

Atlas Zero Waste Program

USF SGEF Fast-Track Grant Proposal

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UNIVERSITY of
SOUTH FLORIDA

The Problem

Based on ongoing student observation and data collection over the past 5 years, USF has an ineffective waste reduction and waste disposal system that prevents it from achieving its sustainability goals.



Ineffective System

- The USF Recycling Drop-Off Station on Sycamore Drive was closed in 2020 due to the irregular disposal of non-recyclable materials.
- There is confusion among employees and students regarding the proper disposal of trash and recycling into bins and dumpsters, which causes contamination of otherwise recyclable materials.
- USF does not consistently group trash and recycling receptacles together, despite the practice being recommended by local and national experts to reduce contamination.
- There is not available funding to replace items such as recycling receptacles on campus, and there has not yet been an assessment to determine the most practical or sustainable solutions, should funding be awarded.
- In a survey conducted in Fall 2020, 51% of students indicated that they did not know where to go on campus to recycle specific materials. Over 50% of students answered that they are unlikely to recycle if there is no recycling bin clearly visible in their area.

Ineffective System

- From my own experience, I am only certain about what the Coca-Cola reverse vending machines (RVMs) recycle – clean water bottles and aluminum cans. Other bins are inconsistent and lack labels.
- Robin Rives, a former student at USF, conducted her own study to determine the campus' current practices. However, considering this study was performed in 2018, some aspects have changed over time. Recommendations were made, but only for recycling specifically.
- Angela Fama, a former student at PCGS, performed a waste audit to evaluate the materials in the MSC's trash and recycling. She found that most recyclable items were contaminated.
- Beyond recycling, students have limited accessibility to reuse or compost systems, unless they are student-led.



Failing Sustainability Goals

- In 2010, USF created a climate action plan that is meant to serve as “a living document to be revised annually by the Office of Sustainability.” However, USF lacks an active Office of Sustainability, a Director of the Office of Sustainability, and a Sustainability Initiative Steering Committee to annually review the CAP, benchmark progress, and move USF forward with local and Higher Education Sustainability Goals.
- Florida Statute 403.7145(2) requires (to the greatest extent practical) colleges and universities to maintain a recycling program.

STARS, a program of AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education), is a sustainability tracking, assessment, and rating system. USF is currently rated Silver.



University of South Florida
Tampa, FL, US

Rating	Score	Valid Through	Liaison	Submitted
Silver	46.29	May 12, 2025	Thomas Frazer	March 4, 2022

Report Preface

- Introduction
- Institutional Characteristics

STARS 2.2

USF overall had poor scores.

In 2022, 167,552.40 metric tons of CO₂ were produced by USF.

~ 4.22 metric tons of CO₂ were produced per campus user.

Operations

Air & Climate	3.45 / 11.00
Buildings	0.37 / 8.00
Energy	2.62 / 10.00
Food & Dining	1.64 / 8.00
Grounds	2.00 / 4.00
Purchasing	3.13 / 6.00
Transportation	1.15 / 7.00
Waste	4.36 / 10.00
Water	2.00 / 6.00

Waste Data

Construction and demolition materials recycled, donated, or otherwise recovered:

1,717.37 Tons

Construction and demolition materials landfilled or incinerated:

188.52 Tons

Percentage of construction and demolition materials diverted from the landfill or incinerator through recycling, donation and/or other forms of recovery:

90.11

Figures needed to determine total waste generated (and diverted):

	Performance Year	Baseline Year
Materials recycled	87 Tons	87 Tons
Materials composted	0 Tons	0 Tons
Materials donated or re-sold	0 Tons	0 Tons
Materials disposed through post-recycling residual conversion	0 Tons	0 Tons
Materials disposed in a solid waste landfill or incinerator	485 Tons	485 Tons
Total waste generated	572 Tons	572 Tons

USF's CO2 Emissions

This is equivalent to greenhouse gas emissions avoided by:

57,977 tons of waste recycled instead of landfilled



8,282 garbage trucks of waste recycled instead of landfilled



7,252,613 trash bags of waste recycled instead of landfilled



46.6 wind turbines running for a year



6,350,406 incandescent lamps switched to LEDs



This is equivalent to carbon sequestered by:

2,770,493 tree seedlings grown for 10 years



199,809 acres of U.S. forests in one year



1,111 acres of U.S. forests preserved from conversion to cropland in one year



(Calculated with the EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator)

About PLAN

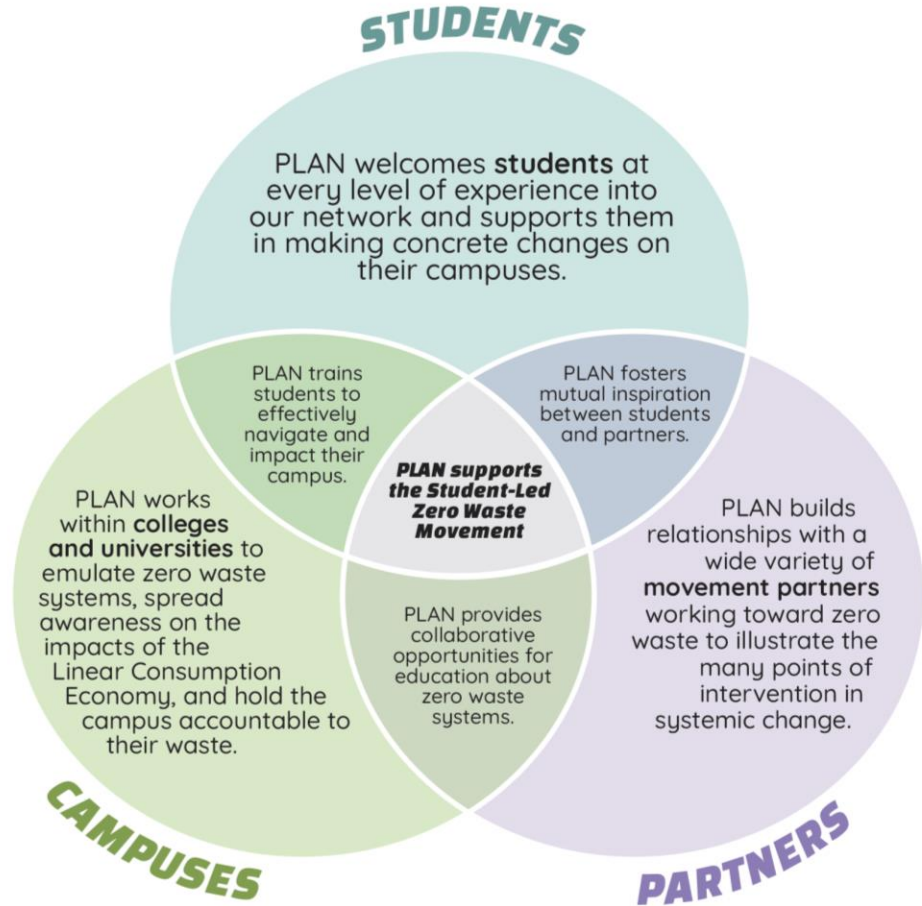
- The Post-Landfill Action Network (PLAN) was founded in 2013 by a group of college students at the University of New Hampshire.
- These students witnessed a **systemic waste problem** on their campus and developed the first student-led, financially self-sustaining, zero waste move-out program of its kind.
- Other campuses wanted to replicate the program and from there, PLAN was born.
- PLAN support students and staff with enacting a wide range of infrastructure changes on campus. They have worked with over 1,000 campuses across the US and Canada.





Zero Waste™ Certification

A Program of PLAN



Atlas Fellowship Program

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
Perform a Holistic Campus-Wide Assessment	Establish a Campus-Wide Strategic Vision	Create a Zero Waste Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Establish a baseline to assess institutional gaps → Lays the foundation for institutional goal setting and the ability to benchmark and track progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Visioning allows stakeholders to engage with possible long-term solutions without the limitations of current systems, logistics, staffing and budgets → Does not need specific details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Fill in specific details: implementation strategy, cross-departmental collaboration and management, cost of implementation, expected timeline of implementation
→ 1 Semester	→ 1 Semester	→ 1 Year (2 Semesters + Summer)

To move from Stage 2 to 3, stakeholders should present the Vision as a **proposal** to Admin (Provost, President or Trustees) and receive approval to move into Stage 3. Campus Admin should show clear institutional capacity to invest in strategic initiatives prior to Planning.

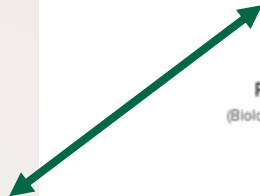
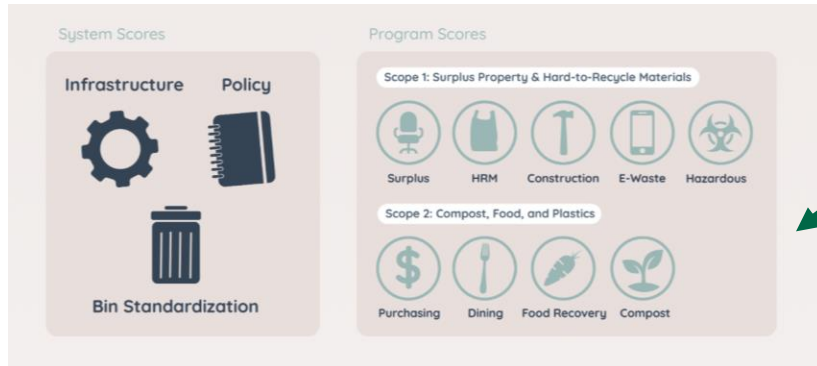
Stage 1 Process

- The assessment divides material management into two different scopes.
- This is based on how those materials are typically procured and used, and ultimately how those materials are managed when it comes time to either reuse, repair, compost, recycle, or dispose of them.

SCOPE 1 HARD GOODS Surplus Property and Hard-to-Recycle Materials Materials the campus has direct control over	SCOPE 2 SOFT GOODS Food and Single-Use Materials Materials the campus purchases, but has limited control over which bin the material is placed in
Electronics Furniture Office Supplies Lab / Art Equipment Vehicles / Tires / Oil Chemicals / EH&S material Facilities / C&D material	Food Waste Food Packaging Disposable Dishware Disposable To-Go Ware Compostable Dishware Compostable To-Go Ware Reusable Dishware Reusable To-Go Ware

Stage 1 Process

- When interviewing stakeholders, the questions on the checklist ask about the existence of systems, infrastructure, and policy that demonstrate sustainable materials management, based on best practices that the Atlas team has observed on college campuses across the U.S.
- Each question is assigned a point value based on where the practice would fall on the zero-waste hierarchy.



Stage 1 Outcome

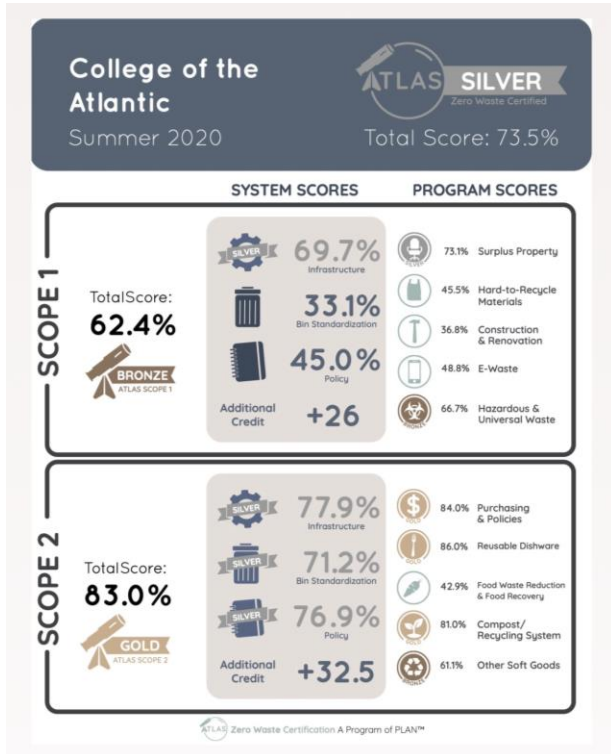


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- Score card is created, as well as a comprehensive report.

- Report provides recommendations for Stages 2 and 3.

Stage 1 Timeline

Week 1-2: Start of Fellowship

- Complete stakeholder identification for any stakeholders that haven't been identified.

Week 3-9:

- PLAN provides support to fellow by following up with stakeholders who have not replied to requests for an interview or who have not filled out the Google form.
- Alternate contacts found where necessary.
- PLAN creates report draft.

Week 10: Wrap-Up

- Participate in an exit interview with Atlas staff and the fellow.
- Review the report draft and provide feedback.
- Submit payment.

Students get involved with PLAN



By engaging with PLAN's programming and resources, student leaders **deepen their understanding of the Waste Crisis.**



Students work together to **envision changes** on their campuses.



Students **make change happen**, winning campaigns for administrative support and implementing zero waste infrastructure.



Infrastructure change leads to **widespread behavior changes.**



Momentum builds across **campuses** as PLAN spreads the word of student success.



Students graduate with a better understanding of zero waste systems.



The standard expectation of waste & consumption on a campus shifts, achieving a new normal.



**Zero Waste™
Certification**
A Program of PLAN

Funding

Item	Source of Item (Website/Vendor Name)	Item Description	Cost Per Item	Quantity	Total SGEF Cost
Materials, Supplies, Promotional Items and Services					
USF PLAN Membership	Post-Landfill Action Network (PLAN)	Membership to participate			1000
USF Tampa Atlas Stage 1 Assessment	Post-Landfill Action Network (PLAN)	Stage 1 fellowship program			3825
					100
					0
Total					4925
Labor/Personnel, Stipend, Rentals, Travel, etc.					
					0
					0
					0
					0
Total					0
Other Costs (Indicate any other recurring fees such as equipment service fees, returns, etc.)					
					0
					0
					0
					0
					0
					0
					0
Total					0
Total Direct Costs					
					4925
Administrative Fee (6%)					
					295.5
Total Project Costs					
					5220.5

Note: I will be paid by Facilities Management Planning through my internship. No additional funding is needed.

Thank you!

