

Take Back the Tap
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Abstract:

Take Back the Tap is an organization with the goal to promote water justice and sustainability. This student-led initiative's goal is to end the sales of all single-use plastic water bottles on the UCSC campus. The ultimate goal is to remove all water bottles UC Santa Cruz campus. In order to accomplish this goal Take Back the Tap must gain a mandate from the chancellor of the university. The steps needed to reach the chancellor were to gain student, administration and Student Union Assembly support. Making certain events water bottle-free and educating the university gave Take Back the Tap the recognition it needed on the issues around single-use plastic water bottles as well as the solutions to a water bottle-free campus.

Introduction:

Water bottles are made out of plastic, paper and water; they are made for the convenience of a few at the expense of all. Out of all the water bottles that are composed of PET about 75 percent of them do not get recycled (Food & Water Watch, 2007, para.3). This waste takes thousands of years to break down and puts a lasting print on the earth. Removing plastic bottles from the UC campus would stop 1,000's of plastic bottles from entering the ocean and landfills (Waste Task Force Report, p.10, 2012). It sends a bigger message that a community does not require bottled water to have adequate water supply. This project does more than stop the creation of waste.

Bottled water consumes 17 million barrels of oil each year, which is the equivalent of fueling one million cars (Food & Water Watch, 2007, para.3). A ban on the bottle shows the UC's support against climate change and products that consume huge amounts of fossil fuels. According to an NPR article, "the amount of water going into making the bottle could be up to six or seven times what's inside the bottle"(Gustafson, 2013, para.7). The project as a whole promotes sustainability in an efficient manner. Having a bottled-water-free UC shows that a community can access clean drinking water that saves energy, water and waste.

Project description:

The project had a specific overall goal: to meet with Chancellor Blumenthal and gain his support to end the sale of single-use plastic water bottles on the UC Santa Cruz campus. In the future there would need to be a mandate from the Chancellor to make sure all organizations and other non-sales-related entities do not have water bottles. The ideal future of the UCSC campus is to be completely bottled-water-free with proper alternatives to provide affordable, clean and accessible drinking water. In order to gain the Chancellor's support to help end the sale of single use water bottle we needed to impact three groups on campus. We had to gain the support of the student population, administrators and the Student Union Assembly. The project was centered around influencing each of these groups.

We intended to reach out to key administrative members and gain their support in this campaign. We wanted to reach out to sustainability members as well as administration that had bottled water in their practices. Turning big events and organizations' practices to bottle-water-free benefited both the Take Back the Tap organization and the people who ran the event. The solution usually was a lot cheaper and although it required more manual labor, the benefits outweighed the cost. The actual way

we gained the support of administration is through multiple meetings with key decision makers on campus. Examples of people we met with were procurement services, recreation center, ACAOs/ CAOs, the Council of Provosts and a few vice chancellors. Talking with administrators and getting their support was important because the Chancellor respected their opinions and looked to them for suggestions and if they had any issues that he himself was not aware of.

Our second party of interest was student support. Having the chancellor's constituents on the organization's side would promote a consensus to move in a more sustainable direction. The approach to gain student support came down to simple outreach and education through events, collaboration and media. We hosted our own event this year called Winter Water. This event had speakers and organizations explaining the importance of water and stress a need for a bottle water free campus. Take Back the Tap tabled at many sustainability and social justice events such as Earth Summit, Oaks conference, Water conservation festival and more. We co-ran multiple water justice documentaries. We also started a student organization coalition where students could state that they support our campaign by holding water bottle free events. Gaining student support really benefited the student body and allowed them to understand more about where their water comes from and what purchasing bottled water truly means. The fundamental way we gathered support from UCSC students as a whole is through petitions.

The last party needed was the Student Union Assembly. Gaining their support would give us an audience with Chancellor Blumenthal. The Student Union Assembly acts as the official student government of the UCSC campus. They have meetings with both the students and administration. They pass resolutions that can be written by students to guide their agenda and help support student efforts. Getting a Take Back the Tap resolution passed by the Student Union Assembly would strengthen our tie with the chancellor.

Alternatives are an important goal that Take Back the Tap has been working on throughout the years. Although banning bottled water was the main goal for the year, providing reusable bottles and water bottle retrofits is part of the solution. Both alternatives cost time and money and the organization had the goal of accessing both through grants and other financial sources.

The project was a stepping-stone toward a full ban on bottled water at UCSC. It was a big step forward that brought together different members of the UC Santa Cruz community. Take Back the Tap has removed single use water bottles from multiple school functions and has obtained an audience with the chancellor. The UC Santa Cruz campus will have less waste, better knowledge, be more financially stable and live in a better environment.

Timeline:

The timeline below represents major objectives that needed to be accomplished each quarter in order to successfully get a single-use water bottle ban. The project will take more than one year but key figures, such as the chancellor, can be influenced. The objectives below required research, time and plenty of organizing.

- Summer
 - Educate myself on the issues revolved around single use water bottles

- Create resolution to present to Student Union Assembly
- Fall Quarter
 - Advertise for organization members (ex: Class raps, tabling at events with sign ups)
 - Table at major events to educate public and gain support
 - Gain Student Union Assembly support by passing a resolution
 - Build coalition amongst sustainability organizations
 - Network with sustainability staff and administration
 - Reach out to key stakeholders (Through networking, emails and meetings)
- Winter Quarter
 - Receive feedback from stakeholders and discuss solutions to their issues
 - Host a major event on water sustainability for student and staff to educate them. (a photo from the event can be viewed in appendices #1).
 - Write grants to raise funds for reusable bottles and water fountain retrofits
 - Have meeting with the chancellor to discuss the campuses future
- Spring
 - Create documentation for others to learn from and use to produce a successful campaign
 - Focus on outreach to students through events, collaboration and media
 - Continue conversation with multiple stakeholders on campus, making events bottled-water-free and removing single-use water bottles wherever possible
 - Write a grant for funding next year's PSI and implement funding from last year's grant

Project Stakeholders:

- Administrative outreach
 - Chancellor Blumenthal- He has the power to implement a campus-wide mandate for a bottle-free university. By using our connection with the Student Union Assembly we were able to request a meeting at his office. The meeting involved possible obstacles of the ban as well as what is needed to make the ban successful. Conversion will continue this summer but the Chancellor has stated his desire to have a bottled-water-free UC.
 - Kathleen Rogers (Procurement Services)- An important point person that was able to advise Take Back the Tap on all administrative roles involved in business practices on campus. We connected through email and recommendation by another student sustainability advisor. We had multiple meetings and discussed possible ways to make a bottled-water-free campus possible. One goal in the works is removing bottled water from vending machines.
 - Adriana White (In charge of ACAO/CAO meetings)- In order to work on having housing practices water-bottle-free we connected with Adriana who was able to set up a meeting with all the heads of housing where we spoke about the issue and possible solutions. She was recommended by third-party administration.

- Kara Snider (CPC coordinator)- Kara is in charge of planning Commencement and was the individual Take Back the Tap reached out to in order to make commencement bottle water free.
- Take Back the Tap team
 - David Shaw- The Co-leader of Common Ground who was the mentor for the Take Back the Tap position. He helped me understand the basics of how to plan an event and how to network, and gave me all the leadership skills and advice I needed to succeed. We had weekly update and strategy meetings and helped each other reach Common Ground and Take Back the Tap goals.
 - David Rosas- I was the Co-coordinator for my organization and would facilitate weekly meetings and delegate jobs to help reach our main goals.
 - Zoe Manoguerra- The Fiscal Manager works to ensure funds are spent according to grant awards and maintains the budget's transparency with funding bodies and within the campaign.
 - Cristal Gonzalez & Josie Tsan- The Take Back the Tap Social Media Outreach Coordinator's responsibilities include all tasks related to publicity such as designing and distributing fliers, updating websites, and writing newsletters submissions for various on-campus organizations.
- Financial report
 - Winter Water: A Winter quarter educational event on water justice and water systems. We had three speakers, one of which needed to be funded. Since I was not acquainted with honorarium system at UCSC I could not use Take Back the Taps grant money and resorted to out of pocket.
 - Refilling station: 4 refilling stations were purchased and are going to be installed over summer. We filled out work orders and are using the Campus Sustainability Council's rewards from winter rounds.

Measurable Results:

Take Back the Tap has made measurable results through many verbal agreements that only people who attend these events will see. My aspiration is to have Take Back the Tap's eyes and ears open to what actual events use water bottle when they agreed not to. A list of the accomplishments made is as follows:

1. **Student Union Assembly (SUA) Resolution Passed:** In fall 2014 a resolution calling for the end of the sale of single-use plastic water bottles on campus passed. It outlined the issues and our intentions. We went to our student government's meeting, presented the resolution and addressed any concerns the board had. A copy of the resolution can be found in Appendix #2
2. **Received Chancellor's approval:** We were able to have a meeting with the Chancellor where he officially stated that he wanted a bottled-water-free campus. We will continue talks this summer on how to further accomplish this common goal.
3. **Commencement ceremony water-bottle-free:** Take Back the Tap and CPCs were able to eliminate the school's purchasing of bottled water for student and staff hydration during their graduation ceremony. By providing ideas for alternatives such as refilling stations, biodegradable cups and reusable bottles, the staff agreed to supply their own reusable bottles and purchase biodegradable cups for the ceremony. Cooperation with other entities such as catering required emails

and voluntary requests to end the sale of bottled water, making the entire event bottled-water-free.

4. **Student outreach:** We have educated and empowered students across the UCSC campus. This is measurable through the petition signatures we gathered stating student support, which was over 1,000. We also had students attend multiple educational events. Attendance ranged from 10 to 60 participants.
5. **RA Events water-bottle-free:** After a meeting with the ACAO and the CAOs, Take Back the Tap received a verbal agreement that all residential advisors would be trained to hold water-bottle-free events.
6. **Water fountain retrofits:** Take Back the Tap gathered funds from the CSC grant and filed work orders for four new water fountain retrofits.

References:

- Food & Water Watch. (2007). Bottled water costs consumers and the environment. Food & Water Watch. Retrieved from <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/water/bottled/bottled-water-bad-for-people-and-the-environment/>
- Gustafson, Thomas. (2013, October 30). How much water actually goes into making a bottle of water?. NPR. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2013/10/28/241419373/how-much-water-actually-goes-into-making-a-bottled-of-water>
- UCSC Landfill and Solid Waste Diversion Task Force. (2012, July 31). Landfill & Solid Waste Task Force Report and Waste Diversion Plan. Retrieved from <http://sustainability.ucsc.edu/governance/files/waste-task-force-report-compressed-%207.31.12.pdf>

Appendices:

#1



#2

A Resolution

In support of ending the sale of single use plastic water bottles on
The University of California Santa Cruz campus

WHEREAS, The sale and production of single use plastic water bottles ultimately contributes to environmental harm in the form of ocean water pollution, climate change, air pollution and the production of non biodegradable substances; and,

WHEREAS, single use plastic water bottles promote the production of oil for manufacturing, privatization of water, and overall relay a message that clean water is a privilege, not a right, that can only be bought at a high price; and,

WHEREAS, “Bottled water generally is no cleaner, safer, or healthier than tap water. In fact, the federal government requires far more rigorous and frequent safety testing and monitoring of municipal drinking water”[i]; and,

WHEREAS, The University of California Santa Cruz currently has sales contracts with vendors on campus that sell single use plastic water bottles; and,

WHEREAS, According to the Office of Sustainability, in 2011 four percent of UCSC’s waste source by volume is attributed to plastic containers[ii]; and,

WHEREAS, UCSC, being a university, has the opportunity to play a role on the issue of the sales and usage of plastic water bottles; and,

WHEREAS, According to the Blueprint for a Sustainable Campus for 2013-14 one of the appropriate actions is to “create a plastic bottle water free campus” pg. 38 [iii]; and,

WHEREAS, Chancellor Blumenthal’s goal of zero waste by 2020 involves the reduction of all plastic water bottle sales; and,

WHEREAS, UC Santa Cruz organizations, such as Take Back the Tap, have already made strides in removing single use plastic water bottles; and,

WHEREAS, These accomplishments consist of the current removal of all single use plastic water bottles from all eateries ran by Dining Services, The Wellness Center, and Joe’s Pizza and Subs; as well as, the instillation of bottle filters on existing fountains; a yearly handout of reusable bottles to freshman and transfer students at summer orientation; gathering signatures from students and staff who support Take Back the Tap’s goal; and, regularly hosting events which aim at educating and fostering action; and,

WHEREAS, UC Santa Cruz has made a commitment to take steps toward a sustainable cleaner and overall greener campus that has a positive impact on Santa Cruz, California, The United States and the World; and,

WHEREAS, “Taking back the tap” is one of those important steps to take toward a Carbon free and zero waste campus.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Student Union Assemble acknowledges the problems related with single use plastic water bottles; and,

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Student Union Assembly will stand in full support of all aspects of the Take Back the Tap Campaign aiming to end the sales and distribution of all single use plastic water bottles, and the removal of all single use plastic water bottles from campus.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Student Union Assembly shall call on the chair of the SUA to draft a letter to UCSC Chancellor Blumenthal, EVC Galloway, the office of financial affairs, and all members who currently reside on the University of California Regent Committee on investment and finance and relay the support of the SUA towards the Tack Back the Tap campaign and towards the following actions:

1. Instruct all purchasing managers on the UCSC campus, both independent and UCSC campus related, to stop any renewal or initiating of contracts which include the purchasing of single use plastic water bottles from relevant vendors and companies.
2. Take appropriate steps to ensure that by the end of the 2014-15 academic year all vendors will formally be notified of UCSC goal of a plastic water bottle-free campus, and there will be no more purchases of single use plastic water bottles on campus.
3. Release quarterly updates to the Take Back the Tap organization and UCSC students, both detailing progress made and future initiatives working toward the goal of a plastic water bottle- free campus.
4. Make reusable water bottles more accessible to the student body.

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Student Union Assembly elected officers and representatives will continually educate their constituents on the progress of the Take Back the Tap Campaign and urge them to take action.