

Dear Administrators of First Year programming,

We, Sophia Sonnenfeldt '22 and Sang Hwan Lee '19, are addressing you in the hopes that our recommendations will be adopted into future programming for incoming freshman for the fall of 2019. During the Spring semester of 2019, we have been considering the best ways to integrate sustainability into the culture of Williams College. After brainstorming with the Zero Waste Working Group, we came to the conclusion that *one essential component of accomplishing this goal is through integrating sustainability into first year programming.*

The programs you run play a significant role in setting the campus culture and in defining what it means to be a Williams student. For the first week and a half that students are on campus, we participate in programming that teaches us how to live and behave in this community. Through the Fire and Safety talk we learn how to treat the spaces on this campus. While meeting with RASAN we learn how to treat our fellow students and what boundaries we need to respect. Through Ephventures and the entry system we create tight bonds that settle us into this wonderful and unique place. All of these programs and more work together to create an image in the minds of first years. They teach us what it means to be a member of the Williams community. As students focused on furthering the College's green mission, we propose three ways of harnessing your unique role in order to add sustainability to that list of values.

The past few decades have been filled with amazing efforts on behalf of students and the administration to make our campus more sustainable. From switching to compostable to-go-ware, purchasing carbon offsets, opening the Zilkha center, and working on more eco-friendly housing options, huge changes have been made to the institution. While all of these efforts have made big impacts, we must also recognize that there is more we can do.

After researching the impact of signage on the way students dispose their waste during the Spring of 2019, we observed that the majority of our student body does not act sustainably. This is not because of a lack of information but because of apathy to the greater cause. As our classmate, Lina Velcheva '19, highlighted in her final project, greater cultural change comes from redefining the standards that guide the behaviors of a group.¹ For us, this knowledge has shifted our view of sustainability away from wanting to add to already existing information – like the waste guides above trash cans – towards harnessing the power of institutional programming as a way to shift the larger culture of this campus. We hope that by adding an element of sustainability to specific programs, we will add this value to those that are propagated in students' first introduction to this school. In turn, the value placed on sustainability will endure throughout students' time here at Williams and beyond. In order to do this, we propose an activity surrounding waste and disposal for Root, Where Am I, and WOOLF. Additionally, we hope to add an element of sustainability to the Fire and Safety talk, and, finally, to propose an entry competition surrounding proper waste management.

¹ Steinberg, Paul F. *Who Rules the Earth? : How Social Rules Shape Our Planet and Our Lives.* Oxford University Press, 2015.

Ephventures

For many students, Ephventures are a memorable part of their first year experience. Many of these programs are focused on getting students situated in the Williams' environment. Whether it's through visiting nearby locations in Where Am I? or spending intimate time in the woods with fellow classmates, we recognize the huge influence these programs have on students and their first impressions of life on this campus. Although there are many other Ephventures, we have identified these three because the themes are compatible with our proposed plans. For Where Am I? and Root, we would like to add a visit to TAM Waste Management, our campus' waste collector. Our class went on a field trip to TAM and, spending time there, seeing the waste of the campus helped us connect to the waste that we so often ignore. We now know how grounding and informative this experience can be, having experienced it for ourselves. Through learning about what the campus disposes of, recycles, composts, and our efforts to close the loop, visiting TAM would complement Roots' focus on sustainability. In meeting with the people who work at TAM, students would be able to get to know both our waste and the people in our community that we so often feel disconnected from.

Furthermore, meeting with TAM would improve the sense of community and broaden the scope of the Williams and Berkshire communities that Where Am I? recognizes. Talking to local workers who engage with Williams and the larger Vermont and Massachusetts area would also help many students feel connected to surrounding communities. Establishing close ties with local communities will also provide students with valuable human-resources that they can utilize in the students' efforts to uphold sustainability.

In addition to these programs, we would also like to include WOOLF in this broader mission for sustainability. While on the trails, WOOLFies learn to "Leave No Trace." Our recommendation is to continue promoting care of one's surroundings through proper waste management once off of the trails. At the end of WOOLF, during the clean-up and unpacking time in the field house, it would be greatly beneficial to incorporate a small activity with the entire group. We would come together and sort the waste, providing WOOLFies with a valuable opportunity to learn this necessary skill at Williams. Taking the time to come together and properly dispose of waste in this way, even if it is a five minute activity, sends the message that waste disposal and sustainability are concepts worth taking time to think about. This is a wonderful time to show that the college really is working towards embodying its ideals. Whether students are coming from homes that have never recycled or from families that cautiously rinse and sort, learning the ins and outs of Williams' proper waste disposal is a valuable and easy lesson to learn. These small additions would greatly add to what we have identified as the core values of the programs themselves and the core values of Williams life.

General First Year Programming & JAAB

The other two recommendations are closely connected. The first part is an addition to the Fire and Safety talk that is given to all entries during First Days. This meeting is key to introducing First Year students to the value of proper treatment of the campus' physical spaces. While the program is run by CSS, and these two programs may be harder to meld together, we propose an added section about proper waste management and disposal. If the two programs cannot be combined, we propose that an additional program be added to First Days during which entries would meet with a group of people who would go over basic recycling, composting, and trash rules for this campus. It should be noted that during our meeting with the Zero Waste Working Group, the custodial staff expressed interest in participating to educate first years about waste. By specifying early on in student's campus life that all of our to-go-ware is compostable, that bottle caps are recyclable, and many other key rules, we would hope to reduce and ultimately eliminate contamination.

Most of all, by spending time emphasizing this value, we would help enforce a new campus culture where sustainability is thought of along with the other values that campus programs highlight: respect, community, and academics. Additionally, this meeting would help familiarize students with the point person for all things recycling who serves as a resource to students and faculty and an agent to streamline waste actions. To push the concept of sustainability further, we propose that JA's incorporate the theme of sustainability to their beginning of the year 'JA skits.' We also firmly believe that productive conversations and discussions can arise by bringing themes of sustainability into an intimate entry setting, with the added benefit of actively engaging first years rather than having first years get all glassy eyed over 'just another' presentation.

Our second, and last, recommendation is for an entry competition that would begin after the addition to the Fire and Safety talk. We hope to work with JAAB to develop a game in which we would conduct several waste audits to gauge which entry was sorting most accurately with a reward for the most successful. This competition could take many forms like Sage competing against Willy and AP competing against MD. This will be a fun and engaging way to get students properly disposing of their waste and consciously thinking about recycling and composting. Alternatively, if conducting waste audits prove to be difficult, then the competition could take the form of a DIY recycling competition outside of the entry space where entries compete with each other by sorting a pre-sorted bag of trash and recyclables. It is very important for students not to disconnect from their belongings once their belongings enter a waste bin. Using the model of the waste audit conducted this year, we ultimately hope to get students to realize that their waste does not disappear after disposal, and that it has a life that continues after they stop use. By using the entry system as a tool to continue instilling a sustainable mindset after First Days ends, we hope to further push sustainability into the common culture of the Williams Student.

Our main goal is that these three recommendations will help influence how you view your responsibility to propagate sustainability as a campus value through your programs. We look forward to hearing back from you and hopefully working with you to develop our ideas!

All the best,

Sang Hwan Lee '19

Sophia Sonnenfeldt '22