

CONNECT, INSPIRE, AND INVENT:

AN INAUGURAL SUSTAINABLE
LAB SUMMIT

ALEXANDRIA GALENS // UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

OFFICE OF CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY, SUSTAINABLE LABS PROGRAM COORDINATOR



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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand where gaps may lie in sustainability culture at a large university and how engagement events can help bridge that.
- Learn the steps, key partners, and best practices for hosting a university-wide engagement event.
- Identify next steps to build on event momentum and continue growing sustainable labs engagement.

BACKGROUND

1. Overview of Sustainable Labs at U-M
2. Gaps in programming
3. Solution: Sustainable Lab Summit
4. Key goals of event
5. Key challenges of event



PROGRAMS AT U-M

- Sustainable Lab Certification
- Lab Reuse Program
- Specialty Lab Recycling and Reuse
 - Pipet tip boxes, ice packs,
- Annual Freezer Challenge and Cold Storage Support
- Planet Blue Ambassador (PBA) Training



PROGRAM GAPS

- Researchers engaging with programs but no network to connect with others across U-M.
- People wanted to know more!
- Champions weren't institutionally recognized.
- Lacking official university-wide support for sustainability in research spaces.
 - Siloed efforts across different colleges supported by OCS but not enough cross coordination.
 - No Flint and Dearborn involvement.

SOLUTION=SUMMIT

- Bring together different departments and sustainability leaders.
- Reach groups that haven't yet been involved.
- Promote other sustainability programs
- Recognize sustainability leaders.
- Spur further innovation.



SUMMIT GOALS

Stated Mission: “As part of U-M’s 2025 goals, the Sustainable Lab Summit aims to continue creating a culture of sustainability. The summit will serve as a place where researchers and sustainable lab specialists will come together to share knowledge, discuss potential solutions, and inspire innovation in each other.”

Major Theme: “Questioning our behavior and striving to act authentically and intentionally rather than out of habit or routine.” - Alison Paradise, Founder and Previous CEO of My Green Lab

CHALLENGES

- Ensure that the content is meaningful and builds on existing programs.
- Incentivize people to attend, researchers are busy people!
- Funding to support the event.
- Engage new partners and people.



PLANNING PROCESS

1. Funding/Sponsors
2. Building out the event
3. Communication
4. Attendance Incentives



FUNDING/SPONSORS

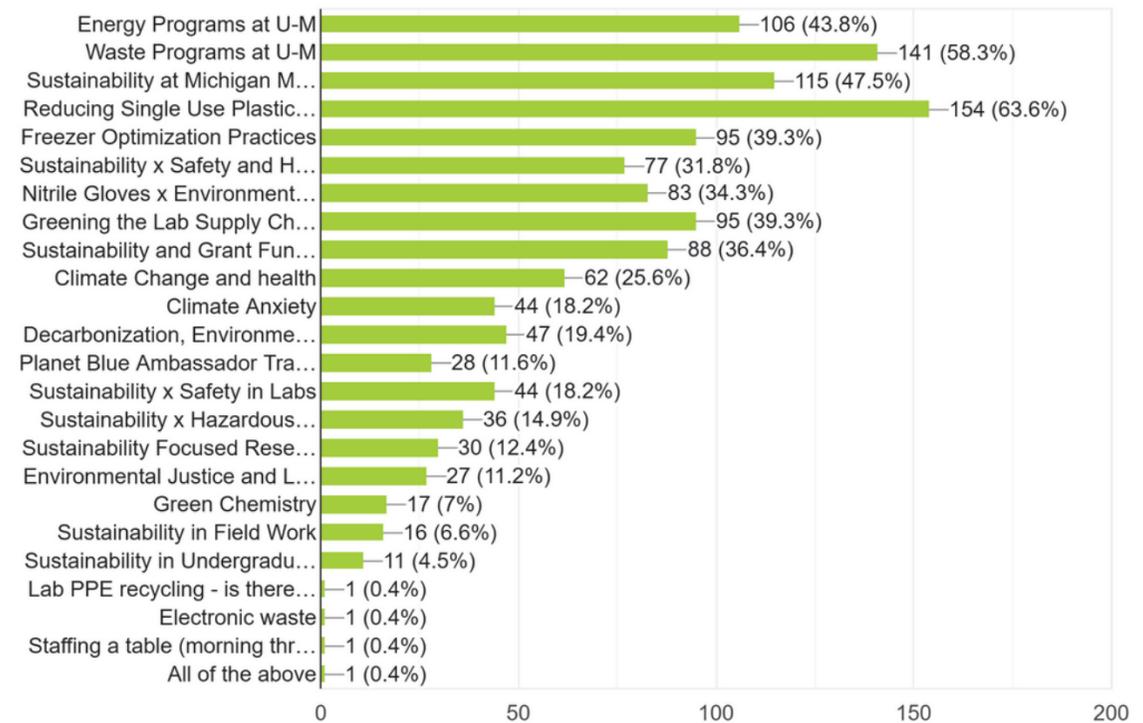
- OCS provided base funding along with LSA college, Medical School (space and planning support), Rackham Graduate School
- Others (\$500): SEAS, LSI, PBA program, and Office of Research
- Key tip: Ask for something small! Research sustainability spans many units so the funds will add up!



BUILDING OUT THE EVENT

- Called for abstracts, tabling, and award nomination submissions.
 - Filled in topical gaps.
- Got researcher and sponsor insight
- People registered indicating sessions of interest and food preferences.
- Landing webpage on OCS website.

Which topics are you interested in learning more about?
242 responses



COMMUNICATION PLAN

- Robust communication plan with key messaging:
 - Free event & free resources (food, grant, lab supplies swap)
 - Office of Vice President for Research (OVPR) support
 - Keynote Address
- Communication channels leveraged
 - Newsletters: Sustainability, units, EHS, etc.
 - Digital signage and flyering
 - “The Record” Article and MM Headlines
 - Canvas banner and Happenings at U-M



ATTENDANCE INCENTIVES

- Chance to win giveaways by signing in.
 - Reusable take-away container
 - Reusable spoon/fork/knife
 - Polycarbin Clear Recycling Bin (if qualified)
 - Outlet timer
- Up to \$500 in sustainability grant funding (apply)
 - Flint Campus Kill-A-Watt meters
 - Corning™ CoolCell™ Cell Freezing Container
 - Reusableware for Chemistry events
 - Waterbath anti-evaporation beads
- Food and swap



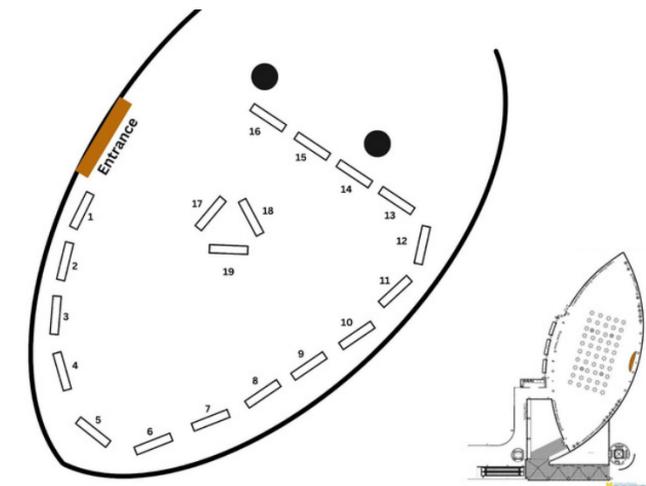
EVENT DAY OF

1. Agenda Overview
 - a. Speakers
2. Keynote Address
3. Tabling
4. Meals
5. Swap Event



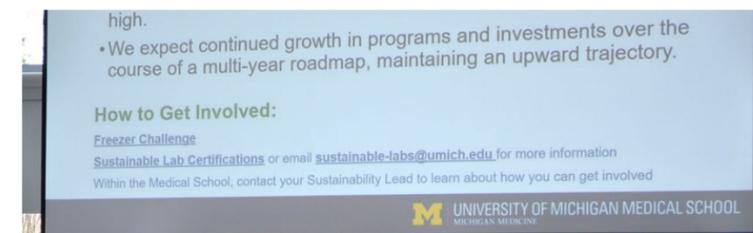
LOGISTICS

1. Volunteers for check-in, session moderators, swap support, tabling
2. Run of the show doc
 - a. Contact information
 - b. Volunteer responsibilities
3. Detailed schedule breakdown
4. Tabling map



AGENDA

- Internal OCS Speakers
 - Waste and energy programs, freezers, scope 3
- U-M Partners
 - Single use plastics, safety/haz waste, clinical actions, climate & health, just energy transition, climate anxiety, PBA
- External Speakers
 - Supply chain equity, grant funding
- Lightning Talk Panel
 - U-M success stories



KEYNOTE

- Alison Paradise
 - My Green Lab founder and former CEO
 - Currently runs The Epicenter
- Theme:
 - Question everything
 - Act intentionally and not out of habit
- Opening address: OVPR staff
- Closing remarks: AVP for Campus Sustainability



TABLING

- OCS Tables
 - Waste, energy, general programs
 - Giveaways and new tools like freezer maintenance kit
- Sign up open for other tables
 - Units: Life Sciences Institute, Michigan Medicine, LSA
 - Vendors: Fisher, Millipore, Thermo
 - Collectives: MiCCA, Research Cores, Nature Rx, MI-CARES



MEALS

- Zero waste lunch and breakfast
 - All bulk
 - All compostables
 - Bin watchers
 - Opportunity to share other OCS programs
- Internal caterer
- Low carbon menu
 - No red meat, only turkey and chicken
 - Vegan and vegetarian options
- Got food head count ahead of time



AWARDS

- Accepted nominations via Google Form
- Categories
 - Overall champion
 - Waste reduction
 - Water stewardship
 - Energy conservation
- Plaque and \$200 voucher for Fisher Scientific supplies
 - Ex of use: Lab replaced disposable syringes with a reusable ones



SWAP EVENT

- Drop off in the morning
- Carts from Lab Swap Shop brought over
- Ended the day with the swap to retain attendees
- 450 lbs and \$13,200 saved compared to buying new



WHAT NOW?

1. Feedback
2. Key Takeaways
3. Momentum and Next Steps



FEEDBACK

- Positively received and people want it bi-annually.
 - 88% of people gave it 4/5 or better.
 - 78% plan to incorporate things they learned into their research and 90% into their daily life.
- Planning and logistics
 - Start even earlier! The earlier you have the schedule the earlier you can promote!
 - Designated tabling coordinator to streamline check-in.
 - Better maps and record all sessions.
- Food
 - Put vegetarian and vegan options first in line.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Themes

1. Question Everything
2. Act intentionally
 - a. Versus habit or convenience
3. ID greatest potential impact
4. Window of tolerance
5. Unite people for support and collaboration!

Takeaways

1. Need insitutional financial backing
2. More hub and spoke models
 - a. "Sustainability Leads"
3. Push back and ask "Why Not?"
 - a. EHS
4. Empower students to engage

NEXT STEPS

- Keep engaging!
 - Mini-workshop, then another summit
- Keep people connected.
 - Working groups - FAIL
 - Advisory committee - SUCCESS
- Further develop partnerships.
 - LSA, SPH, Med School
 - Dearborn pipet tip recycling
- New sustainable research positions
 - FTE for Sustainability and Lab Safety
 - Sustainability Faculty Advisor



Questions?



Email

agalens@umich.edu

sustainable-labs@umich.edu

Website

ocs.umich.edu/programs/workplace-initiatives/sustainable-labs/

