

Reflection: Students for Zero Waste Conference 2017

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This semester Green Action Fund granted me the opportunity to attend my first conference. 1,700 miles from home, Philadelphia's Temple University gave me the chance to interact with 500 other individuals passionate towards sustainability. The Students for Zero Waste Conference hosted by PLAN (Post Landfill Action Network) gave my coworkers and me valuable insights to bring back to our campus and leadership examples to follow as an office.

The biggest take away our office gained from going to this conference was refocusing our objectives. Our society sees recycling and composting as a way to reduce the amount of trash that goes to the landfill, when really it should go beyond that. The biggest contributor to CO₂ emissions is the energy needed to run our communities. The energy it takes to make clothing on our backs, cell phones we charge, and aluminum cans we drink all need a power source to continue making these products. When we continuously consume and discard, we are directly responsible for the climate issues presented before us today. Less energy needed to use recycled materials means that by recycling you're really doing your part in helping the earth. As an office, we will strive to get students out of the viscous cycle of consumption. Using reusable coffee mugs and water bottles, not buying a new cellphone every two years, and patching torn jeans can be the first step in consuming less.

Kate Bailey, a keynote speaker for the sustainable initiatives at EcoCycle in Boulder, Colorado, gave attendees valuable advice on the processes of making their community successful in zero waste initiatives. The inspiration to achieve something as challenging as making a community sustainable seemed palpable. Nic Esposito, the new Zero Waste Director for the City of Philadelphia, also presented. Esposito sees the uphill battle of reducing litter scattered throughout the neighborhoods he works for as something that is necessary for him to achieve. Individuals that attended that conference can agree that the heroic mindset that Esposito possess is both admirable for future political figures and important regardless of the community's condition. The hope and perseverance to reverse the effects the human race has done is strong with activists like Kate and Nic, and provides inspiration to continue to do the little things.

