

SUSTAINABILITY AT REID HALL

Harrison Gerson

This document summarizes the study conducted by Columbia Climate School Student Harrison Gerson over the week of June 11th - June 16th on sustainability at Reid Hall and among exchange students, aiming to reflect on current practices and offer recommendations. The week included touring the center, holding key informant interviews, conducting an online survey, and meeting daily with Strategic Lead for Climate Response Mélody Braun. **Recommendations begin on page 5.**

METHODS

I organized with Mélody Braun and Director Brune Biebuyck my arrival and week with Reid Hall, where I spent five days, June 12-16, 2023. I began and ended the week meeting with Director Biebuyck to discuss our progress. Much of my framework gives credit to and reflects the [Circular Campus initiative](#) of Barnard College. As the Grants & Articles lead of Barnard Sustainability, I am very familiar with the process of Barnard developing and enacting its sustainability goals, so I integrated many of their themes within our work. This study and its recommendations are built on information gathered through desk research, an online survey, and in-person key informant interviews.

Initial desk research on current sustainability practices within various exchange programs in Paris, and in NYU and Goergetown's Global Centers abroad was conducted. Little information on sustainability and circularity practices was found, and attempts to obtain more information via email were mostly unsuccessful, providing little insight on collaborative potential for Reid Hall to explore. However, the University of Kent publishes a blog for its study abroad program in Paris, and they have many articles focused on sustainable lifestyles in Paris. After conversing, Naomi Hooper, their coordinator, decided to add a sustainability tag to such articles to keep track of them, which can be viewed [here](#). Also, within the Alliance, the [Sciences Po Climate Initiative](#) stands out, and we hope to connect with Sylvain Quatravaux, Director Center for the Americas at Sciences Po this fall to discuss a collaboration.

An online survey was developed for fellows and students studying abroad in Paris to understand their emissions and sustainability impact and concerns. The survey was sent out on Thursday, June 15th and has remained open since then. It was shared with Columbia Undergraduates (Séverine Martin), the Institute for Ideas & Imagination (Marie D'Origny), APUAF (Ophélie Landrin/Garry White), Dartmouth College and Dickinson College in Paris (Jacqueline Menoret), Smith College in Paris (Marie-Madeleine Charlie), Sciences Po (Elodie Ginga), Ecole Polytechnique (Daniel Cedeno), Paris 1 La Sorbonne (Sylvain Quatravaux), Columbia M.A. in History & Literature (Christine Valero), Vassar-Wesleyan in Paris (Hannah Gersten), Sarah Lawrence-Paris (Sarra Braham), Kent University in Paris (Naomi Hooper), and the American Graduate School in Paris. The survey questions are accessible [here](#). As of July 10th, there have been 27 responses from students and fellows. The recommendations produced from the survey will remain specific to Reid Hall, although other organizations may use the results for their own

programs or to start a dialogue internally on sustainability. The results will not be published, and won't be used to form hypotheses, draw conclusions, or contribute to generalizable knowledge.

Key informant interviews were conducted throughout the week with members of the Reid Hall community to discuss the sustainability survey and circularity practices at Reid Hall, specifically events management, recycling and compost, gardening, facilities, storage, printing, and reuse of materials. These discussions gathered useful information about current practices and ideas for improvement. Key informers are listed below.

Key-Informer	Organization	Role
Melody Braun	Reid Hall	Strategic Lead for Climate Response
Brune Biebuyck	Reid Hall	Director
S��verine Martin	Reid Hall	Public Programs Manager
Andrew Wells	Reid Hall	Public Programs Coordinator
Samantha Csenge	Reid Hall	Program Coordinator French Immersion
Krista Faurie	Reid Hall	Operations and Communications Manager
Students	Reid Hall	Undergraduate
Adriana Samaniego	Reid Hall	Senior HR & Finance Manager
Cyril Kaminski	Reid Hall	IT Manager
Sam Selvakumar	Reid Hall	IT Coordinator
Amanda Kwele	Caf��oth��que	Staff
Marie d'Origny	Institute for Ideas & Imagination	Director
Laura Neitzel	Columbia Committee on Global Thought	Professor
Laurie Postewate	Barnard College	Professor
Marie-Madeleine Charlie	Smith College in Paris	Director
Maya Pemble	Smith College in Paris	Student Assistant
Jacqueline Menoret	Dartmouth College & Dickinson College in Paris	Program Associate
Sarra Braham	Sarah Lawrence - Paris	Program Assistant
Naomi Hooper	University of Kent - Paris	Office Administrator
Hannah Gersten	Vassar-Wesleyan in Paris	Adjunct Director
Christine Valero	Columbia M.A. in History & Literature	Director

CURRENT SUSTAINABILITY AT REID HALL

Within La Petite Caf  oth  que, the current practices follow the French cultural ethic of reducing food waste. The Caf  oth  que partakes in [Too Good to Go](#), a mobile application that allows its users to purchase food at a reduced price toward the end of the day to reduce food waste. The Caf  oth  que runs this program every Friday afternoon to ensure that their fresh goods are eaten before they close for the weekend. The Caf  oth  que also makes croissant bread pudding with uneaten croissants and encourages its customers to use their washable dishware.

Within the Columbia Undergraduate Program, the program coordinators keep items for students to reuse circularly, including dishware, so students do not have to go out and buy new dishware when they get to Paris. The History & Literature M.A. program also keeps a collection of items for new students to use within the program when they come to Paris, and the Institute for Ideas & Imagination (II&I) has a shared kitchen. The IT department has a collection of electronic appliances for reuse within the Reid Hall community. Moreover, the IT department also encourages refurbishing electronics, and the center itself refurbishes much of its furniture instead of buying new. The center has also purchased new recycling bins for the grounds, which many people mentioned during interviews.

Regarding printing practices, the IT team is monitoring printing data and shared that the number of sheets printed per user within the Reid Hall system decreased per user in 2022 compared to pre-pandemic levels, as seen in the chart below. The IT team suggests that this difference could be partly explained by age difference in staff changes, where younger staff members have replaced older staff members and may be less inclined to print documents. However, 2023 numbers do not yet allow confirmation of if this trend will continue, or if numbers will grow back up by the end of the year. The changes in number of users per year could also play a role in the interannual differences.

Year	Number of Pages	Number of Sheets	Pages/Sheet	Number of Printing Users	Sheets/Users
2023 (up to July 26)	65855	41074	1.60	269	152.69
2022	101936	64614	1.58	352	183.56
2021	52525	32123	1.64	153	209.95
2020	65764	41158	1.60	204	201.75
2019	137401	84965	1.62	406	209.27

SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the survey will be shared with the programs who circulated it to their students and fellows for internal use if they wish to reflect on their sustainability practices. In relation to **demographics**, our 27 respondents represent students and academic fellows from 11 universities (Figure 1) and 9 nationalities (Figure 2) who have spent time in Paris. 19 women, 7 men, and 1 non-binary person responded (Figure 3). We included demographics to understand our respondent base.

7.4% of respondents estimate that they recycle over half of their waste in Paris; 51.9% report recycling 25 to 50% of their waste; 40.7% report recycling 0-25% of their waste (Figure 4). Improving recycling access and education may improve these statistics. Respondents to the survey also estimate that they waste less food in Paris than in their home country, buy more local food, and use more public transport and less Uber/taxis/etc. Respondents shop online less and receive fewer packages from abroad. At their arrival in Paris, responding students report having purchased new office supplies (paper, electronics, pens, etc.) and home supplies (light bulbs, furniture, fans) if not already owned. With kitchen and bedding supplies, respondents who did not bring them with them report both buying or borrowing. Respondents report spending the most money on office supplies, home supplies, and self-care during their stays in Paris. Among the supplies responding students wish they had brought with them, they cite hangers, paintbrushes, and electronic cords. Students tend to leave supplies they brought but do not need for home at their accommodations for future students to use, which is great for circularity.

Regarding travels in France and Europe, 90% of respondents reported using the train and bus systems within Europe, and 65% reported traveling by plane during their stay in Paris with Europe. One student mentioned that they took a plane 80% of the time, “truly because planes were cheaper.” Exploration of potential opportunities for incentivizing land transportation where possible could be considered in the future.

On sustainability awareness and education, one student in the University of Kent program and one in Barnard Acting in Paris program mentioned they received basic sustainability education when they started their program, but 88.2% of respondents received no information about sustainability education during their orientation. Including sustainability content into the information package delivered to exchange students upon arrival would help improve sustainability awareness and understanding of local successful practices.

Respondents proposed a number of ideas to improve sustainability practices within their programs. 3 respondents recommended starting a compost system. 3 respondents also mentioned recycling, they would like recycling bins to be more present and marked, including education about how recycling works in Paris. 3 respondents also suggested a donation collection area. Sharing supplies is a large theme within the answers, as well as a sustainability orientation. One student mentioned having a shared materials closet for home goods. Concerning saving electricity, a student mentioned installing motion sensors for lights in hallways, bathrooms, and printer rooms.

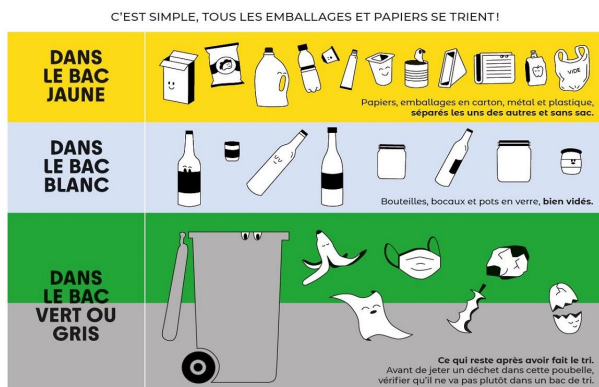
RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a sustainability page on the CGC | Paris website. Sustainability is already present at Reid Hall. Creating a webpage on the website focused on sustainability will help Reid Hall think about the next steps for sustainability. This includes **crafting a short sustainability mission statement** and **highlighting current and future work**. This goal should not take much time and will encourage further action

Hold a Reid Hall sustainability forum. Throughout the interviews, there was a sense of desire to bring the Reid Hall community together among different affiliates. A sustainability forum is an opportunity to strengthen team cohesion and assemble the community for a common goal.

Increase recycling bin access. Reid Hall should ensure that its recycling bins are accessible. **Adding more yellow recycling bins, if possible, could help, as increased access leads to more recycling.** Including a **white glass recycling bin** in the center of the courtyard may be a good option for those with glass waste. The Cafeothèque sells drinks in glass bottles and affiliates may bring glass-bottled drinks from outside. Speaking in interviews, not many people knew that there is a glass recycling bin in the back of the courtyard. Considering the difficulty to monitor whether or not facilities separate glass out from the trash, it may be helpful to have a more accessible glass recycling bin.

Have an unavoidable recycling education message on the bins. Most survey respondents indicated recycling less than half their wastes, even though the recycling facilities in Paris accept a large range of wastes. This could indicate a need for better communication and displaying of the types of wastes that go into the different types of bins. **Including [this message](#) or [this message](#) (laminated) on top of or alongside each waste station** will encourage affiliates to think more carefully about what they put in each bin. Clear labeling such as **“TRASH/DECHETS”** and **“RECYCLING/RECYCLAGE”** in capital letters right next to the openings would also increase visibility and avoid using the wrong bins.



Account for and centralize supplies to improve circularity with storage and donations.

Identifying opportunities for circularity practices between departing and arriving students, collection, purchasing or storage of small items, and opportunities to borrow items from the exchange programs - if at all possible - could help reduce expenses and consumption of new goods. Reid Hall could build on the shared storage systems in place within individual offices. Limiting the purchase of new items within the Reid Hall community will save money and help the environment. Creating a list of what each department of Reid Hall has to share with their students is a good step to accounting for what they can share. For instance, **creating a Google Sheet** of the current kitchen supplies that Andrew Wells and Samantha Csenge keep in their offices for students will help measure it. They will then be able to share this list with students to help students understand what they can avoid buying and what they could return to Reid Hall at the end of their time in Paris. If different affiliates at Reid Hall are willing, they may share these supply lists with others within Reid Hall, so if they are in excess of a certain good to share with others, they may. These lists will also help encourage more sharing. **Creating a donation bin** as well for goods that students and other affiliates leave in Paris may help. If there is no storage for these items, Reid Hall can directly donate these goods to the public collection system.

Create sustainability orientation programming (in booklets and the presentation). Many students expressed this desire, and this programming has a large benefit for its time cost. Different universities at Reid Hall may share their information with each other, as they express a similar desire. Andrew Wells (Columbia), Jacqueline Menoret (Dartmouth-Dickinson), and Naomi Hooper (Kent) may be able to start this collaboration. The information can include how and where to recycle, composting options, shopping and consumption habits (with leboncoin and vinted, for instance), sustainable transport options (Interrail), food waste reduction (Too Good To Go), printing, and climate action in Paris. The information can also include information on circularity within Reid Hall for reusable tableware and (perhaps for the future) furniture and appliances. The information can be shared during orientation presentations as well as in orientation handbooks. Switching to the [Guidebook app](#), which Columbia University New Student Orientation Program (NSOP) uses, to share events and orientation information may also help digitize information for students and reduce paper usage. The information can be integrated into established sections and/or highlighted on its own. This programming can center toward students, but considering a similar program for staff may be helpful as well.

Eliminate food waste via WhatsApp Announcements. In discussions with Séverine Martin and Andrew Wells on the subject of food waste and undergraduates, we brainstormed different programs to share food with students that will soon be discarded. WhatsApp Announcements, done through the new Community feature, allow staff members to share messages with students without students being able to chat in the group to limit fluff. Séverine Martin created a group to share messages with students in the Columbia in Paris program, and she may share messages related to food and sustainability within it as well.

Encourage refurbishment of furniture and electronics, which Brune Biebuyck, Adriana Samaniego, and the IT team all highlighted. Reid Hall does a good job at maintaining, refurbishing, and using original furniture. Reid Hall should continue to prioritize and highlight this sustainable practice which reduces the carbon footprint, potential costs, and aligns with Reid Hall's efforts to maintain its rich history. Including this encouragement on the new webpage and sharing this rhetoric within the office will improve this process.

Visiting a waste recycling center and/or landfill during staff development and/or student programming. Learning about the current waste management systems may help Reid Hall understand its current impact. We brought up this theme during my conversation with Mélody Braun, Krista Faurie, and Brune Biebuyck.

Limit Columbia Library exchanges. The transatlantic exchange of books between Columbia Libraries in NYC and Reid Hall is a luxury that uses a lot of energy through air transport. Fellows at Reid Hall have the privilege to request these books at Columbia Libraries overseas. Placing a limit on books exchanged with Columbia Libraries and/or encouraging electronic scans of these books will lower scope 3 (indirect) transport emissions.

Composting may work better in the future. The student community expresses much interest in composting, but with the maintenance of the composting system, there may be too much organization for the time being. Paris is piloting compost collection systems in the 2nd, 12th, and 19th arrondissements but has yet to reach the 6th. For the time being, eliminating food waste through other methods may help, such as ordering smaller amounts of food and sharing food in student group chats (as mentioned previously).

Vegetable and herb gardens in the courtyard may work better in the future. Further conversations with the gardening may be helpful. Beginning with a mint plant directly into the soil may be a nice start, as they are hardy and (usually) perennial.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you so much to Mélody for guiding me throughout this project. Your work on climate action within the center was crucial to this project taking ground, and your daily support throughout my week at Reid Hall and your communications before and after my time are central to the production of this paper. Thank you for also arranging the logistics of my week and meetings within the center. Thank you to Brune for your advocacy for sustainability within Reid Hall and for trusting me with this work, especially for funding my time in Paris with Reid Hall. Thank you to Séverine and Andrew for supporting my work during the project and for assured future support of sustainability initiatives within the Columbia undergraduate program. Thank you to Laura Neitzel with the Committee on Global Thought and Sandra Goldmark at Barnard Sustainability for promoting my goals. I look forward to the progress of this work and supporting Reid Hall throughout the process.

FIGURES

FIGURE 1 - University Demographics

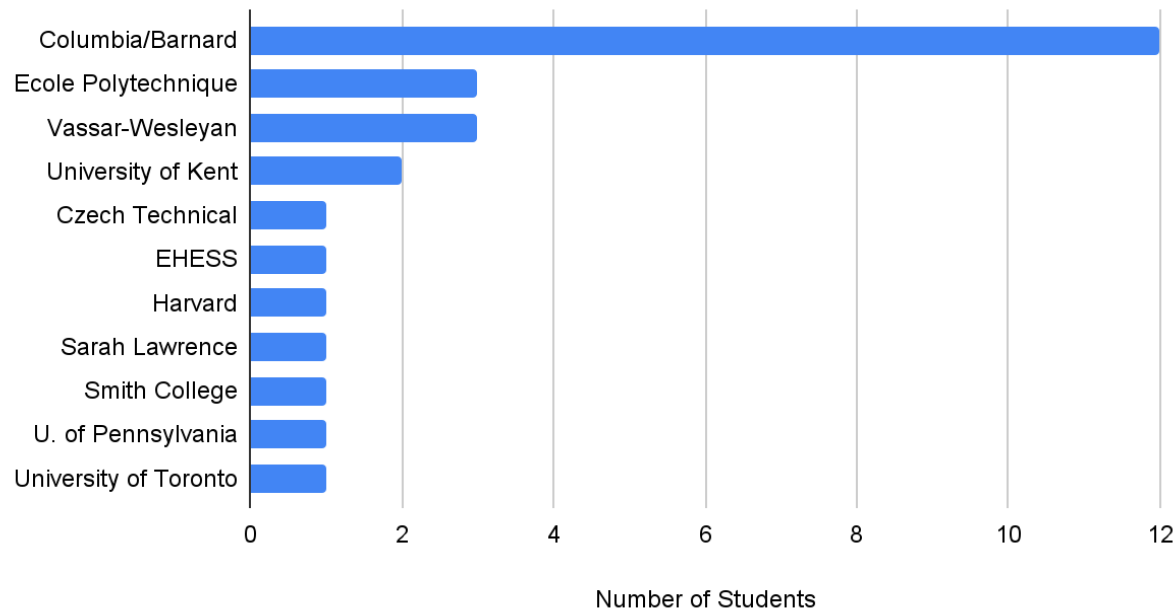


FIGURE 2 - Nationality

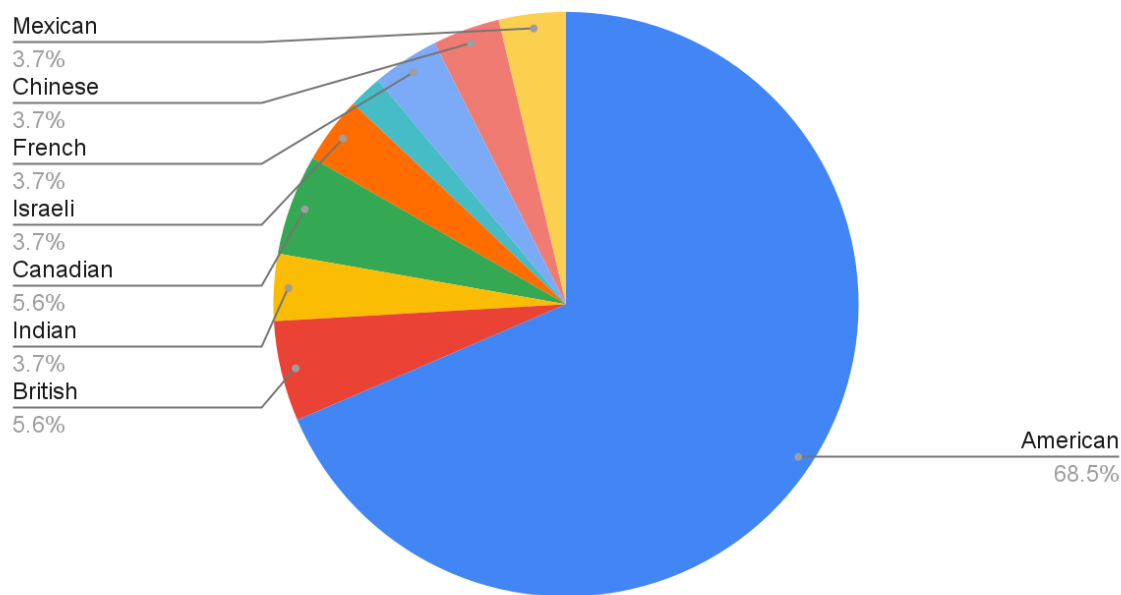


FIGURE 3 - Gender Demographics

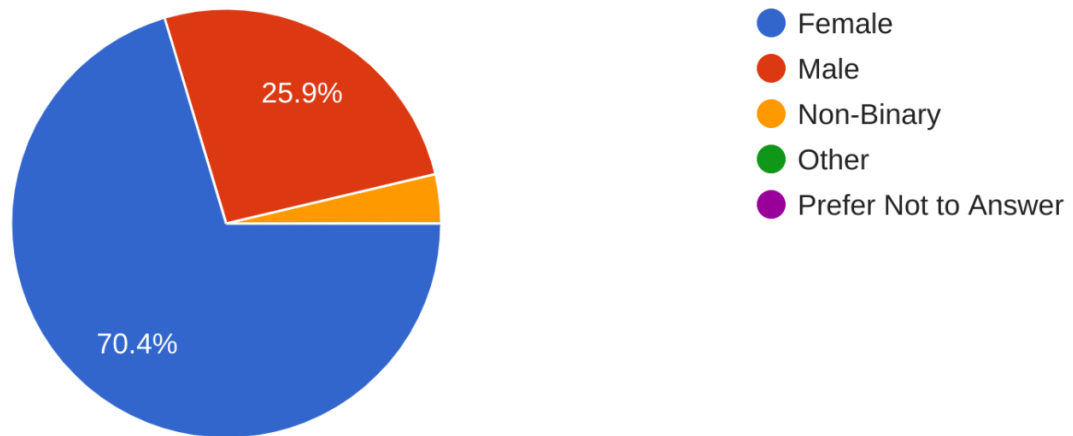


FIGURE 4 - "About what percent of your total waste do you put in the recycling bin in Paris?"

