

Wayne State Lab Coat Dispensing Program



About Wayne State

The Department of Chemistry at Wayne State University is dedicated to research, education, and outreach efforts that benefit Detroit, the State of Michigan and the world. They are committed to educating a diverse undergraduate and graduate student body, advancing chemical knowledge and positively impacting society. They actively promote a safe and ethical environment that is equitable and inclusive, so that students, staff and faculty may thrive and advance personally and professionally.

Problem

When Professor Matthew Allen took over as Chair of the Chemistry Department, one of his top priorities was to create an improved student lab coat program for use in the school's laboratories. At that time, undergraduate chemistry students were required to purchase their own lab coat from the school bookstore. In addition to this responsibility, the students were expected to launder their own coats. The twin challenges of expecting students to remember to bring their personal coat and to make sure it was cleaned proved difficult, and often forgetful students were forced to ask for a temporary coat from the department. This was both inefficient and expensive, but the alternative of a student not wearing a coat in the lab was even more untenable. Another drawback to the old process was that the students would be forced to carry their potentially soiled coat with them after class, taking any contaminants on the worn lab coats with them to other classes, or their dorm, their home, or workplace.

Burdening their students and staff with this program had become an intractable problem, and the Chemistry Department's Safety Committee was determined to provide a better solution. But finding a solution that was cost neutral to students and the school, and which simultaneously minimized the administrative work for the department was not easy and required innovative thinking.

Solution

Enter the Cintas Lab Coat Dispensing Program – a closed loop system that provided the availability and control that met the needs of the department and its' students. The school selected the type and amount of lab coats that it would need for its' students and Cintas installed automated dispensers to dispense those lab coats, ensuring that hygienically-cleaned coats, in the right size, are available when needed. Students use their existing student ID card to access the dispenser and are limited to one coat at a time. After their lab is complete, they simply deposit the coat into a locked return unit that takes a digital photo of their coat to verify its return. Since the students also use their ID card on the return unit, they are credited back for the coat and can get another clean one at their next lab. All of this activity is saved and monitored proactively so that the goals set by the Chemistry Department continue to be met.

FROM BEGINNING TO END, THE LAB COAT DISPENSING SOLUTION IS CONVENIENT AND HASSLE-FREE.

"We wanted to keep it so that the cost was not prohibitive for the students." Said Jackie Baldyga, Facilities Coordinator, "So when Cintas walked in and suggested their program with lab coat dispensing machines, we were intrigued. And when we realized the costs were in line with our budget ... and Cintas would wash the coats in a hygienically-clean wash process, we said okay!"

Available through OMNIA Partners, Public Sector – the Cintas Lab Coat Dispensing Solution provides easy access to clean garments that help students and researchers focus on their important projects. From beginning to end, the Lab Coat Dispensing Solution is convenient and hassle-free.



Results

Now students do not have to worry about going to the bookstore and buying a new one every time their coat is destroyed or carrying around a contaminated coat in their bookbag during school. They come into the building, get their clean coat from the dispensing machine, and return it immediately after class.

As an added bonus, Wayne State University was able to add the Cintas program into the school's First Day Program. The program is designed to give students all the required course materials on or before the first day of class so they can use financial aid and book vouchers for all their materials. The Chemistry Department was able to wrap the lab coat dispensing fee into the textbook bundle for the class, so the students do not have to worry about it.

As Professor Allen concludes, "We take safety very seriously. For a long time there has been a split between what goes on in the research labs and what goes on in the teaching labs. We had undergraduate students purchasing lab coats at the bookstore, putting them in their backpacks after class contaminating their belongings. We were not sure how to fix it. The Cintas program has been working really nicely. Students do not have to take anything home with them. We have been really happy with the outcome."