



earth day 2011

EARTH DAY NETWORK

CAMPUS ORGANIZER GUIDE

www.earthday.org

Earth Day University Leading the Movement

Dynamic, aggressive action has the power to capture the attention of peers and leaders, and is most powerful when its purpose is clear. Earth Day 2011's campaign is simple: organize the world's largest environmental service movement to show our leaders the critical importance of protecting our planet. It is time to stop waiting for policymakers to enact environmental legislation and for individuals to become the catalysts for change by generating *A Billion Acts of Green*®.

April 22
Earth Day

Every Act Matters

Introduction

Work with Us and Other Campuses for a Sustainable Future

On April 22, 1970, twenty million Americans, led by students, took to the streets in protest of the rampant pollution throughout the country. Together, these men and women gave birth to the modern environmental movement. As a result, the U.S. government responded by establishing U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and passing the first generation of environmental protections, including the Clean Air and Water Acts and the Endangered Species Act .

Today, Earth Day is still a tremendous vehicle for change. In an era when carbon emissions are sky-rocketing and effective climate and clean energy legislation could provide millions of young graduates with green employment, it is vital that campuses come together and demand a sustainable future. Earth Day is the perfect platform for students to re-ignite the environmental concerns of the nation, teach new audiences about climate and clean energy, and address environmental concerns.

This coming Earth Day, Earth Day Network is asking student leaders to organize events that will unite their campuses around individual acts of green and alter their community's perception of the environment. Earth Day University wants campus student groups to join Earth Day Network's *A Billion Acts of Green*® campaign, which is an international effort to mobilize a billion acts of environmental service. The campaign will inspire peers to act green because it provides a platform for individual acts to count as part of a larger movement.

An "Act of Green" is an action that reduces an individual's carbon footprint or educates an individual about the environment

By participating in Earth Day University and reporting the "Acts of Green" generated, your school will be entered into *A Billion Acts of Green*® University Challenge! The competition will award the universities and colleges that generate the most Acts of Green. There will be two divisions: schools with over 4,000 undergraduates, and schools with less than 4,000 undergraduates. The top three schools in each division will receive an award.

Why Earth Day?

A perfect venue for generating individual acts of green is an Earth Day event. The function can range from an Earth Day festival, trash pick up, tree planting, or an environmental film screening. The important thing is to have students either perform an act of green at the event, or commit to a future environmental act. For example, students might register the number of electronics they have recycled, or pledge to bike rather than drive to class the following week. Just make sure to collect the aggregate figures and report them to your Earth Day University contact.

Remember to email us about the acts you generate to participate in ***A Billion Acts of Green***[®] University Challenge. The more “Acts of Green” you register, the better your chance to win!

The ultimate goal is to show how a green future is important to everyone. A successful event will help generate numerous Acts of Green and give you the ammunition to address environmental concerns with your campus administration and elected leaders.

How Can You Participate?

The goal for celebrating Earth Day on your campus is to get as many people to participate as possible. Make sure you involve staff, faculty, and the local community as well as students. In order for your event to be an official Earth Day event, you must register it on Earth Day Network’s website at act.earthday.org/events. Below are three effective ways for you and your school to get involved in an official Earth Day event:

1. EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

Having an Earth Day festival is a fun way of encouraging your fellow students and community to get involved in saving the environment. Generate awareness of campus and local environmental issues by inviting speakers, bands, vendors, etc. Make sure to invite students, faculty, and residents from your area and organize a day of fun that ties back to the environment. To increase the size of the event, you may want to partner with nearby colleges. You can also incorporate an Earth Day message into previously planned events, such as the Spring Fling or other prominent campus events.

Every participant to your Earth Day Festival will count as an Act of Green!

2. GLOBAL DAY OF CONVERSATION

Another way to observe Earth Day 2011 is to hold a Campus Global Day of Conversation event, where you ask a campus, state or federal elected official to hold a dialogue with students regarding the green economy or other local green policy issues. Simply invite one of these officials and organize a forum for a discussion on green economy challenges in your community. Thanks to our partnership with Campus To Congress (C2C), we can help you set up a dialogue with your federal Senator or Congressman over Skype. For more information about this opportunity or how you can organize a Global Day of Conversation event, please refer to the guide located on our website: www.earthday.org/earth-day-2011.

3. BILLION ACTS OF GREEN EVENT

Rather than organize an Earth Day Festival or Global Day of Conversation, you can set up an event dedicated to environmental service and designed specifically to generate “Acts of Green”. Here are some suggestions.

- Set up a campus clean-up with students, faculty and staff. Count the volunteers and the pounds of trash and recycling they pick up as Acts of Green.
- Hold a tree planting event. Count every tree planted as an Act of Green.
- Collect e-waste as a fundraiser. Some businesses buy electronic waste that you collect – this helps recycling efforts and keeps toxins out of landfills. Every pound of material you collect for this recycling effort can count as an Act of Green.
- Organize an Earth Day hike, walk, run, bike or swim. Each participant counts as an Act of Green.
- Screen an environmental film and hold a discussion forum afterwards. Each viewer is an Act of Green.

Remember to register for *A Billion Acts of Green*® University Challenge by emailing the total number of acts your school generated to your Earth Day University contact or the Assistant Director of Earth Day 2011, Franklin Russell, russell@earthday.org. You need to have your school’s acts counted and registered by April 25th in order to be considered for Earth Day Network’s prize package.

Important Event Organizing Tips

Work with Other Student Groups

To have a truly large, successful event, it is essential to partner with other student groups on campus. Working with other groups will increase your event's resources and enhances its appeal to the student body. Therefore, one of your first steps in organizing your event should be researching campus student groups.

Make a chart of the various student organizations you want to approach and list each group's focus. Determine the relationship between the environment and each group's purpose. Some student organizations will have a clear connection to the environment, while other links may be less obvious and may require more thought. Possible connections may include healthy living, civic service or a personal connection with someone in your own group. Here is an example of a difficult group to target and how to approach them:

Darfur Activists—These anti-genocide groups are dedicated to raising awareness and funds on behalf of Darfur. The violence these groups want to stop is being intensified by dwindling natural resources caused by the region's water contamination and desertification. Consequently, you could easily approach this organization to participate in your Earth Day event via the subjects of water conservation and sustainable farming. Someone from their group might want to join the rally to discuss how fragile eco-systems contribute to violence and the ways to address and prevent further resource destruction.

Once the connections are determined, approach the groups and propose a partnership for the event. Allow each group to have a representative on the organizing team and make sure to include their priorities in the event. All participating groups need to feel as though they own an element of the event to make it a success.

Important note about partnerships: Before reaching out to any potential partners, be sure to define what you want from them, in clear, concise and specific terms. Be sure you are comfortable communicating your goals clearly to partners. Keep it simple.

Finally, consider working with environmental or other groups at neighboring or rival universities to organize your event. Sometimes friendly competitions can inspire greater action!

Working with the Administration, Faculty and Staff

To further strengthen your event and make it more official, try to get the administration, faculty and staff involved in the planning process as well as the event. Organizers should try to collaborate with the highest-level representative possible - someone who can respond to student demands and be held accountable for any promises. Ideally, the college President will take the matter seriously enough to speak on behalf of the campus; the environmental department head will talk about sustainability in the classroom; and the head of facilities management can talk about campus energy efficiency. Regardless of who participates, make sure the administration, faculty and staff are a part of the event.

Registering the Acts and Wrapping up the Event

The first thing to do after your event is to total the number of green acts generated by the event and email them to your Earth Day University contact to be entered in *A Billion Acts of Green*® University Challenge. Your Acts of Green must be submitted by April 25th in order to participate in the challenge. If you do not have an Earth Day University contact, please email Franklin Russell, russell@earthday.org.

Lastly, follow up with the groups and administrators that participated in the event to collect feedback. Thank them for their participation and ask for their input on the event.

Steps to Organizing an Event

GETTING STARTED: WHAT YOU NEED TO SUCCEED

A. Set the Event & Form a Team

Pick an Event. Work within an existing Earth Day event or start your own. Begin by learning what's already being planned in your community. Check [Earth Day Network's website](#) for the latest listing of planned events, and to look for contacts and organizers on campus or in your community.

Enlist core members, two or three dedicated students and ideally a supportive professor or staff member to spearhead the organizing effort.

Ask other campus groups what they are planning.

Organize a kick-off meeting to identify possible partners. Invite campus groups who are planning an Earth Day event or who might be interested in helping with one. Remember to find the connection between your event and their group. Pull together a steering committee. (For more on recruiting volunteers, see [Building Support.](#))

List your event on Earth Day Network's Web site so that locals in your area can find the event: act.earthday.org/events.

Form committees. If you choose to organize your own Earth Day event, consider forming committees to oversee basic functions, including project/event planning, materials, publicity and outreach.

B. Set a Goal

Do research. Find out where your political leaders stand on various environmental issues, who/what/where your school gets its power from, etc. Make sure you know all of the relevant information that will make your campus Earth Day event successful.

Set campaign goals. Be ambitious, but realistic. Decide how many people you want involved and how the event will generate acts of green. Whatever you do, set clear goals so you can assess your progress along the way.

C. Choose a Strategy

Identify your goals and objectives. How will you achieve them? Will you rely solely on existing group members or will you recruit more members? Will your campaign make extensive use of campus media, or will you try to expand interest into your community? Will your strategy involve building a coalition or retaining a separate organizational identity and focus, or both? There are many ways to craft your strategy. Pull together your steering committee and choose an action plan that is best for you.

Educate yourself and others about your campaign. Lots of good information already exists, don't try to reinvent the wheel. Knowledge of the material is the basis of a good campaign. Make sure you know your stuff before you move forward.

ORGANIZING TOOLS: WHAT YOU NEED TO SUCCEED

A. Developing the Message & Outreach

Formulate a Message. Generate a message that focuses on inspiring individual acts of green. The message should be a positive "call to action" that inspires people to get involved and support the campaign. Make sure to include the message in every piece of material you produce, just like your logo.

Publicize creatively. Use all of your social networking talents and connections. There are also dozens of more traditional ways to get your message out. Consider handing out fliers, sitting at an information booth, phoning, hanging up posters, making announcements during other events, attending meetings of other groups, getting listed in campus calendars, starting an online group or message board, or any other form of publicity suited to your particular campus.

Court the Media. Write a press release—a compelling one-page summary about your event or project and your organization. Be sure to cover who, what, when, where, why, and how, as well as contact information for your group.

Send the release to campus and community newspapers and your school's communications department. Consider including supplemental background materials for outlets that may want to do an in-depth story.

Give the media plenty of notice—at least a week or two in advance of your event. Send all media advisories to both the general office and those reporters most likely to cover the story. Be sure to follow up a few days before your event. You can find sample press releases and media advisories in the [Resources](#) section of this guide.

Follow through. Try to establish relationships with certain reporters. If reporters ask for additional information in order to write a story, keep detailed records of requests and follow through promptly.

Treat the press well. Reporters like to feel that they are important to your group. Be available for interviews. If you are holding an event, assign someone to greet reporters and show them around. The more personal contact reporters receive, the more likely they are to write a substantial and positive story.

Make a visual impact. Events that have bright signs, big props and vivid colors are more likely to get front-page stories as well as bring attention to your campaign and event.

B. Building Support

Do what you do best. Facebook, Twitter, and blog your heart out! Use all of the many tools available these days to get the word out about your event. Create an event on Facebook, or Twitter your friends' updates on your Earth Day organizing efforts.

Find Volunteers. Earth Day is an ideal opportunity for interested students who have never volunteered before to get great experience and build their resumes. You just need to invite them!

Invite a large cross-section of your campus to a recruitment meeting or activity. Make sure notices get posted all over campus. Send a notice to your school newspapers and listservs, stating that you are going to hold an Earth Day organizing meeting at a certain time and place, and that everyone is invited to attend. The key to successful volunteer recruitment is sending out invitations that get a response. Free food or giveaways always help attract attendees!

Start the meeting by introducing yourselves and the meeting agenda. Give participants some background information on your organization. Depending on your stage in the planning process, either brainstorm ideas for an Earth Day event or discuss the plans to date and ask for feedback.

At your meetings, always pass around a sign-up sheet for people to give their name, phone number, email address and dorm/address. Following the meeting, ask the volunteers to sign up for specific tasks they would like to take on.

Create robust organizational systems to help your campaign or event run smoothly. As things heat up, you will want to be confident that you can handle the increased workload.

One important aspect of creating good systems and building capacity is having excellent communication tools within your campaign and for the audience with whom you will communicate.

Make sure you have a good email list or telephone tree to reach key members of your team in a pinch. Create a database from which you can pull your contact list and break down the list in useful ways. Use email, which is fast and affordable, to get out the word about meetings, events and important news.

Reach out to decision-makers. Assess whose approval or involvement you need to make your project successful. This may include other organizations on campus, campus administrators and staff. Go to these people immediately after you have worked up a solid plan. Keep them informed throughout the process and value their input.

Location, Location, Location. Decide early in the planning process where you should host meetings and post information about your event, and if permission is needed. Campuses are typically extremely supportive and helpful of student activities. If you plan to have an Earth Day event, be sure to reserve the location well in advance. Be sure also to have a back-up plan for rain or in case more people than expected show up. Be sure to account for logistics such as accessibility, restrooms, trash cans, bike racks, food/drink, etc.

C. Staying the Course – Timelines & Deadlines

Create clear, achievable completion dates. Know how much time you need for all of your tasks. Set up your volunteers to succeed by allowing that amount of time to produce your desired results. Get volunteer commitments a few weeks or a month ahead of time, if possible. This allows you time to react and get replacements if something unexpected comes up. Be sure to check in with your volunteers along the way to be certain everything is moving according to plan.

Work Backwards. Determine all the steps needed to accomplish your goal. For each step, ask, "How long before Earth Day must this be done?" Then for each time period, add a week. Keep track of all deadlines on a calendar and stick to them. Take notes throughout the organizing process for next year's planning committee.

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