), a project of the Campus Environmental Center and Environmental Health and Safety. The SSN provides newsletters, posters, and instruction sheets for how to reduce the environmental impact of your office.

## ***Start by Finding Interested Individuals***

If you are looking for like-minded souls to take action on environmental issues in your building or department and don't know where to start, here are some suggestions for gathering some people together:

1. Post a notice in your common areas such as break rooms, bathrooms, conference rooms, administrative offices, or reception areas. Ask the appropriate administrative staff for permission to do so. People are more inclined to turn up if you have an event or meeting planned. Keep in mind the time at which you want to meet (lunchtime vs. after work) and make sure you choose a convenient time for people.
2. Staff meetings. If you have regular staff meetings, you could add the formation of a green team to the agenda. Create a sign up sheet to get people's contact information.
3. Send out a departmental email through administrative staff or through your director or dean, if you have their support. A suggestion coming from the most senior person in your area can carry a lot of weight. If you do not have a 'champion' for your cause, seek permission to email staff members prior to doing so.
4. Contact the Campus Environmental Center's Staff Sustainability Network at [staff@UTenvironment.org](mailto:staff@UTenvironment.org). They have an email list with more than 500 UT staff interested in the environment, and can connect you with other people in your area.

5. Student organizations. If you wish to involve students, contact the Campus Environmental Center and any departmental student groups and let them know about your meetings and activities.

### ***Projects to Begin With***

The best way for your Green Team to blossom it is to pick an initial project that everyone can get behind. Pick the lowest hanging fruit... The easiest thing to start with is to establish recycling programs in your building or department. Aluminum and plastic recycling is available on campus, as are ink and toner cartridge recycling, all through the Campus Environmental Center (CEC) at <http://www.utenvironment.org/recycling/> Battery recycling can be established through the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) office at 471-3511.

Or do something fun! Plan a small event in your office for Earth Day in April or for America Recycles Day in November. And remember that the Staff Sustainability Network is available to help at all stages of growing your Green Team; e-mail us at [staff@UTenvironment.org](mailto:staff@UTenvironment.org)

Once you have established a new environmental program, it is a good idea to have one (or more) leaders responsible for that program. This is a great way to get people more actively involved. Their duties could involve educating colleagues about the program, being the contact for any questions, liaising with the CEC/EHS, etc.

Next, you may want to look at the activities in your department or building and see where your greatest impact is on the environment. If it is paper use, then develop suggestions for reusing paper rather than recycling it. Or reduce paper use in the first place. Or buy recycled paper... the possibilities are endless. If it is chemical use, see what your team can do to implement measures to minimize chemical waste and maximize chemical reclaim and reuse. Education is a big part of any environmental effort, and the internet is a magnificent source of information right at your fingertips. If it is energy use (computers, printing, lights, machinery, etc.), look to energy conservation. Energy conservation is very topical right now given the critical state of global warming. Many simple conservation measures, which can be implemented in most offices, can be found online at websites such as:

<http://www.utenvironment.org/staff/>

<http://www.utenvironment.org/energy/>

<http://www.sierraclub.org/coolhome/resources.asp>

<http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/>

The interests of the team members will also shape the projects you end up working on. One person may have a personal gripe with Styrofoam, so ridding your department of

Styrofoam cups could be their perfect project! No task is too small, and the more involved your members feel, the more benefit you will all have.

Also be sure to check out the resources provided by the Staff Sustainability Network. We have information sheets on reducing environmental impact in your office in a variety of areas. The work you do, too, can help inform and inspire other departments, so please share it with us. The web site is <http://www.utenvironment.org/staff/>

### ***Keep Track of Progress***

It's a good idea to start out by assessing what your department or building's impact is before implementing a program. This is easy for recycling – count how many bags of recyclables are collected each month and then track how much you have saved from the landfill. Report this back to your colleagues so you can demonstrate progress, and keep people inspired! If its energy conservation you are focusing on, ask your building manager or accounts manager for the history of your building/department's energy use – either in dollars or kilowatt hours. Once you begin an energy conservation program, you can start tracking how much energy you are saving.

We would appreciate if you also reported this information to the Campus Environmental Center's Staff Sustainability Network ([staff@UTenvironment.org](mailto:staff@UTenvironment.org)) so that we can track campus-wide progress.

### ***Keep in Touch***

It's a good idea to arrange a meeting with your team members once a month or more, to keep abreast of what they are working on and to provide support to the team. Taking lunch together or even going for a beer can assist in creating some momentum. Also, set up an email list; it's free for all UT students, staff, and faculty. Visit <http://www.utexas.edu/its/maillinglists/>

Once you have established a team with some ideas to work on, keep the Staff Sustainability Network ([staff@UTenvironment.org](mailto:staff@UTenvironment.org)) posted on your activities. We love to hear about and share ideas with other groups around campus. Cross-pollination of ideas between different areas can create great opportunities for us all. We have monthly meetings for Green Team liaisons from across the campus – we hope you can join us! We also publish success stories in the SSN newsletter once monthly.

The SSN is a resource that can provide you with support and suggestions as well as help in connecting with other groups and related interests across campus. There are many sustainability measures taking place already in a variety of departments and faculties. We would be happy to connect you with any resources you may need. Just email us!