

Walsall College Students' Union Student and Staff Engagement That Bit Extra

Section 1 About the project

Summary

Walsall College Students' Union has an engaging and dynamic approach to promoting a range of extra-curricular activities through That Bit Extra. The sustainability agenda is raised through a variety of short and long term opportunities that enable students and staff to work together on everything from plants to pants.

Project partners

That Bit Extra is driven by the Students' Union but engages students and staff across College. That Bit Extra have benefitted from the NUS Student EATS initiative, Lloyds Money for Life Campaign, RHS support and locally from Walsall Housing Group, Wates Construction and various donations from businesses and individuals.

Section 2 The results

The problem

Walsall College is located in the town centre, surrounded by manufacturing with poor soil and a history of Japanese knotweed.

The approach

There are no land based courses taught at Walsall College but the environmental agenda has been incorporated in a variety of ways. The Students' Union successfully bid for the NUS Student Eats to promote a College food growing society and created a raised bed allotment on wasteland. The College entered environmental projects in the Lloyds MFL Challenge. Don't Spend a Wedge saw students handing out free pots & seeds and Cash4Trash project raised recycling awareness highlighting items to exchange for cash. Our Chelsea Fringe entry used recycled containers to display plants in a shopping trolley to challenge the 'take away culture' and show how to grow your own. Walsall College was the first winner of the Pantpreneur Challenge, a national enterprise competition by Pants 2 Poverty to raise awareness of Fairtrade cotton. Their prize was a trip to India to see fair trade cotton was produced.

Our goals

To develop a student led garden to encourage students to grow their own fruit and vegetables and to raise environmental awareness across College.



Profile

- FE College
- 7818 FE students & 253 HE students
- 700 staff
- Urban

Category supported by



Winner's case study

Obstacles and solutions

Poor growing conditions	Built raised beds, purchased a poly tunnel & found a source of free horse manure
No curriculum land based courses	Promoted and supported a range of environmental projects to students and staff through the Student Union
Limited budget	Applied for grants from the NUS, Lloyds MfL, Local Authority, Wilkinsons. Joined the RHS campaign for school gardening for resource support. Emailing staff for unwanted garden items generated donations of pots, slabs, birdbath, a shed, seeds, horse manure and a broken cold frame
Challenging site and limited staff skills	Engaged construction staff who used opportunity to develop curriculum area and extend provision from workshop to 'live' site. Successfully applied for Wates Construction community day who volunteered for a day to move on more complex & labour intensive tasks

Performance and results

Walsall College is in an area of high social and economic deprivation. Child poverty is one of the highest in the UK and many of our families live in homes where there are long histories of unemployment or very low wages. Adult obesity in Walsall is significantly worse than the national average, with physical activity and healthy eating below the national average. The food growing projects provide a valuable and unique opportunity for all students to actively get involved in developing environmental awareness and encouraging healthier eating and lifestyle habits. The impact of the food growing projects is far greater than the 600 square metres allocated. The Student Eats project has been incorporated across College and helps students develop real sustainable skills. The development of the garden has been challenging and staff and students have had to respond creatively to keep the project on track. Winning a trip to India in the Pantrepreneur challenge was a massive journey of self-discovery and was a humbling experience for all of the students.

Section 3 The future

Lessons learned

Network, ask for help and have fun.

Sharing your project

YouTube links of our videos have travelled far and wide.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5FZs9jxbhOc&feature=em-share_video_user
<http://youtu.be/8lmKzIBcy-l>

What has it meant to your institution to be a Green Gown Award finalist?

Green Gown Award acknowledges our achievements and helps embed our evolving environmental passion and impact. The Award has raised the profile of the College and Walsall to a national and international level

Further information

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