

FY17 Eco-Representative Program Summary

Introduction

This Fiscal Year 2017 (FY17) summary provides an overview and summary of Oregon State University's Eco-Representatives (Eco-Reps) program, a leadership development cohort-based program. Eco-Reps are paid student employees who deliver sustainability programming to the residence hall in which they live. This annual summary references information specific to one year, while providing links to previous reports. For more detailed program background and purpose, please see the [FY15 Program Report](#). The FY15 report contains information specific to program purpose, scope and history.

Eco-Rep Scope of Work

While supervision and primary program support comes from the OSU Sustainability Office, the Eco-Reps program is a partnership between Campus Recycling, University Housing and Dining Services, the Student Sustainability Initiative and the Sustainability Office. Together, these stakeholders develop the Eco-Rep position description, review the program curriculum, and provide ongoing funding for the program. A brief description of the Eco-Rep position is below:

Eco-Reps are responsible for advancing and institutionalizing a culture of sustainability in the residence halls in which they live. Overall, this position is responsible for (1) educating residents about sustainable lifestyles and resources, (2) assisting with marketing and outreach efforts for OSU sustainability programs, and (3) planning and executing sustainability-focused events.

For FY17, six Eco-Reps were hired in fall but due to one Eco-Rep leaving the university at end of fall quarter, programming was carried out in five halls for the year: Bloss, Cauthorn, Finley, Tebeau, and West. These locations were the result of selecting the most-qualified applicants from an applicant pool that spanned all residence halls.

A work plan serves as a general guide for programming. It includes a list of events, campaigns, programs and projects that Eco-Reps support over the academic year. The FY17 Work Plan document is attached to the end of this summary.

During FY15, Eco-Reps produced a [video](#) highlighting what the job entails, what an average day looks like, why they chose to be Eco-Reps, their favorite parts of the job, what challenges they face and how their work impacts their residence halls.

Orientation, Training and Support

Rather than occur in one concentrated timeframe at the beginning of the year, Eco-Rep cohort training and orientation maximizes depth of learning and retention by being spread throughout the year. The Eco-Rep Lesson Book, created and maintained by the Sustainability Office specifically for the Eco-Reps program, serves as the primary capacity building and learning resource. It is a compilation of articles, videos and other material from vetted sustainability sources. The Lesson Book provides an introduction to sustainability principles and aligns subject matter within higher education context so that Eco-Reps are equipped with information, facts and the vocabulary to develop as leaders, become global citizens and communicate effectively to fellow residents. At each weekly meeting, readings or videos from the

Lesson Book are assigned and the cohort discusses the relevance of the material in a facilitated discussion at the next meeting. Eco-Reps repeatedly indicate how key the Lesson Book is in their work, and report increasing satisfaction with its content, as the Sustainability Office, Campus Recycling and SSI have attempted to broaden and diversify the subject matter. Eco-Reps each year provide valuable feedback that informs the next Lesson Book version.

Additional support in FY17 and in years past has come from Eco-Rep “alumni” who, as continuing OSU students, volunteer their time to support their successors. At the end of each year, it is common for Eco-Reps to speak passionately about wanting to see the program continue, expand and improve, and specifically offer to come to future meetings to help orient the next cohort. Other orientation activities include recycling how-to training, campus tours, attending SSI and Sustainability Office team meetings/social gatherings and other activities.

Budget and Wages

The wage budget and actual wage expenses for FY17 wages are below.

Department	FY17 Budgeted	% cost share	FY17 Actual
Sustainability Office	\$1,050.00	16.54%	\$670.31
Pepsi Sustainability Fund, via Campus Recycling	\$3,200.00	50.39%	\$1,975.01
UHDS	\$1,050.00	16.54%	\$723.04
SSI	\$1,050.00	16.54%	\$982.02
Federal Work Study	-	-	\$499.11
Total	\$6,350		\$4,849.49

Table 2. Wage Budget and Wage Expense, FY17

As with every previous year, the program ended under budget. Several factors contributed to the underspend of nearly \$1,500: the mid-year departure from OSU of one Eco-Rep, unexpected access to Federal Work Study funding and the usual trend of individual Eco-Reps working fewer hours than available. Because underspending has been consistent each year of the program, it is likely the same budget will support a cohort of seven paid positions.

Eco-Reps are compensated just above minimum wage, and able to accomplish a surprising amount with very few hours. Eco-Rep average hours worked per week in FY17 varied from person to person, as it has in past years, with a low of 1.4 hrs./week to a high of 3.7 hrs./week. FY17 included approximately 27 weeks of paid work, about the same duration as FY16. The hiring timeline allowed for a similar start date for FY17, with the same number of applications both years: 14. The trend in average hours worked per week is shown in the chart below.

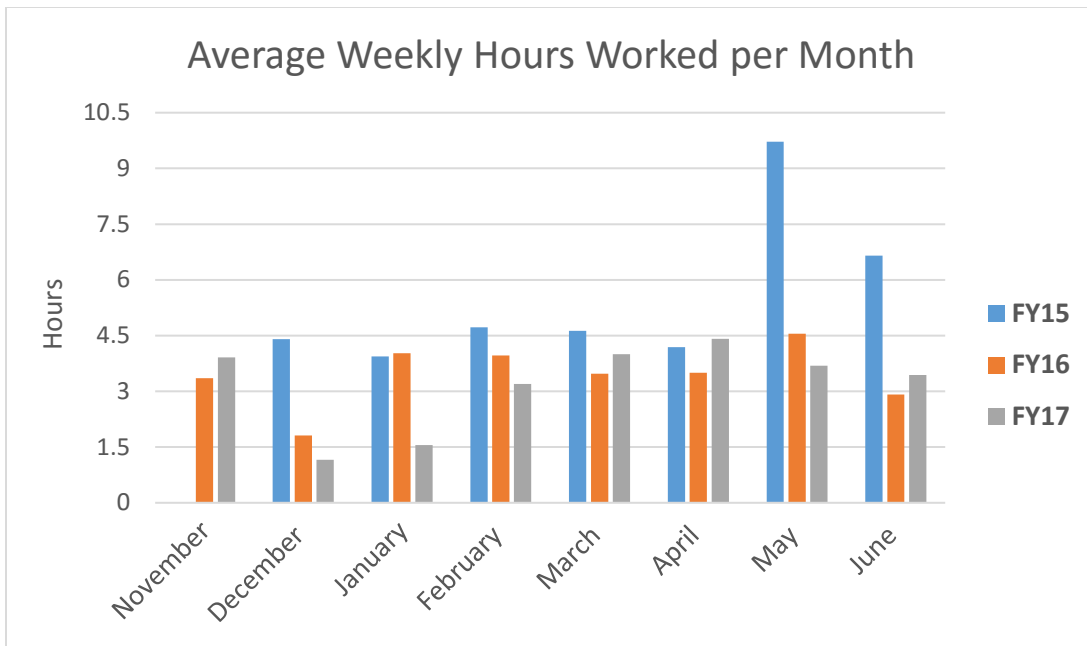


Figure 1. Average (per Eco-Rep) Hours Worked per Week by Month, FY15-FY17

In addition to the wage expense, printing, supplies and miscellaneous other materials were provided at each department’s discretion. During the academic year, other staff and faculty support for the program included training; one on one consultation, coaching and problem solving; meeting attendance; payroll and hiring. Tasks typically conducted in the summer include budgeting, program planning, assessment, reporting and recruitment.

Outcomes, Successes and Challenges

Outreach Totals and Methods

In addition to developing students as sustainability leaders, peer to peer outreach is a key outcome of Eco-Rep work. While some outreach methods vary from Rep to Rep, a large core of tactics are standard and required for all Eco-Reps. Communication vehicles include “Eco-Rep boards,” personalized door markers, social media presence, posters, tabling, flyers, door to door contact, impromptu interaction with fellow residents, business cards, nametags and attendance at hall staff and hall council meetings.

The chart below shows the count of the six most frequently reported types of constituent contact between the three years for which data are available. For a more detailed discussion of outreach methods, please see the relevant section of the [FY15 Report](#).

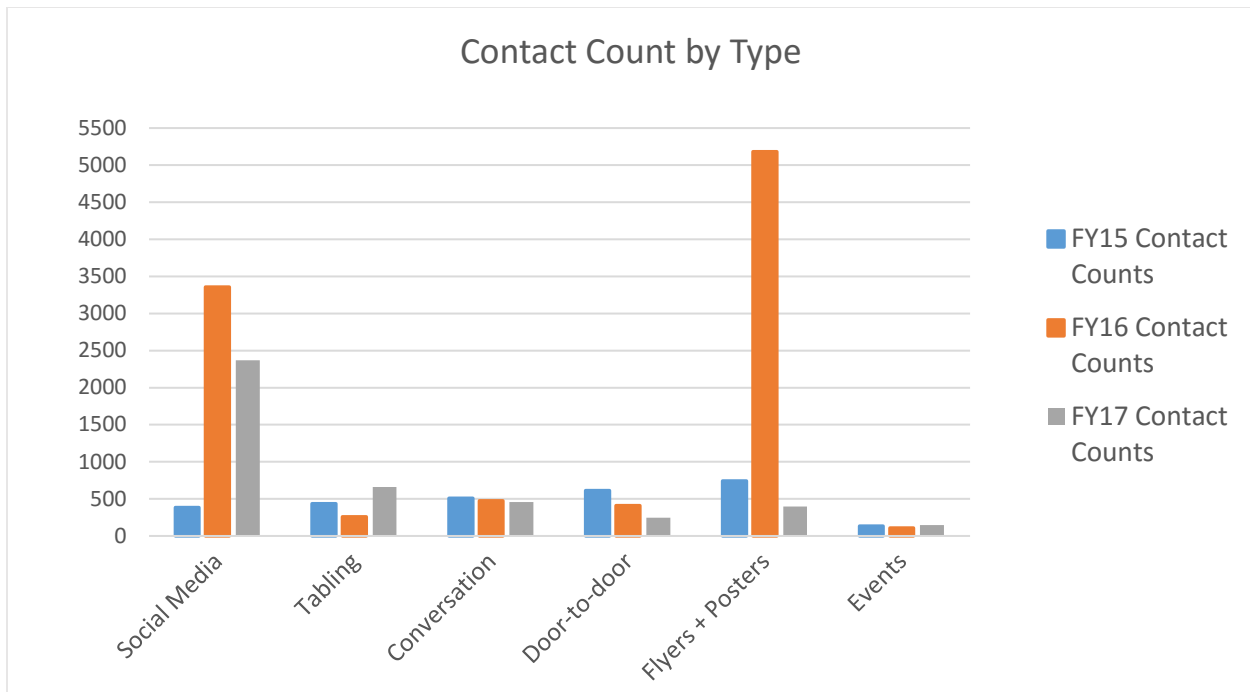


Figure 2. Contact Count by Type Trend, FY15-FY17

To produce the trends above and help track individual as well as program success, Eco-Reps are required to maintain an Outreach Log. The Log is particularly necessary since the cohort does not work in an office environment and the position requires the ability to succeed working independently. The Log tracks contact counts, notable results and “takeaways.” It is useful for assessment purposes but also helped Eco-Reps identify patterns of effectiveness to improve outreach and share information between themselves. Effective use and tracking results within the Log typically varies between Eco-Reps. During FY17, the program produced less contact than FY16 by 44%, but this is in largely due to exceptionally high use of flyer/poster outreach methods in FY16 (5,182 counts). At the end of FY16, Eco-Reps had recommended a reduction in the use of paper material for outreach and it is likely this directly impacted the reduced flyer/poster counts for FY17. Social media continues to be a strong outreach method for the program, up radically in FY16 and FY17.

Below is a table listing contact counts. Contacts were mostly resident students, but also include some staff, faculty and community member contact. Please note the Eco-Rep for Poling Hall moved to Tebeau Hall at the beginning of February.

Eco-Rep building	Contact types with largest reach (listed in decreasing magnitude)	Contact count (regardless of contact type)
Cauthorn	Social Media, posters/flyers	980
Poling/Tebeau	Social Media, tabling	1,306
Bloss	Social Media, events	642
West	Events, door-to-door contact	290
Finley	Social Media, events, tabling	1,060
	TOTAL	4,278

Table 1. Contact Type Count, FY17

Composting

As with any similar program, quantitative assessment is critical but it is sometimes difficult to ensure accuracy. Quantitative results were tracked for the composting program and via Outreach Logs. Qualitative findings were derived from feedback and discussion from the Eco-Reps and other stakeholders. Quantitative results are summarized below.

	FY17	Bloss	Cauthorn	Finley
Hall info	Floors	7	5	7
	Residents (early winter term 2017)	255	335	339
	Rooms (nearly all occupied)	192	156	198
	Participating rooms (# pails issued, highest point)	21	48	33
	% of rooms with pails	11%	31%	17%
Weights	Compost weight - winter & spring break (lb.)	244.1	155.7	160.5
	Compost weight - spring (lb.)	189.0	132.2	111.2
	Total weight (lb.)	433.1	287.9	271.7
Averages	Avg. weight/week - winter & spring break (lb.)	20.3	13.0	13.4
	Avg. weight/week - spring (lb.)	21.0	14.7	12.4
	Avg. weight/week - entire program (lb.)	20.6	13.7	12.9
	Avg. weight/participating room/week (lb.)	0.98	0.29	0.39

Combined, the three halls composted **993 lbs.** of material in winter and spring quarters. Total weight was down from the program total for FY16 of 1,741.5 lbs., at which time five halls participated. Note that in FY17, only three halls have compost results due to a) the relocation of an Eco-Rep within the first half of winter term that did not allow enough time to establish a compost program in the new hall (Tebeau) and b) incomplete data supplied from the Eco-Rep in West Hall.

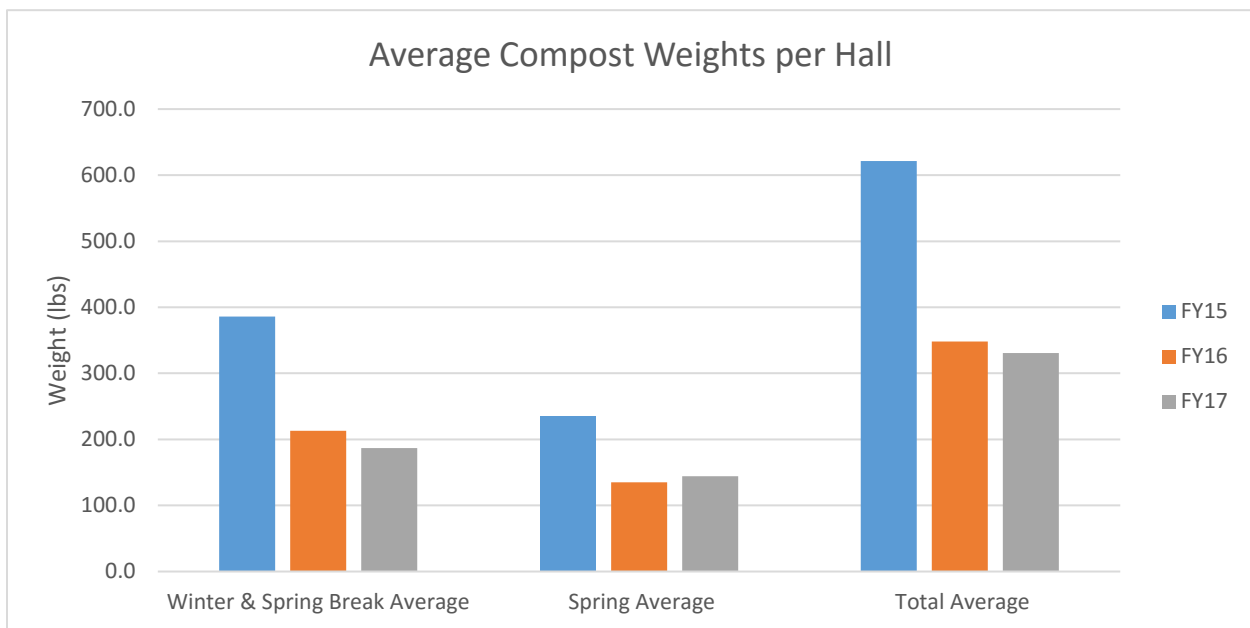


Figure 3. Average Compost Weight per Hall, FY15-FY17

The percentage of rooms participating was down slightly in FY17, averaging 19 percent vs FY16’s 21 percent. These results and the weights noted above demonstrate that in most halls residents participated in total at a slightly lower rate than last year, but did perform marginally better during spring term. The reasons for this are unknown. The following table shows the trend.

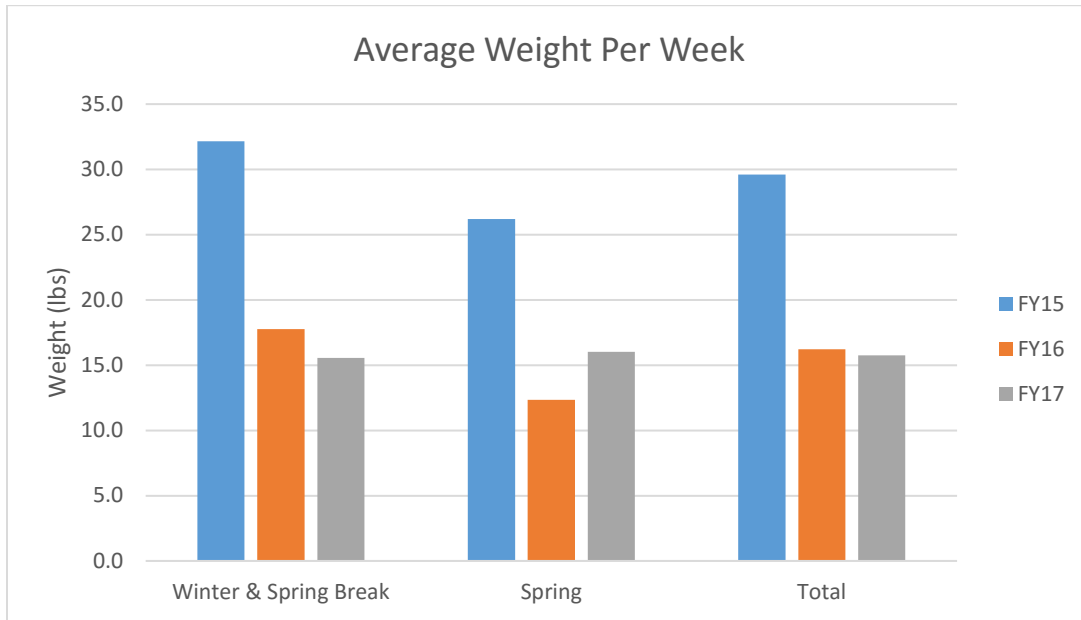


Figure 4. Average Compost Weight per Week, FY15-FY17

Encouragingly, compost weights increased by about one pound per week from winter to spring quarter. In comparison to FY16, the compost weight during spring quarter increased by about three pounds, but stayed about the same in total. Unlike FY16, the trend of composting more as the year progresses is positive, as composting becomes more routine and deeply embedded in residence hall culture.

For more discussion and detail on compost program management, benefits and opportunities, please see the [FY15 Annual Report](#). It should be noted that due to pest, odor and other potential compost management issues – and regardless of numeric outcomes – the compost program would not be possible without a paid workforce in each building each day.

Other program outcomes, success and challenges

With the presence of a UHDS employee at many Eco-Rep weekly meetings, UHDS provided more program support during FY16 and FY17 than in the earlier years of the program. The continued presence of professional staff from partner units is critical to program success. Given that the goals of the program include developing students into sustainability leaders and global citizens, deeper engagement from UHDS’s Residential Education unit would strengthen the institutional support of the Eco-Reps program, and better connect the cohort to relevant development opportunities.

To further formalize the program and maximize development opportunities both for the cohort and program broadly, the Sustainability Office and partners will for FY18 develop program and/or learning outcomes that reflect the missions of the partner organizations and ensure a long term vision for student success. More detailed information about existing outcomes, successes and challenges can be

found in [past reports](#) and for brevity are not repeated here. Additionally, while a high level summary of Eco-Rep work is available in the Work Plan, detailed notes were kept during each weekly Eco-Rep meeting in a Google doc that can be made available by request.

Summary highlights of Eco-Rep programming from FY17 is below.

- Marketing for and working at the Move-Out Donation Drive
 - Major effort by Campus Recycling, Surplus Property and UHDS at the end of each academic year to collect items residents don't want after leaving res halls and redirect them to local non-profits.
- Composting (discussed above)
- Experimental outreach conducted to test ways to reduce contamination and overflow issues in hall recycling rooms. While results were not conclusive, the Eco-Rep who lead this project developed potential methodology to continue experiments in future years.
- Kilowatt Crackdown energy competition between five halls in April
 - Engaged several hundred residents in social media and other events like short film viewings, coloring events with snacks and pizza parties for both kickoff events and the competition winner.
 - Saved UHDS operations approximately \$925, or 14,600 kilowatt hours, in one month.
- Outreach for events like alternative spring breaks and other service trips from Center for Civic Engagement, Repair Fairs, Beyond Earth Day, hiring and recruitment opportunities for on campus sustainability related student employment, Waste Watchers and RecycleMania.
- To support sense of place, and awareness of local first peoples, a trip to Mary's Peak occurred spring quarter in partnership with the Mary's Peak Group local chapter of the Sierra Club.

Conclusion and Summary

In its fifth year, the Eco-Reps program shows decreased performance on some key indicators (like a 44% decrease in individual contact counts) and steady performance for others. Based on feedback from the FY17 cohort and their constituents, the program clearly continues to assist in the institutionalization of sustainable practices in the residence halls and beyond. It also has resulted in developing Eco-Reps as individual leaders and high performers. At least six students from previous cohorts have gone on to deepen their involvement in OSU sustainability programming. Many have become employees of the Eco-Rep partner departments; others have become advisory board members within an institutional governing body – all as the result of their initial introduction and development through the Eco-Reps program. Below are highlights of some program outcomes, including direct feedback from Eco-Reps.

- Institutionalization and support for the Eco-Rep position in the West Hall constitution is evidence of strong tie in for this hall.
- Positive experience having discussions with residents after watching videos during movie nights. The discussions were great and helped facilitate connections with fellow residents.
- Kickoff events for energy competition were fun.
- Graphic design support was good.
- Eco-Reps reported high levels of satisfaction with the amount and type of training and orientation resources provided.
- Lesson Books were great and could try to implement these with residents in the future.

The FY17 Eco-Reps provided extensive ideas for future program changes. Below are some highlights:

- Update the Lesson Book with more current articles and different “levels” of sustainability awareness/competence such as understanding, achieving, influence, etc. Have ER bring an article for discussion in addition to or in lieu of Lesson Book
- ERs could have “office” or “desk” hours at a table or front desk.
- Create campaign goals for each ER like food, sustainability in fashion, etc. Could be collective or individual.
- Have a backup person to perform key tasks if an ER is not available.
- Work beyond the res halls (maybe on things like Eco2Go)

At the end of the year, Eco-Reps were asked to share, in one or very few words, what they got out of the experience. The responses were:

- How to be an advocate
- Out of my comfort zone
- Compost
- Confidence
- Knowledge

Similarly, the Eco-Reps were asked what they saw as their biggest contribution:

- Outreach
- Positive Attitude
- Knowledge
- Planting the seed

Suggested changes from FY16 included the following, all of which were implemented for FY17.

- Less paper material for outreach (which could have resulted in lower reported contact counts)
- Changes to order of Lesson Book readings
- Expand the Eco-Rep program to more residence halls.

Eco-Reps fulfill an important and unique need at OSU by working in the same place as they live and play and therefore reaching peers more effectively than posters, handouts and other methods. Living on-site provides understanding of ideal timing and culture unique to their hall. Understanding this culture, which varies from hall to hall, is critical to any programming delivery. Additionally, it helps further develop the Eco-Reps’ individual skills as adaptive, responsive student leaders who care about sustainability and know how to appropriately share their passion with others.