Proposal for a UC Resource Exchange programme

Introduction:

The idea of a UC resource exchange is to encourage the re-use and recycling of items within our University that are still usable and in good condition, to prevent them from ending up in landfill before their time. It has a simple mission: “take what you need and give what you don’t”; a way for people within the University to get rid of unwanted goods and connect with others who want or could use them. This helps reduce our environmental impact, reduces our waste disposal and purchasing costs and encourages re-thinking of what we consider rubbish.

Proposed initiatives:

Ways of fostering resource exchanges on campus involve:

1. Setting up a central “free box” where staff and students can deposit things they don’t need anymore and pick up items that they could use.

2. Setting up a UC Resource Exchange website and accompanying e-mail database to foster communications within the UC community about available items.

3. Organising events where swaps can take place in person.

4. Organising donation drives, where resources and goods that cannot be used again within the University are donated to local businesses or charities for them to use and recycle.

1. A “Free Box”

To test how well a type of resource exchange would work within the UC; a good start would be to set up a central “free box”. A free box is a box or series of boxes in a central location where people can leave things that they no longer want or require and pick up anything they do want from the items available. A free box is a simple, user friendly way to exchange goods that requires little management, is cost effective and easily accessible to most people on campus. The idea is that goods here can be taken by anyone who needs them, everything is free and it is available to everyone within the University.

This would be a useful way for individuals and departments within the University to get rid of small amounts of goods they no longer require from on campus or from home. The things that can go in the free box are endless, however there are restrictions on the size of items and rules would need to be applied to ensure it was not used inappropriately or used as somewhere to dump rubbish. Possible free box sections could include i) clothing, ii) house ware, iii) stationary/books, iv) electronics/computers and v) other.

Above the free box a notice board could be placed, to explain the idea of the free box to people who are not sure what it is or how use it. Also here the rules could be displayed, reminding people of things that cannot go in the box, and perhaps a list of things that would be suitable for the free box to give people ideas of what they could donate.
Lost property items collected around the University could also eventually be put here, after a holding time, if they are not picked up from their original owner.

**Decisions to be made:**

- Where to place the “free box”?

The free box needs to be in a relatively central location, however away from mainstream traffic as it may cause blockages in walkways. Perhaps under the central library would be the most centrally accessible location. It needs to be easily accessible to all, and relatively easy to find.

- Where to get the box from/how and who to make it, what from and how big?

There may already be a large box/container/shelf set/cabinet of some kind within the University that is not being used that may be ideal for this project! If not, and there are materials available that could be used to recycle some resources, a box could be constructed by someone (perhaps a student or Facilities Management) to meet the requirements. Otherwise materials will need to be purchased to construct a box.

- Who would maintain the “free box”?

There is a possibility that some people could throw rubbish in the free box or that not enough items are taken from the box and the box becomes full regularly. A person/group needs to be allocated the responsibility to check the box approximately once a week for rubbish or other inappropriate items in the box (too big, dangerous, or illegal) or inappropriate/old notices on the notice board, and that the box wasn’t overflowing.

- What are the rules of the “free box”? What can/cannot go into the free box?

What could go into the free box could potentially be anything, however size restrictions will apply, for example no one can leave anything in the box that is larger than the box itself, or takes up most of the room in the box. If they have something large that would not be appropriate to go into the box, they can leave a notice up on the notice board, telling people to get in touch with them if they want the item the donator has to offer.

Obviously no illegal things are to be placed in the box, no item that could endanger or put someone at risk, and no offensive material.

- How would we advertise/market the “free box”?

Advertising for the free box could be put on the UC Sustainability and other relevant UC websites, through interested clubs, and in Canta magazine and UC Diary etc. Advertising is needed to explain the idea of the free box, where it is located, and to encourage people to donate to and use the free box. Student Advisory Services may also wish to tell students of the free box, where items that are much needed by some students could be found.

- How to monitor the “free box” and other resource exchange initiatives?

In addition to day-to-day monitoring of the free box, the campus community would need be surveyed sometime during the year to assess the effectiveness of the free box and other resource exchange initiatives. This would include gauging the level of awareness about the free box, how many people have used the free box and how regularly, how many items were being shifted through the free box, and other feedback.

**Resources needed:**

Resources needed during the free box trial would include:

- Initial free-box set up costs - constructing and installing the box/es and notice board. Perhaps if we need to ‘rent a space’ to place the free box, we would need to pay for the rent.

- Marketing - this could be done largely as part of other promotional activities from the UC Sustainability Office (events during orientation weeks, Canta and UC Diary articles, email and website updates).
• Maintenance - time for someone relevant (from Cleaning Services? Student volunteers?) to regularly check the box, and to dispose of any unwanted materials (including waste disposal costs).

• Monitoring - time for someone (student project? UC Sustainability Office?) to develop and run a survey (and possibly) focus groups to assess the effectiveness of the free box and other resource exchange initiatives.

2. A UC Resource Exchange website and accompanying e-mail database

The purpose of the Resource Exchange website and e-mail database is to foster communications within the UC community about resources available and needed within the UC. By updating of the website on a regular basis, and sending out regular e-mails, the community can be informed to what was available and what was needed within the University, and how to access these resources.

A Resource Exchange (RE) website and e-mail database would allow:

• Communication between departments and/or individuals about what resources are available and what are needed within the UC.

• A regular reminder of the RE services and events, how to donate resources and how to acquire or request resources.

• A regular overview of the types of items available and needed from within the UC, so if the website is not checked regularly then the regular e-mail will inform the community what is available/needed at that point in time.

• A means of communication for the Resource Exchange programme, including the free box, swap meets and donation drives.

Decisions to be made:

• Who will update the website?

Someone would be required to update the website and check the content that was being posted on it. This person needs to be website and computer savvy, and have access to the appropriate equipment and software to update it.

• Who is responsible for sending out the regular e-mails?

Someone is required to post regular e-mails to the RE e-mail database, reminding people of what events are coming up, how to use the RE, and to list a preview of what items are available at the time. This person would be required once a week, for however long to takes them to compose an e-mail with the above content.

• How do we acquire the e-mail database?

To be on the RE database we would need people to give permission to add their e-mail to the database. This does not mean they have to be exclusively asked if they want to be on the RE database solely. If the RE e-mail database was integrated into an already existing database, such as the Sustainability Community or Sustainability Learn database, then this would be a way to tap into an already existing database, as well as provide potential sign ups with another reason to join up to the group.

• How/where will it be run from?

The website needs to run from somewhere, perhaps the Learn site, Sustainability Site or from within student services. There is also the option of running it through the time bank, as the time bank software has options to be able to do this.

Learn - The perks with Learn are that only people with UC user codes are able to access the site. This is ultimately what we desire, as we do not want any one from outside the UC to use it.

Sustainability Community - If the RE website was run as part of the Sustainability community then it would be easily accessible for all UC staff and students, adhere to an already established e-
mail database and connect with people who have already shown a key interest in sustainability, which is what the RE is all about.

UC Time Bank - The possibility of running the RE website through the time bank is beneficial in the sense that to access it, you would need to be a part of the time bank. However, for those that do not want to be a part of the time bank, but want to participate in the RE, cannot without a time bank log in.

**Resources needed:**

The resources we would need to run the RE website and e-mail database include:

- A website
- A person to update the website and send out regular e-mails

### 3. “Swap Meet” events

A swap meet is an event where resources and items are swapped between people. Anyone can come, bring whatever they no longer want with the objective to swap or give it away in return for something they do want. This is a great opportunity for people of the UC community to be rid of things they no longer want and to obtain things they need, all without having to spend money buying new things or throw unwanted things away.

Swap meets could tie in with a donation drive (see #4 below), where items that are not swapped or wanted by anyone at the swap meet can then be taken and donated to local businesses, schools or charities.

**Decisions to be made:**

- Who is responsible for organising the swap meets?
- What venue can we hold them at? Dry weather venue? Wet weather venue?
- How will we market the swap meets?
- Who is responsible for transporting or taking unwanted items to donation recipients at the end of the swap meets?

**Resources needed:**

- A wet and dry weather venue
- Marketing supplies
- Organisational personnel
- Personnel to take things away after swap meets

### 4. Donation drive events

A donation drive is an event where unwanted resources and goods that cannot be used again within the University are donated to local businesses, schools or charities for them to reuse and recycle. This could be a chance for the UC community to show their support within the wider community, and to donate to good causes. It doubles up as an opportunity for goods and resources either within the University, or from individuals, to go to a good cause at the same time as having an outlet to get rid of things we no longer want or need ourselves.

**Decisions to be made**

- Who is responsible for organising the donation drives?

We need someone with time and organisational skills to fill the position of organiser for the donation drives. This person will be responsible for all organisational details of the donation
drive, marketing the drive and for delegating tasks to others and supervising anyone whom is working alongside them.

- Where do people put the donated items? What venue can we use in wet and dry weather?

Two venues will be needed; one for dry weather conditions, and one just in case it is bad weather. The dry weather condition location could be simply outside, on a lawn or field around the UC campus. This would not cost any thing, and would also draw interest and attention of others who are unsure of what event is taking place, so in turn it could be a good marketing tool as well. The wet weather venue needs to be inside, easily accessible and on the larger side. Perhaps the Shelly Common Room or the Ballroom would be appropriate. Also, under the Central Library is an option.

- Who is responsible for organising the collection or transporting the goods to the donation recipient/s?

There is a chance the donation recipients will be happy to collect items themselves. However if this is not the case we will need to organise the transport of goods to the recipients ourselves. This could be done by volunteers with cars and trailers, or may require the use of a university vehicle such as a van or truck to donate larger items. It could also require a combination of the two.

- What kinds of items are appropriate to donate? What items are not?

The types of items appropriate to donate could be specific to that donation drive. For example, have a drive that is donating clothes and shoes to the Salvation Army, or donating kitchenware to the local City Mission, or donate furniture to the Super Shed. There are many possibilities for this. General donation drives could also occur, where people bring anything they want and we contact a whole lot of businesses, charities and schools who can come along also, and therefore choose what they want from the drive. There can be restrictions placed on what items you bring, such as nothing bigger than you can carry, no illegal items, no broken items and no electronics etc! The possibilities are endless for what you can, and therefore what you can’t bring!

Resources needed

- A venue, one for both wet and dry weather options
- Means of transport to take the goods to the donation recipient
- Transport personnel to take the goods to the donation recipient
- Organisational personnel

Similar initiatives going on within NZ:

- NZ Post Shop Recycling Centre [www.nzpost.co.nz/recyclecentre](http://www.nzpost.co.nz/recyclecentre)
- Donate NZ [www.donatenz.co.nz](http://www.donatenz.co.nz)
- Resource Exchange Lakes District [www.recirculate.co.nz](http://www.recirculate.co.nz)
- NZ wide waste exchange directory [www.nothrow.co.nz](http://www.nothrow.co.nz)