

# Recycling Online



It is now May and we are approaching the part of the school year that students like most – its end. One of the rituals that take place prior to this happy event is the clean-out of lockers in middle and high schools, and the evacuation of housing units by college students leaving to enjoy summer vacations or after graduation. It is a testament to our general affluence that this results in the creation of overflowing waste containers filled often with perfectly-useful products that their former owners felt would be too inconvenient to lug to their next destination. Fortunately, many institutions of higher education have created programs to eliminate the waste created by these move out migrations, and the many of the same practices are now starting to filter down into K-12 schools. The following is a short survey of resources that illustrate what is being done to make the end of the school year less wasteful.

## Higher education move-out resources

There are three websites that provide good general resources on how to start and manage college and university move-out (CUMO) programs. The first is a collection of links compiled by the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CTDEEP). One link that should be consulted first would be “Treasure From Trash – A Toolkit for Move-Out Reuse Projects,” written by Lisa Heller, the founder of Dump & Run, one of the first organizations to organize CUMO events. The guide is organized into chapters that describe five steps for implementing a CUMO event, starting with the planning stage through to the final

## Move-outs without the waste

by Roger Guttentag

event day. It envisions reusable items being sold or donated. The steps that it outlines continue to be followed by most CUMO events held today, though the emphasis appears to be more on donating collected reusable items.

While the CTDEEP site has a link to a 2008 webinar series sponsored by the College & University Recycling Coalition (CURC), I would recommend consulting a more recent CURC webinar held in February 2011. There are four slide presentations, along with presenter audio files, of move-out programs held at Northwestern University, Temple University, Indiana University and Ohio University. I found the discussion of Indiana University’s Hoosier to Hoosier program very interesting, because it describes how the donations of reusable items received at the end of one school year becomes the basis for a yard sale event for students arriving for the next school year in the fall. The funds that are generated through student purchases are then returned to the community through donations to local nonprofit organizations.

Finally, there are three presentations that can be viewed on the 2011 California Higher Education Sustainability Conference page on move-out programs conducted by California State University at Chico, San Francisco State University and Humboldt State University.

## Move-out program examples

There is a separate listing of CUMO programs that provide additional examples of how the move-outs are organized and implemented, as well as, in many cases, providing descriptive statistics on what was achieved. Most collect the following products for donation, typically to local residents and organizations:

- Bedding and furniture
- Books
- Carpeting
- Clothing and shoes
- Electronics
- Exercise and sports equipment
- Housewares
- Non-perishable foods

- Small electrical products and appliances.

The focus of these CUMO programs is typically on-campus residences but some also address off-campus student move-outs. The Ohio University program presentation provides one good illustration of how off-campus student donations can be collected. Another program that has a very strong focus on recovering reusable products from off-campus housing is operated by the City of Davis (California). Donation stations are set up at participating apartment properties starting mid-to-late August and are managed by volunteers to insure they don’t become eyesores. Items at the donation sites can be taken by current and incoming residents of these apartment properties, as well as community nonprofit organizations with specific “wish lists” of desired items. City recycling staff collects clothing and shoes that are left at the donation sites. The program ends at the beginning of September.

## Don’t forget about locker clean-outs

We should not forget that middle and high school students are also expected to clean out their lockers at the end of the school year and this, too, can generate a significant quantity of waste. For this reason, a number of K-12 school districts are now implementing locker clean-out events that operate on a similar, though smaller scale to CUMOs. The best guide to reducing waste from locker cleanouts is a 2012 guide, “Locker Leftovers,” published by the East Bay Depot for Creative Use based on their experience in conducting several pilot programs in 2011 with funding support from Alameda County (California). The guide recommends creating collection stations for every 150 lockers to recover the following:

- Binders
- Books
- Clothing
- Notebooks
- Pens, pencils
- Recyclables
- Trash (not recyclable or reusable)

The guide provides a detailed task check-list as well as a recommended scheduling calendar for accomplishing them.

Site links are provided to two other jurisdictions, Northern Cook County (Illinois) and St. Louis County (Missouri) to provide additional examples of how local school districts are trying to reduce waste generated by student locker cleanouts.

## Some final thoughts

In researching this topic, I have developed a conflicted perspective regarding it. On one hand, the work by school staff and dedicated volunteers to reduce the waste avalanche at the end of the school year is absolutely commendable. On the other hand, it does nothing to address the root cause for why these programs are needed, which is our tendency to accumulate stuff and then to toss it when it is no longer convenient to keep it. If we want to create a zero waste future (or just a reduced-waste

one, for that matter), it makes me wonder what the next step in the evolution of these programs should be.

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## Web Address Directory

California Higher Education Sustainability Conference	
Presentations – Sustainable Move-Out Programs	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/CAMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/CAMove-Out</a>
Connecticut DEP – Move-Out Days	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/CTMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/CTMove-Out</a>
CURC – Residence Hall Move-Out Programs Webinar	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/CURCMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/CURCMove-Out</a>
Resourceful Schools Project – How to Have a Locker Clean-Out (St. Louis County, Missouri)	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/STLMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/STLMove-Out</a>
SWANCC – Locker Clean-Out (Cook County, Illinois)	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/CookMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/CookMove-Out</a>
The East Bay Depot for Creative Use – Locker Leftovers Guide	<a href="http://creativeuse.org/teachers.html">http://creativeuse.org/teachers.html</a>
Arizona State University – Ditch the Dumpster	<a href="http://moveout.asu.edu/">http://moveout.asu.edu/</a>
Brandeis University – Give and Go	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/BrandeisMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/BrandeisMove-Out</a>
City of Davis (California) – Apartment Move-Out Waste Reduction Program	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/DavisMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/DavisMove-Out</a>
Colorado University – Boulder – Student Move-Out Report	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/CUMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/CUMove-Out</a>
Georgia Tech – Student Move-Out	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/GAMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/GAMove-Out</a>
Ohio University – Move-Out	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/OHMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/OHMove-Out</a>
Oregon State University – Residential Hall Move-Out	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/OSUMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/OSUMove-Out</a>
Texas State University – Pack It Up and Pass It on	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/TXMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/TXMove-Out</a>
University of Connecticut – Give & Go	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/UConnMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/UConnMove-Out</a>
University of Michigan – Student Move-Out Guide	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/MiMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/MiMove-Out</a>
University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill – Student Move-Out Guide	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/UNCMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/UNCMove-Out</a>
Virginia Tech – Move-Out Waste Reduction	<a href="http://tinyurl.com/VTMove-Out">http://tinyurl.com/VTMove-Out</a>