
CFMS/FEMC
Green Charter Best Practices
for Medical Student Societies

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CFMS Green Charter Best Practices for Medical Student Societies

Introduction

By adopting green practices within your Medical Student Society activities you are joining a growing medical student movement across Canada to create a cleaner, greener, more sustainable environment for ourselves, our patients and our communities. We encourage you to share your environmental successes and challenges with other medical students from across the country through the CFMS/FEMC so we can learn from each other and continue to move ourselves along the continuum of environmental sustainability.

One of the most powerful things Medical Student Societies can do when advocating for green practices on campus is leading by example! Adopting green practices in the day-to-day workings of your Medical Society not only contributes to a healthier, more sustainable environment, but supports students in making eco-friendly choices and encourages Faculty administration to make the environment a priority in their activities as well.

Making green changes to your Medical Societies operations and activities can be broken down into three easy steps. Each of the Best Practice Areas for Environmental Change are organized into changes that can happen immediately within your current infrastructure, changes that require some rearranging of current practices, and changes that require some long-term planning, to help you tackle environmental sustainability one step at a time. By setting both short-term and long-term green goals you will be able to support Medical Society members in making environmentally responsible choices in all Society activities.

Best Practices Areas for Environmental Change:

Society Administration
Awareness Initiatives within Medical School and in the Community
Transportation
Recycling/Reduction
Catering Practices
Energy Conservation/Facilities

Society Administration

Easy changes that can be made now:

- Take advantage of e-communications, laptops and smart phones by providing electronic meeting documents instead of printouts and using email in place of snail mail and fax whenever possible.
- Minimize hardcopy printouts whenever possible and purchase environmentally responsible, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified paper. As an example, Staples has an Enviro Choice option of FSC 30% recycled paper (the 70% of the paper that isn't recycled comes from sustainably managed forests) that is less expensive than their non-recycled, unsustainable options.
- Take advantage of ink recycling programs, and recycling programs for used electronics equipment.
- Take advantage of teleconferencing whenever possible to minimize travel.
- Encourage representatives to take mass transit ground travel whenever possible when traveling to and from meetings.

Changes that require short-term planning:

- Purchase paper that is FSC-certified 100% post-consumer paper; this option is currently more expensive than paper with less recycled content, but Societies can make an effort to reduce the additional cost by reducing overall paper use.
- When replacing office equipment purchase energy-efficient equipment; it can easily be identified by the Energy Star logo.
- Purchase recycled ink cartridges, pens, paper clips, and other office supplies as old office supplies get used up.
- Request that Medical Student Society representatives bring reusable water bottles and coffee mugs to meetings to eliminate the need for bottled water and reduce waste.
- Offer students opportunities to purchase reusable coffee mugs and water bottles in annual Medical Student Society clothing sales and encourage students to lug-a-mug; many on-campus and in-hospital food outlets offer discounts to customers who bring their own mugs!

Changes that require long-term planning:

- Solidify your environmentally responsible practices into policy to ensure they stay in your Medical Student Society's organizational memory; be sure to mandate a regular review of your environmental practices both to ensure continuity and to build on your initiatives.
- Create a Sustainability Officer position on your Medical Student Society to be responsible for keeping your environmental initiatives on track and building on them.
- Explore carbon off setting through offset organizations, green activities on campus or donations to local environmental groups. Not sure where to start? The David Suzuki Foundation has great resources to help get your head around going carbon neutral (http://www.davidsuzuki.org/Climate_Change/What_You_Can_Do/carbon_neutral.asp)

Awareness Initiatives within Medical School and in the Community

Easy changes that can be made now:

- Encourage students to switch to electronic alternatives of mailings and subscriptions (e.g. CMAJ, provincial medical association mailings, etc.) from paper copies.
- Get in touch with campus environmental groups and communicate information regarding their events to the medical students as part of monthly newsletter/class council announcements
- Inform medical students of environmental conferences, especially the ones for students.
- Celebrate Earth Day & Earth on March 20th every year.

Changes that require short-term planning:

- Make it publicly known when environmental principles discussed in other sections of this document are implemented into events
- Engage medical students in community environmental events and initiatives, such as park clean-ups or composting initiatives.

Changes that require long-term planning:

- Create a medical student environmental group. If one exists already, encourage them to include the following initiatives:
 - Set up periodic displays with information on how to save energy and how to be more environmentally conscious. For example, tips on novel ways to reuse containers, where to get free cardboard boxes for moving, facts about wastes and pollutants, etc. are all great ideas to consider.
 - Organize workshops on reuse and recycle. It could be as general as “How to use old things for new purposes”, or as specific as “Sewing workshop to reuse old fabric”. These initiatives could be integrated as a part of the activities for Health and Wellness programs/student clubs.
 - Create art projects made from waste or recycled material collected from campus or in the medical buildings over a set time span, and display them in public areas to promote environment awareness and waste reduction.

Transportation

Easy changes that can be made now:

- Encourage max capacity car-pooling for society events by recording how society members are planning on attending the event.
- Include walking, biking, or bussing instructions/directions for Society sanctioned events.

Changes that require short-term planning:

- Prizes for those that run, walk, roll to school (& possibly public transportation)
- Encourage staff & faculty to use public transportation
- Organize local carpool communities

Changes that require long-term planning:

- Explore rail (or carpooling if possible) as an alternative to flight travel
- Acknowledge those that give up parking spaces for public transport/run, walk, roll

Recycling/Reduction

Easy changes that can be made now:

- Place receptacles next to printers for scrap paper
(Good quality single sided scrap paper can be collected into stacks, stapled, and available for students to pick up for use)
- Reminders/incentives to bring own mug (can collaborate with most popular coffee shop)
- Encourage students & staff to bring re-usable plates/utensils/cups to catered events
- Provide students with directions to recycling centres and businesses that offer curbside recycling (if these services are not provided in your location).

Changes that require short-term planning:

- In small group study rooms, bins for cans/bottles and paper products should be available
- Involved student groups in recyclables collection services as a fundraising opportunity
- Work with medical curriculum leaders and administrations to computerize major examinations and replace paper copies whenever possible.

Changes that require long-term planning:

- In lunchroom, can consider making/getting an indoor compost bin. Check out [How to Start a Vermicomposting Bin](#) to make your own!
- Work with school management in implementing transparent, consistent, and accessible recycling/compost facilities. Ensure what is being put in recycling receptacles is not being thrown out!
- Advocate for inter-campus/hospital shuttle services, as well as public transportation passes/deals for medical students.

Catering Practices

Easy changes that can be made now

- Avoid bottled water: *Bottled water creates unnecessary waste, travels huge distances to deliver a product that can easily and cheaply be obtained locally, often comes from unsustainable water sources, and frequently contains more contaminants than our tap water. Offer tap water in pitchers instead, or other beverages in large, non-single serving containers. For more information, visit <http://tappening.com>.*
- Choose items with less packaging: *Buy in bulk and avoid single-serving sizes. Choose products that have recyclable and/or biodegradable packaging.*
- Offer and encourage vegetarian and vegan options: *Vegetarian and vegan options require substantially fewer resources to produce and result in lower greenhouse gas emissions. These options are often healthier, too.*

Changes that require short-term planning

- Buy local for meeting snacks and refreshments: *Visit <http://www.buylocalthinkglobal.com> for a listing of farmers markets in Canada. If not local, purchase goods made in Canada. Local products are no longer just available at farmer s markets; look for them in grocery stores, too.*
- Select products that are farmed/produced in a sustainable way: *Visit <http://www.seachoice.org> to see which types of seafood are environmentally sustainable. They have many resources, including an iPhone app.*
- Avoid disposable cups, cutlery, plates, and napkins: *At some universities, existing student groups loan reusable dishes (e.g. ECOS at University of Alberta). Ask the environmental student group on your campus if this is available. Encourage students to bring their own reusable dishes or at least reusable beverage containers.*

Changes that require long-term planning

- Establish organic waste disposal: *Explore the option of starting and maintaining an outdoor compost or a vermicompost. Consult the environmental student group on campus or online resources to get started. You can try the Compost Council of Canada website: <http://www.compost.org>.*
- Invest in Medical Student Society-owned flatware, cutlery, and cloth napkins: *Share cleaning responsibilities among users; make dishwashing supplies or equipment available. Collaborate with other student groups interested in offering this service in order to cut costs.*
- Create Medical Student Society policies for greener catering practices: *For example, mandate that disposable cups will no longer be provided and students must bring their own beverage containers and/or other reusable dishes to events where refreshments are provided.*
- Advocate for systemic changes that promote greener catering practices: *Suggest that the hospital/university food services implement some of the practices listed above in order to make it easier for all of their customers to be environmentally friendly.*

Energy Conservation/Facilities

Easy changes that can be made now:

- Create signs to remind people to turn off electronics, use less paper towels in washrooms, etc.
- Add “Lights Off” reminders to switch plates in offices and lecture rooms. Work with administration on having lights in lecture halls/study rooms turned off when not in use.
- Promote the use of stairs instead of the elevators
- Unplug electronics in student lounge over the summer
- Encourage students to bring leaky faucets to the attention of facilities management

Changes that require short-term planning:

- Change the power management settings on computers so that they go into standby mode when not in use
- Approach facilities management regarding turning down heat in the winter and air conditioning in the summer

Changes that require long-term planning:

- Installation of low flush/dual toilets
- Converting present light bulbs to more energy efficient ones. This could be done in stages starting with the student lounge and moving on to others areas as the budget allows.
- Purchase of energy star qualified appliances/office equipment
- Approach administration regarding the possibility of installing motion sensors for lights for lecture rooms