

A Year in Review: Green NAU 2014-2015

In the past year, the Environmental Caucus (EC) has continued to grow and demonstrate phenomenal teamwork between students, faculty, staff, and administration. Not only has the EC itself done exceedingly well, but also the Action Teams associated with the EC have continuously moved barriers and pushed Northern Arizona University closer to carbon neutrality. Most importantly of all, the Student Environmental Caucus, the Green Jacks, has exceeded all expectations and has grown to become one of the most powerful student groups on campus.



Green NAU

Green NAU received two Americorp positions which were funded by the Caucus. These seats were filled by two incredibly hardworking individuals, Rachelle Berry and Alex Gaynor. Rachelle was a great asset to the Green NAU team because she went above and beyond. She researched and presented on various projects such as, rainwater harvesting, a revolving Green Fund, and signage for sustainable landscaping. She not only advised the Green Jacks, but she was also the Staff Leader for Alternative Spring Breaks. She managed outreach for Green NAU and Earth Week as well as assisting in NAU becoming a Tree Campus USA.

Alex Gaynor was an outstanding employee and a great addition to the Green NAU team. His focus mainly revolved around recycling where he presented recycling education in classes and at staff meetings, created a Bblearn module for recycling, assisted in Rio de Flag clean up organizations, and created recycling posters for the new Big Bellies around campus. He also did remarkable work designing bookmarks, bags, stickers, and the like to increase awareness of sustainability around campus. He continued to be involved with the students by orchestrating a Public Relations Capstone project for recycling and creating a campus map that outlined NAU's recycling potential.

Environmental Caucus

The EC has sponsored events such as the Better World Film Series, the NAU Sustainability Leadership Awards, and parts of Earth Week. In addition, they provided funding for seven students to

attend the AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) conference in Portland and represent NAU. They also provided funding for two internships in association with the Better World Film Series, as well as a Communications Internship, which assisted in utilizing social media and other advertising outlets to bring event awareness to students. The EC assisted in promotion of the Sustainability Action Plan town meeting, Yellow Bike Crowd Funding Campaign, and Earth Hour. This year they launched a program called Careers with Impact in association with Career Development. At Careers with Impact, students can get one-on-one time with professionals in the sustainable workforce and have the opportunity to ask questions from a panel of professionals. The EC expanded the NAU Sustainability Leadership Awards to include community members, which established a stronger community relationship and presented the Awards with the highest number of nominees per category. Read more about all the [EC Sustainability Award winners](#).

One of the most rewarding accomplishments of the EC was that they successfully eradicated plastic bags from the entire NAU campus. They also launched a home football game tailgate-recycling program where a group of volunteers spent time during tailgating to educate students and visitors on recycling. The volunteers assisted in proper recycling and were successful in diverting a significant amount of waste from the landfill to the recycling centers.

Green Jacks

[Green Jacks](#) (GJ) is the Student Environmental Caucus and they represent the student voice. Within the past year they have made great strides towards sustainability and have become one of the most powerful student groups on campus. They raised awareness about energy concerns on campus and represented the student voice during the NAU Solar debates. They assisted with the Better World Film Series, held discussions with the community regarding important topics, were active with communication about events and sustainability, and helped the Open Air Market grow. The GJs advocated for a plastic bag free campus and were highly involved in the Plastic Bag Ban in Flagstaff by attending city council meetings and representing NAU. Last spring, they created an event called Earth Jam, which will now be the kick-start event before Earth Week and is a great way for students to get involved and learn about what NAU is doing to become a greener campus. The group worked closely with Dining Services to get eateries across campus to post signage advertising the 50 cent discount customers can get from bringing their own reusable cup.

The GJs planned to launch “Students for a Better World Seminar Series” that will begin in the fall of 2015. They will cover a significant amount of sustainability issues and will give students the chance to learn from professionals and get hands on workshop experience.

Environmental Caucus Action Teams

Within the Environmental Caucus are Action Teams. These teams focus more closely on specific topics such as transportation, energy, sustainable landscapes, communication, and waste. These teams then come together at the monthly EC meetings and discuss their projects, plans, and hear feedback.

Transportation Action Team (TransAT)

The Transportation Action Team aims to keep transportation around campus safe and efficient. Within the past year they have identified unsafe, trouble spots and attempted to fix or find a solution for them, worked with NAU Police Department to ensure the safety of NAU, created a partnership between Campus Recreation Services and Parking and Shuttle Services, promoted Bike to Work Week and hosted Bike to Work Week breakfast, and provided feedback on the Transportation section of the Sustainability Action Plan. They continue to develop partnerships and provide feedback to NAU regarding unsafe areas. They also work with the bus systems to create a safe and reliable transportation source to decrease personal car transportation around campus. The TransAT constantly works to increase bike usage and public transportation around campus to decrease car traffic while also making campus a safe traveling community.

Energy Action Team

The purpose of the Energy Action Team is to investigate and pursue clean energy projects that will enable NAU to reach climate neutrality. Within the past year, they have made great strides in reaching that goal by arranging and executing a project proposal for a six panel [solar hot air heating technology system](#) on Property Surplus. They also assisted in the NAU Solar debate by reviewing finances of the San Francisco garage and advising the Green Fund, established a relationship between a representative from San Diego Gas & Electric to assess micro-grid potential, established a connection between the NAU community to discuss pros and cons of an NAU biomass plant initiative, and included students in the Action Team to engage them in applied learning and tap into their ability to work on various carbon neutral initiatives. The Energy Action Team has created a partnership with the City of Flagstaff Sustainability Director to learn and discuss clean energy allocation of the Hoover Dam. They also created a partnership with the faculty and staff of the environmental sciences and climate sciences programs to discuss collaborations engaging classes in support of the carbon neutrality goals. Lastly, this team consulted on the submittals of two NAU Requests for Proposals. One is for the installation of a solar array on the San Francisco Garage and the other is to assess the purchasing of Renewable Energy Certificates. Learn more about NAU's [green power purchases](#).

Communications Action Team (CommAT)

The Communications Action Team was created to spread awareness and understanding of the structure and purpose of the sustainability-related organizations on campus. Within the past year they have updated and modified all Green NAU webpages, coordinated a successful Earth Hour, which consisted of fire performers, and created a liaison with Flagstaff Dark Skies Coalition to educate students and parents of NAU's dark skies. They also launched the Green Wall during the spring of 2015, which is located on the back wall at the Green Scene and is an easy way for students to know what is happening around campus regarding sustainability. CommAT also completed a [movie](#) to be shown at NAU's new employee orientation to communicate many of the sustainable initiatives on campus and ways to get involved to all incoming employees.

Sustainable Environmental Practices Action Team (SEPAT)

The Sustainable Environmental Practices Action Team was created to eliminate the use of toxic herbicides, pesticides, and other hazardous materials on NAU campus, and facilitate land-based practices that demonstrate sustainable methods. During this past year, SEPAT recruited students to analyze soil samples, initiated a sustainability signage and map project for campus, began a report on weed barrier experiments conducted by the Sustainable Landscape Management (SLM) Team in the NAU green house, and they participated in the Steering Committee for Campus Landscape Assessment where they emphasized chemical-free maintenance. SEPAT also participated in volunteer hand weeding programs on campus lawns and worked with the SLM project to refine the budget for full implementation of an herbicide-free campus. SEPAT is expanding its efforts beyond pesticide studies and will be continuing its work on sustainable signage and investigating the potential to create native pollinator habitat and honey bee habitat on campus. Do to this expansion of goals; the team has changed its name to the Sustainable Landscaping Action Team.

[Get involved with the Environmental Caucus and the Action Teams!](#)

Green Fund

As always, the Green Fund had a tremendous year of accomplishments and funded seven projects in calendar year 2014. [Learn more about their projects.](#)