



Clothing Mending and Upcycling at the Library

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What is it?

This program offers workshops that teach beginner mending and sewing skills to students at University X. These workshops will be taught by local seamstresses and will cover a variety of techniques used to alter, repair, or upcycle clothing. This may include invisible or visible mending (like sashiko), patching, darning, and pattern drafting (for reimagining clothing items).

This workshop series will culminate in a fashion show featuring upcycled garments made by students at University X. The fashion show seeks to highlight the new skills students learned in the workshop while also promoting sustainable practices and alternatives to clothing waste.

Mission Statements

University X

The University aims to educate students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good.

Mending + Upcycling Program

Convince University X students **that by** learning how to mend and upcycle clothing **they will** be able to get more life and use out of their wardrobe **which will** contribute to sustainability efforts related to clothing waste **because** the library values access to information, collaboration, and engagement.

Background



- It's estimated that, in 2024, an article of clothing is thrown away after about 7 to 10 uses. Yet less than 1% of clothes are recycled or reused ([Uniform Market](#)).
- Studies consistently show that young consumers *do* want environmentally friendly clothing; however, cost is often one of the biggest inhibitors to making that choice ([Herron](#)).
- Many have noted an increased interest in hobbies like sewing, crocheting, knitting, etc. among young consumers. These crafts often align with desires to be more eco-friendly as well as show off personal style ([Hoppe](#); [Triplett](#))

So What Can We Do?

These factors show us that there is a disconnect between intention and practice among young consumers.

One of the ways we can help students (young consumers) better align their beliefs with their habits is by equipping them with knowledge and skills that will allow them to make more conscientious choices.

Mending and upcycling can be an affordable, sustainable, and creative alternative to clothing waste!



Success Story #1: Reuse Minnesota's Mend-It Clinic

Funded with an MPCA grant, Reuse Minnesota hosts a volunteer-led “Fix-It Clinic” where community members can bring in items for repairs or alterations. Though volunteers are happy to simply repair items, their larger goal is to get “people to think about what they can do to extend the useful life of the things they already own through repair and reuse” ([Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#)).

Reuse Minnesota also provides one-off classes aimed at reducing textile waste, such as one on how to repurpose old button-down shirts into gift wrap.

In Spring 2024, the Fix-It Clinics were able to divert 129lbs of items from landfills, including clothes, bags, purses, and stuffed animals. The grant will allow them to continue into Summer 2025.

Success Story #2: Kendall Young Library Upcycle Fashion Show


In Summer 2024, the Kendall Young Library hosted a fashion show featuring only upcycled clothing. It was an all-ages event so the whole community could be involved.

This was done in collaboration with Makers Mill, which hosted workshops in the weeks leading up to the event. These workshops focused specifically on ways to repurpose clothing.

Another partner in the event was ArtPop Street Gallery, which hosts annual runway exhibitions designed entirely out of repurposed materials.



Program Goals

- Teach students about the impact of clothing waste
 - Offer opportunities to develop basic sewing and mending skills
 - Provide an environment for students to meet and connect with others who care about sustainability practices
 - Create an inclusive and inquisitive experience for the campus community
 - Celebrate creativity and innovation
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The Workshops

Part of our budget will be used to hire seamstresses to teach the workshops. Additionally, the library will purchase sewing machines to be kept in the makerspace. These machines will be available for use by patrons outside of workshop times.

Workshops will be hosted once a week, each week highlighting a specific skill or technique. The topic should be aimed at beginners. The workshops will be conducted in the makerspace.

Materials (such as clothing, fabric, notions, etc.) will be brought in by students, donated by the campus community, or sourced from sustainable retailers.

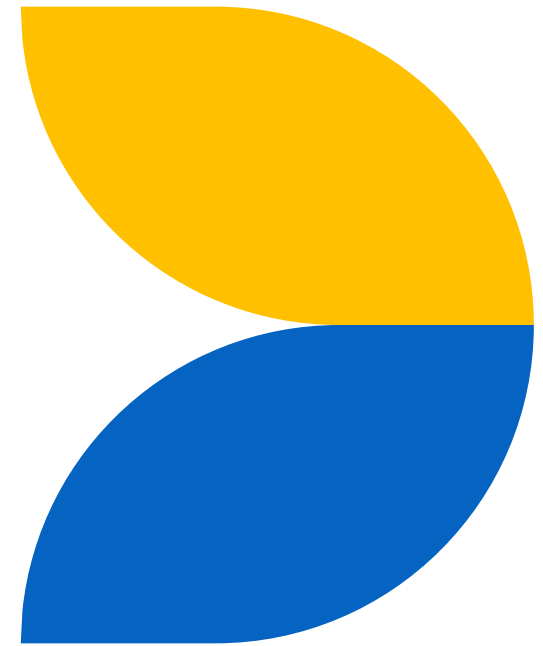


Upcycle Fashion Show

The Upcycle Fashion Show will be open to all students at University X, regardless of whether they took the workshops or not. However, all entrants should be submitting garments that are made of at least 70% upcycled materials. Attendance is open to the public.

Depending on the number of participants, the show can be divided by skill level (i.e., beginner, intermediate, and advanced) or other applicable categorizations (e.g., year, workshop vs non-workshop, etc.). The event should be hosted on campus in a location appropriate for the number of anticipated participants and attendees.

Lastly, the Upcycle Fashion Show culminates with a reward. Dollar amount and number of rewards given will also depend on the number of participants. At least one Fan Favorite award and one Craftmanship award should be given.



Timeline

- In total, the program will occur over 10-12 weeks in the Spring semester.
- Workshops will be offered for 8 weeks.
- Optional: a donation drive prior to the beginning of workshops could be run to collect materials
- The Upcycle Fashion Show will occur toward the end of the semester, but before Finals.



Marketing and Outreach

Library Efforts

- A LibGuide that features books in the collection about mending and garment upcycling
- Web page about the program on the Library site featuring previous years' entries and winners
- Social media posts and flyers

Collaborations

- Work with Office of Sustainability and Student Affairs to promote program
- Ask related groups and courses to highlight the event (e.g., Reuse Closet group, Sustainability courses, etc.)

Evaluation and Expansion

- In the first year, a minimum of 4-6 participants are desired
- After the Workshops and Upcycle Fashion Show, gather feedback from students – How did they feel before participating and afterwards? Would they do it again? Would they invite friends to do it in the future? What would they change?
- If popular enough, may need to request a larger budget to hire more seamstresses to accommodate additional participants
- Collaborating with a local clothing donation store to upcycle unsellable clothes may be worth exploring if outsourcing of materials is needed.

Works Cited

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