

Academic Engagement Specialist

UT Recycling, CAC AmeriCorps

Service Site Summary: UT Recycling's goal is to convert the University of Tennessee, Knoxville into a Zero Waste institution by diverting 90% (or more) of all waste from the landfill through reducing, reusing, recycling, and composting. In addition to waste reduction and waste diversion, UT Recycling routinely educates students, staff, and faculty about sustainable lifestyle practices.

UT Recycling provides recycling collection services at all campus buildings and compost collection services at the majority of campus dining facilities. We also coordinate food donations on campus and engage the UT community through volunteer opportunities and educational programs. Some of our many projects include:

- The Mug Project (an initiative to reduce single-use cups on campus)
- Zero Waste Game Day (outreach and recycling efforts during football season)
- Recyclemania (a national recycling competition)
- My Tiny Trash (a waste reduction initiative that has doubled recycling rates in participating buildings)
- The Public Drop-off (a drop-off recycling facility open to all)
- The Grow Lab (a new campus garden that addresses food insecurity)
- Project Clean Plate (a project that encourages students to reduce their food waste)

At UT Recycling, a dynamic team of staff, students, and AmeriCorps members work to reduce waste, increase environmental practices, and engage the UT community in sustainability.

Service Position Summary: The Academic Engagement Specialist is a new position within UT Recycling. The member in this position will serve as a liaison between academic departments and UT Recycling. They will create exciting learning opportunities, oversee experiential learning internships, and create programs to engage students in intentional ways. This position will focus on three main areas: course engagement, mentoring student interns and volunteers, and maintaining familiarity with all UT Recycling projects in order to effectively 'plug in' students to their interest area.

Primary Functions of Position: Currently, UT Recycling engages a large number of volunteers and shows presentations to multiple classes. Many volunteers participate one time in order to fulfill service hours. Other student volunteers are excited and passionate about getting involved with UT Recycling and furthering our mission. Unfortunately, existing team member positions often do not have time to create meaningful opportunities for these students, and they end up doing menial but necessary tasks such as stickering bins, tabling, and cleaning.

We want the Academic Engagement Specialist to take involvement a step further by creating long-term project opportunities within UT Recycling for enthusiastic students. These projects can be internships involving the implementation of a new initiative (e.g., a food camera to reduce food waste), research projects (e.g., examining the waste-reduction efficacy of Recyclemania), or

creating intentional volunteer opportunities that use students' enthusiasm and skill set to make a difference using resources found within our department. Responsibilities for the Academic Engagement Specialist can be divided between course engagement, student mentorship, and project familiarity and communication.

Course engagement:

- Develop, create, and showcase presentations about UT Recycling initiatives to classrooms
- Communicate internship and volunteer opportunities to professors and students
- Meet with professors to create experiential and service-learning opportunities and integrate them into course curriculum
- Create and expand a database of professors who are interested in working with UT Recycling
- Utilize the Office of Sustainability's sustainable course database and reach out to relevant instructors
- Suggest course projects involving UT Recycling and oversee the successful completion of these projects for professor's desired learning outcomes
- Develop reading guides for interested professors that correspond to volunteer opportunities, tours, and current events

Mentoring student interns & volunteers

- Be the 'go-to' person when a student expresses interest in UT Recycling
- Meet with students one-on-one and in groups, discuss their academic and professional goals and provide structured opportunities for them to engage in UT Recycling projects
- Provide resources and support for successful implementation of initiatives and research
- Create volunteer 'tracks' so that students can engage in meaningful service
- Help students find other internship and job opportunities in related fields, possibly by creating a UT Recycling job guide for students and recent graduates
- Provide assistance communicating their UT Recycling experience on CVs/resumes

Project familiarity & communication

- Maintain familiarity with all UT Recycling projects and initiatives
- Work effectively with other team members to identify opportunities in their areas for student interns, volunteers, and workers
- Coordinate tours of the warehouse, compost site, recycling facilities, food donation partners, etc. for students
- Communicate the UT Recycling story to other UT Recycling team members

Principal Working Relationships:

- UT Recycling Manager (supervisor) Jay Price
- UT Recycling staff and AmeriCorps team members
- Faculty & students

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities:

- Independent self-starter
- Strong commitment to sustainability, recycling, and waste reduction
- Comfortable making presentations to large groups (30+ people)
- Great one-on-one communication skills
- Organized and able to oversee multiple projects and individuals simultaneously
- Able to effectively convey the UT Recycling story through written and verbal communication