



University of California San Diego
La Jolla, California
Water - AQUAholics Anonymous Water Conservation

SCHOOL

Nestled along the Pacific Ocean on 1,200 acres of coastal woodland, UC San Diego is a 4-year public university serving about 28,500 students at its La Jolla, California, campus. The university is the 3rd largest employer in San Diego County with nearly 26,000 employees. A leader in climate science research, UC San Diego is one of the greenest universities in the nation and promotes sustainability solutions throughout the region and the world.

ABSTRACT

AQUAholics Anonymous is a coalition between students, staff and faculty designed to combat UC San Diego's water use addiction. It is a resource for networking and collaboration between different groups on campus already working on water conservation / management and an opportunity to accelerate the growth of new collective efforts. AQUAholics is a tool to develop and promote a consistent conservation message to the campus community and encourage community involvement.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

- a. Facilitate and manage a networking space for updating, brainstorming, collaborating, and advising on water conservation programming, policies, publications, etc.
- b. Create, foster and deliver a unified community-based conservation message to the campus community.

We hoped to unify students, staff and faculty who were already working on water conservation and management projects and send out a consistent message of water conservation to the public. We identified which departments and student organizations should join the water conservation network and set goals of meeting regularly. Our goals for the next 2-3 years include combining efforts from various campus groups to foster a cohesive water conservation message to make it easy for individuals to understand the need for water conservation and understand what the campus is doing. By creating a network, our water efforts will become strengthened. We hope that greater coordination between the different groups on campus will help develop a memorable and unified community-based marketing program that is essential for any sustainability initiative.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

We have taken significant strides in establishing a campus water conservation program and building a coalition between the different areas of campus working on water conservation. We have developed a "12 Step Recovery Program" geared towards combating our water use addiction and related informational materials on water conservation for individuals at home or on campus, and for UC San Diego as an institution.

We were asked to help debut the institutionalization of one of the recovery steps—to give up disposable bottled water— at the largest annual campus festival, Sun God, by coordinating volunteers to work at the first-ever sustainable water booth. Becoming a model for social and environmental justice, the Associated Students sold reusable stainless steel bottles at the festival and encouraged students to bring their own bottles for free refills at the water coolers. The water booth project was a success and the Associated Student government asked AQUAholics to manage future water booths at Sun God. One of the student organizations involved with AQUAholics, the Social and Environmental Sustainability Committee (SESC), successfully lobbied the student government to pass a resolution to urge the campus to phase out the purchase and use of plastic bottled water, starting with Sun God. I helped by creating a power point presentation pressing the Associated Students to transition from passing out bottled water to a more sustainable and cost-effective option. In result, the Associated Student government utilized Sun God as an opportunity to phase out bottled water and provided tens of thousands of participants with free drinking water via the water coolers.

We have recently invited three students to intern for AQUAholics as part of a student internship program for the water conservation coalition. The interns will advance AQUAholics' goals of creating a network between students, staff and faculty on water conservation projects, and facilitating a unified message of water conservation through a common marketing message to the public. The AQUAholics internship program will support efforts to improve water policy, management, conservation and compliance primarily by assisting in researching, documenting, educating and reporting on water conservation, storm water pollution prevention and drought management opportunities. AQUAholics Anonymous would like to support at least two interns each quarter. These interns will focus on maintaining the AQUAholics networking coalition, water conservation, programming and outreach to the campus community. The internship program provides an opportunity for students to take on leadership roles in water conservation as well as effectively serving the campus community, providing educational and professional skills development. Fostering and implementing student-led projects is key to AQUAholics' mission in serving the community. Student Interns are given the opportunity to work in partnership with UC San Diego staff and faculty on water conservation programming.

SESC is currently working with AQUAholics in developing a “Water Proposal” that encourages the campus to go beyond the local and regional water use restrictions and establish educational native plant gardens to demonstrate water conservation, replace water-intensive landscaping with low-water / drought-resistant landscaping, and to install water filtration stations for avid bottled water drinkers, etc. AQUAholics aims to become a main player in forming future campus policies regarding water on many levels, including landscaping, open space, buildings, housing and dining, etc.

Challenges and Responses

The major challenge was to initiate and foster cooperation from all groups on campus who are working on water conservation. In response to this obstacle, we made use of the catchy theme of AQUAholics Anonymous to create a movement that is “made to stick” in people’s minds. Soon enough, the word about AQUAholics stirred among the administration and the students working on water-related issues. Ensuring commitment from all groups working on water conservation and maintaining communication between the groups was difficult. In response, we created a student internship program to manage the network and facilitate new projects. For future initiatives, I would develop the framework necessary for a community-based conservation program before I launch the actual movement.

Campus Climate Action: Your School’s Carbon Footprint

We estimate that if all on-campus residents reduced their shower time by two minutes for twelve days, UC San Diego would save enough water to fill an Olympic-sized pool.

Commentary and Reflection

This project demonstrates that AQUAholics Anonymous is not a selective workgroup, but an idea that *anyone* who uses water can combat our collective addiction by conserving, and that we need to unify and work together in order to change our behaviors.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The main campus groups that are instrumental to the development of AQUAholics Anonymous are Environment, Health and Safety (EH&S), Sustainability 2.0, Housing, Dining and Hospitality, Facilities Management, The Social and Environmental Sustainability Committee, The Sustainability Resource Center, The Student Sustainability Collective, The Sustainability Solutions Institute, University Centers, Academics, the Med Centers and Sports Facilities. The key individuals involved are Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) Climate Action Student Assistant: Frances Avendaño, Sustainability Director: Margaret Souder, EH&S Environmental Affairs staff: Kimberly O'Connell and Valerie Fanning, and Sustainability Analyst: Kristen Hansen.

Funding and Resources

AQUAholics is not a separate entity or group that has its own funding or interests. It is a resource for different water-based projects and seeks to develop a consistent and cohesive message of water conservation for public outreach. The cost of the internship program is completely free since the student positions are unpaid and benefit undergraduate areas of study that require a senior project such as Environmental Systems majors who are required to complete an internship project for graduation.

Internally, Environment, Health and Safety (EH&S) and Sustainability 2.0 have mainly supported the creation of AQUAholics Anonymous, helping to fund the first life-size poster and bookmarks for the 12 Step Recovery Program. EH&S plans to house and manage the future AQUAholics student interns in conjunction with Sustainability 2.0.

Education and Community Outreach

The 12 Step Recovery Program was not only featured at Sun God, but also at UC San Diego's first Sustainable 5K Grove Race orchestrated by the campus triathlon team. From the success of both events, AQUAholics has been invited to participate in many other events in the future, including those held by Food and Water Watch and Walking 4 Water in San Diego.

AQUAholics has also been invited to help with the annual UC San Diego Sustainability Social this coming October and educate participants on the importance of water conservation.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

The Chill Out video competition helped the university spread its message with more than 10,000 viewings.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contacts

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Case study submitted by:

Frances Avendaño, Climate Action Student Assistant, EH&S. Expected date of graduation: Fall 2009

MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

Beginning with pioneering climate change research in the 1950s and '60s by Professor Charles Keeling, UC San Diego has put numerous eco-friendly projects in place and in the planning stages. To name a few:

- 75 percent of landscaping features low-water-use vegetation; 25 percent is irrigated with recycled water.
- 54 percent of commuters choose alternatives to single-occupant vehicles, thanks to campus support.
- Through collaboration with Caterpillar, UCSD has introduced its first 100 percent biodiesel shuttle.
- Our ChemCycle program diverted about 200 pounds of chemicals from the waste stream in 2008.
- A planned fuel cell will provide 2.8 megawatts of energy from waste methane gas.
- Installing 2 Sun Modular Datacenter S20s will reduce cooling costs by 40 percent.
- All new buildings will meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Silver or Gold standards. \$60 million of energy retrofits have already been installed in existing buildings.
- A sustainability resource center on campus is in the works, and we have a Web site, sustain.ucsd.edu.