

Establishing Clothing Donation Bins on Campus to Limit Waste and Help Students in Need

Erik Hardiman, Environmental Studies, Central Washington University

Introduction

Clothing waste is a huge issue in modern society. Due to personal changes, moving, or lack of interest, many articles of clothing that are still usable and even desirable end up in landfills due to lack of awareness or facilities for donation.

In response to this issue and in partnership with CWU Surplus, the Wildcat Pantry, and CWU Career Services, a clothing donation bin has been built and is to be placed in the Student Union and Recreation Center in a widely trafficked and visible location. This, in combination with clothing drop points organized at the Wildcat Pantry and at Career Services will help stem the flow of clothing into landfills and, through Career Services' Casual Closet, help students in need find clothing.

Clothing Donation Pathway

Step One: The Source of Clothing

Every year, usable clothing is disposed of or abandoned by students and ends up away from those who can use it. This is caused by factors such as lack of knowledge about systems to donate clothing on campus or lack of access to those systems at convenient times.

Step Two: Clothing Donation Locations

A clothing donation bin, as seen in Fig. 2 and 3, was built and is to be placed in the SURC. This bin will be located in a visible and easily accessible area, and has a slot on top for putting clothing through while making it harder to quickly remove, and has a lid on top and on the back, both of which lock, to facilitate clothing pick-up. In addition to this, additional clothing drop locations will be at Career Services in Bouillon Hall and Wildcat Pantry In the Library. Contact information for both will be placed on the bin as well as that it is managed by Career Services.

Step Three: Processing and Organization

The clothing will then be picked up and processed by Career Services. Another student, Deante Barry, is working on facilitating and organizing these next two steps. Processing involves sorting and removing anything that lies outside of donation guidelines, clothing that's too dirty, for example, as this could pose a health risk to those collection and processing the clothing, and are then washed.

Step Four: Distribution

The clothing then goes to CWU's Career Services, where it is displayed in their Casual Closet, where students can go to get clothing they want or need for free. This helps combat clothing waste and helps provide access to clothing for students In need. Deante' is helping Career Services revitalize the area and get it ready for this purpose.

Recommendations:

Although progress was made in organizing and facilitating a system for clothing donation on campus, certain areas and times remain underserved. The entirety of North Campus as well as most of the southern parts of campus still do not have a convenient donation location within walking distance while carrying a load. Despite original intents of this project to get bins in Student Village in the north and In the vicinity of Kamola Hall on the southern side of campus, those ultimately proved to be outside of the scope and timeline of this project.

More work also needs to be done in promotion and spreading the word about available facilities and services, and more information will be added to the bin in the coming weeks, as it is in a very visible location.

In addition, more work needs to be done around times of high clothing waste, such as during move-out periods, to make it easier for students to donate unwanted clothing instead of throwing it out.

Clothing Donation Locations



Fig. 1: Map of the CWU campus with the locations of all three clothing drop locations, the Bin in the SURC, Career Services in Bouillon Hall, and the Wildcat Pantry in the Library.

Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 (Right): Pictures of the outside and inside of the boxes. Fig. 1, on the left, shows the box with hall doors closed, while Fig. 3, on the far right, shows the top door, which would usually be locked, open to facilitate larger donations or unloading. The back door can also be seen, though it is closed in this picture.



UN Sustainable Development Goals Supported:



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank:

- Dr. Susan Kaspari for her guidance and connections throughout the course of the project
- Jason Bakeman of CWU Surplus for volunteering materials, tool, and supplies, as well as being a driving force behind the project as a whole
- CWU Career Services and especially Dale Larson for being very accommodating with accepting clothes and volunteering to collect, wash, and distribute them.
- Kaila Red Bow (Wildcat Pantry) for logistical advice and providing a clothing donation point at the Library
- Deante' Barry, who helped set up the Career Services Casual Closet and is essentially the other half of this project
- Trevor Finnern and Jobe Kirner, both Mechanical Engineering and Technologies, for labor and resources help.