

# College Community Focuses on Environmental Sustainability

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AN ESSENTIAL PART of the mission of Research College of Nursing is “caring for our communities.” To honor this – and to celebrate Earth Month 2025 – the college hosted a variety of activities focused on sustainability and responsible buying habits. The “Buyerarchy of Needs” (Figure 1), developed by Sarah Lazarovic, was used as a basis for these activities. This model assists consumers in discerning whether a new product should be purchased by first guiding them through potential alternatives. Prior to purchasing an item, buyers are asked to consider whether they can use something they already have, borrow the item, swap something they already have for the item, thrift the item, or make the item.

The Buyerarchy model was presented to the college community (staff, faculty, and students) through a series of videos and discussion boards hosted on their learning management system. Participation

was optional and no course credit or grades were awarded for participation. Ninety-one percent of the college community accepted the invitation to the optional course and 29% participated in some way. Each



week highlighted one or two of the alternative options to buying, such as thrifting, borrowing, or making. Videos from faculty and staff highlighted the weekly topic and

discussion boards were provided to engage in further conversation. Throughout the month, 18% of course participants watched at least one video and 12% watched two or more videos. Four percent of course participants contributed at least once in a discussion board.

The activities culminated in a clothing swap, during which members of the college community were encouraged to donate gently used articles of clothing that could be “swapped” for others. Ten percent of the college community donated; donations were so generous that the clothing swap was opened up to the whole college instead of solely to those who donated. Approximately 17% of the college community attended the swap. The items that were not claimed during the swap (206 lbs) were donated to a local nonprofit that partners with the college.

At the conclusion of the Earth Month activities, a survey was conducted among those participants in the college community and had a response rate of 12.5%. It was found that 66.6% of respondents felt that the activities increased their likelihood of acting in sustainable ways in the future. Additionally, 66.6% of the respondents stated that the clothing swap was their favorite activity, followed by the sustainability videos (19%).

In addition to the success of this initiative, lessons were learned to improve future Earth Month activities. For example, it was found that a month-long program discouraged sustained engagement.

The majority of video views and discussion posts occurred during the first two weeks and drastically declined as the end of the semester approached. It was also found that a plan for nonprofit donation should be developed prior to the conclusion of the clothing swap. Because it was initially unknown how many items would be donated or left after the swap, an organization had to quickly be found to take the remaining items. Due to strong community partnerships this was not hard, but advanced planning with community partners would allow for increased partner participation. While these activities were specifically done within an academic setting, they could easily be transferred to other healthcare settings as a way to promote sustainability among nurses and the healthcare community. 🔥

#### References

Lazarovic, S. (n.d.). The buyerarchy of needs. <https://www.sarahl.com/>



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