

SU Among Top 10 Schools in the Nation for Waste Diversion Efforts

Seattle University took sixth place out of 145 schools across North America in the waste diversion category of this year's RecycleMania. Normally an eight-week competition through which colleges and universities closely track and compare their recycling and composting rates, this year's RecycleMania took place over five weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When all was said and done, SU comfortably met its goal of finishing in the top 10 nationally and was #1 in Washington state. The university's final diversion rate (recycling plus composting) of 69.5 percent was a vast improvement over last year's performance of 56.4 percent.

Within Washington, Gonzaga took 15th place with a diversion rate of 60.5 percent, the University of Washington placed 16th with a rate of 58.8 percent and Pacific Lutheran University finished at #26 with 52.6 percent. This year's RecycleMania winner was Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles with a diversion rate of 85.3 percent.

"These are great achievements," Nathan Wolk, recycling coordinator and compost technician, said of SU's success in waste diversion, "but it puts into perspective the additional improvements Seattle University must make if we want to reach our diversion goal of 90 percent (Zero Waste) by 2025. SU's Recycling Department has been taking several measures to help improve our recycling and composting efforts," Wolk continued, "including updating signage, implementing a new bin placement system, adjusting pick-up schedules and building departmental relationships."

Looking ahead, he cited the goals of working with campus vendors on waste-diversion efforts, creating a more sustainable procurement system for the university and further extending the Recycling Department's reach across university departments.

"These efforts—in combination with increased awareness, changing consumer habits and more education—will greatly contribute to SU's zero-waste efforts and help us surpass our goal of a 90 percent diversion rate well before 2025. With continued dedication and increased community efforts, we can reach our goal."