

The Faces of Sustainability at UCCS

By Mariah Wagner

Why do you shake hands when you meet someone? Would it be okay to go to the grocery store in your pajamas? Finding it hard to come up with an exact reason to explain why? Our society molds our lives and decisions without us even thinking about why. In a field where we encourage people to make changes in their lives toward more sustainable choices, what can we do to make turning off the lights, bringing reusable bags to the grocery, and recycling a social norm?

In 2015, Dr. Jennifer Cross, Associate Professor in the Sociology Department at Colorado State University presented at UCCS' Sustainnovate Summit on the social science of how campaigns can present information in the most effective way. This presentation was an altered version of her TED Talk in 2013, which can be viewed [here](#). It exemplified that social norms have the greatest impact on behavior by setting behavioral expectations. As a species, we are highly social creatures and it is instinctive for us to follow the behaviors of others.

Based on this idea that our peers greatly influence our behaviors and choices, the UCCS Office of Sustainability rolled out a campaign that focuses on sharing the sustainable habits of people you may know or see on campus. The photos show various people in the UCCS community engaging in simple sustainable tasks such as recycling or biking. Each photo also has a series of icons to help identify which aspect of sustainability the photo is addressing along with encouragement to mimic their peers and assume the behavior in their own lives. By including photos of faculty, staff, and students in the campaign, it truly encompasses the whole campus. UCCS is making an effort to lead by example and working to make sustainable lifestyles a habit as well as a standard, or rather the new social norm.



So far, the campaign has highlighted the Greenhouse, Aquaponics, Clyde's Cupboard, the Green Action Fund, cardboard recycling, Alpha Sigma Phi fraternity, cycling, and recycling. "We like showing aspects of sustainability that seem unexpected," says Clare Thomas, Recycling Coordinator for the Office of Sustainability and co-creator of this campaign. "Sometimes our campus community participates in sustainable choices without realizing how much of an impact they have on reducing our campus' carbon footprint. This campaign is just one way to thank them as well as encourage others to do their part."

The Office of Sustainability also encourages the UCCS community to nominate their friends and peers to be highlighted in this campaign. Does your friend hang-dry their clothes? Or carpool to run errands? However they practice sustainability, we would love to include them in the Faces of Sustainability campaign at UCCS!

Questions about recycling, biking, conserving resources or other aspects of sustainability?
Contact the Office of Sustainability, sustain@uccs.edu or 719.255.3089, to learn how you can
become actively engaged in this topic and more!