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As a part of my Environmental Philosophy class, we have been working as individuals or in small groups to implement sustainability initiatives in a number of places on Luther’s campus. We were encouraged to instigate change in a way that would be personally fulfilling and that could be completed in a reasonable amount of time. I decided that this would be an excellent opportunity for me to encourage my housemates to implement sustainable practices in the newest addition to campus housing, the Norby House. This is especially important because Norby is a new space; it is absolutely necessary that we implement environmentally conscious practices now so that a precedent will be set for the future tenants of the house. To establish these earth-friendly practices, I worked closely with Maren Stumme-Diers, who helped me outline a few specific ideas that are sure to make a significant impact on Norby’s carbon footprint.

**Recycling:** Maren arranged for an indoor recycling bin to be delivered to the common space; it arrived a couple of weeks ago and is an excellent addition to our common space. This recycling container is set up against the north wall in a sort of “recycling station.” It is only a few feet from the garbage, so there is little to no inconvenience associated with recycling. Within the container, there are separate spaces for paper, plastic, metal, and cardboard recycling. These are specified by shape-appropriate openings in the top of the container to avoid confusion about where each material is supposed to go. Maren also kindly arranged for the waste sustainability workers to take out our recycling on a regular basis.

**Compost:** Because the Norby House is a residential home with a full kitchen, food waste is a large issue. Many of the women dispose of fruit cores and peels in the kitchen garbage, where the organic matter releases methane gas upon its arrival in a landfill. Therefore, a wonderful and sustainable option is to compost our food waste instead. Maren has contacted the custodian in the Norby house, has purchased composting bins, and has arranged for Chips to recycle their
newspapers into worm bedding on a regular basis. Unfortunately, we have experienced a few delays, but it is our hope to implement the system by the beginning of JTerm or spring semester.

**Personal Energy Consumption:** Norby’s common spaces have been equipped with compact florescent light bulbs, HVAC devices for more efficient heating, and low-flow toilets for a less wasteful flush, but it would be wonderful to educate the residents on exactly what individual consumption patterns mean for us as a home. It would be great to demonstrate how the individual actions of residents who regularly compost and recycle positively impact the rest of our campus. Enabling the tenants of a space to understand exactly what their consumption means in dollar amounts is a very effective way to convey a point and instigate a positive behavior change; eventually, we hope to conduct a waste audit to determine how composting affects the amount of organic waste in our garbage.

**Educational Initiatives:** With respect to the individual beliefs and practices of Norby’s residents, I posted an educational poster to teach my housemates more about sustainability within the home. I posted this board on the west wall (a very central location) in hopes that the women would gain a better understanding of my project. The theme of the board is “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle,” and it includes simple tips for Norby residents about simplifying their lives. In addition, Maren has been diligent in her house emails to remind us to turn off the lights and make use of the HVAC devices in the bathrooms and laundry room to remind us of the little things we can do to make a difference. Eventually, Maren and I will evaluate the effectiveness of the systems we have put in place by asking for suggestions from our housemates. Based on these recommendations, we will make changes as necessary so that Norby can continue to develop into a more sustainable residential option.

It is my hope that with increased efforts from our eco-minded students, RAs, and staff, we will be able to implement a number of these sustainable practices in other residential spaces on campus. A few RAs have already expressed interest in implementing a worm-composting system on their floors, and many are working on environmental education as a part of their monthly bulletin boards. These educational initiatives are incredibly important, and I am very pleased that there has been such diligent support from our RAs and Residence Life Staff. It is my belief that as the integration of sustainability and residence life continues to develop, Luther will be better able to fulfill our vocational mission of being an institution that “serve[s] with distinction for the common good.” Until then, thank you so very much for your time; I genuinely appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Sonja E. Arneson-Ecklund