

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



OnCampus ecoAmbassadors are college students who implement projects from EPA's partnership programs to help carry out the Agency's mission to protect human health and the environment. The program is open to ANY college student, regardless of program, age, or background. All interested students are encouraged to participate.

## Did You Know?

- Food waste is the second largest waste stream in the United States, after paper and yard waste.
- When excess food, leftovers, and scraps are disposed of in a landfill, they decompose and become a significant source of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.
- The United States generates more than 34 million tons of food waste each year, and less than 3% is recovered and recycled.
- Food wastes dumped in standard trash cans and dumpsters can attract rodents and insects, as well as generate bad odors.

## Learn More

WasteWise helps organizations save money, improve efficiency, and reduce their climate footprint through waste reduction. Any organization, including large and small businesses, colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, and federal, state, local, and tribal governments, can become a WasteWise partner.

For more information, please visit:  
[www.epa.gov/wastewise](http://www.epa.gov/wastewise)



# Food Recovery Composting Project

How much food and money is your campus literally throwing away? The Food Recovery Composting Project encourages participants to reduce as much of their food waste as possible and then compost any remaining food scraps — thereby saving money and helping protect the environment. Food scraps can be composted into a nutrient rich soil amendment that then feeds the soil. Participants in this challenge will create their own composting program to recycle the waste generated on their campuses.

## Goals of the Food Recovery Composting Project

- Reduce the volume of food waste that is unnecessarily sent to landfills
- Increase awareness about the consequences of improper disposal of food waste
- Educate and encourage others to reduce food waste
- Learn how to compost and the environmental benefits of compost in soils

## If You're Interested In:

- Learning how to conduct a food waste assessment
- Initiating an environmental project on your campus
- Working with your campus' dining services and facilities staff to improve waste management
- Gaining valuable project management and data analysis skills

**... then the Food Recovery Composting Project is for you!**

See page 2 for a step-by-step checklist for the Food Recovery Composting Project.



## Students Taking Action

After learning about the 200 gallons per day of waste created by unused food in his school's cafeteria, an ecoAmbassador from Xavier College was able to implement a composting program on his campus. Due to EPA support and the director of the school's physical plant, Xavier College was able to find a farm that would take the excess food. Beginning in fall 2011, all waste from the cafeteria will be collected and composted.

In 2007, Eastern Illinois University used twelve and a half tons of yard waste composted into mulch for campus beautification as part of its waste prevention and recycling program.

The Food Recovery Composting Project is ideal for students pursuing degrees in communications, education, engineering, environmental economics and policy, environmental science, and environmental studies.

## Checklist for the Food Recovery Composting Project

Follow the steps below to conduct a Food Recovery Composting Project on your campus.

### ☐ 1. Find out what is being done on your campus.

Meet with campus administrators, facilities staff, sustainability directors, and environmental clubs on campus to learn more about your campus' current waste management practices and what is being done to educate students and faculty about food waste disposal.

### ☐ 2. Form a team.

Gather support for your efforts by developing relationships with facilities staff, dining services, and environmental clubs. Facilities staff and dining services can suggest what you need to do to start a composting project and lend administrative support. Peers in environmental clubs can help you when conducting assessments and publicizing your efforts.

### ☐ 3. Create a food composting plan.

Composting can be done both on and off site. First, figure out options for your campus by researching available land space and determining whether there are any food haulers or end users in your area. In addition, consider the following questions:

- Do you have staff resources to separate food from trash and/or to operate equipment?
- Is there appropriate infrastructure (i.e., electrical, sewer backup) for the type of technology you want to use if you decide to compost on site?
- Do you have an end use for the finished compost?
- Do you need approval from your local enforcement agency?

Meet with campus administrators and facilities staff to help get the answers.

### ☐ 4. Publicize and document your success.

Utilize multiple media outlets to get the word out about your projects and events. Create a Facebook event and invite your friends. Promote your efforts in the school newspaper and make class announcements, if approved by professors. If possible, have your projects and events sponsored by student organizations and campus officials to reach a larger audience. Take photos to post to the OnCampus Facebook page and keep track of your results. Track the amount of waste you've reduced using Re-TRAC by joining WasteWise. Celebrate your success and record lessons learned so you can make your next project or event even better.

### ☐ 5. Continue your efforts beyond the challenge.

Remember that food waste is being created every day and we don't always need a competition to promote waste reduction! Maintain your relationships with your campus' dining services and facilities staff to ensure that food waste efforts are continued beyond the challenge.

### ☐ 6. Fill out your completion form.

Record the information that you are required to report to EPA on the event completion form, including your name, date of the event, name of your college, a description of the event or events, the number of interactions (include any interesting comments), and additional comments.

## Resources

### Activities to Reduce and Recover Food Waste

1. Start a food collection drive
2. Educate others to eat responsibly
3. Initiate a food composting system

For more ideas, see:

[www.epa.gov/foodrecovery/](http://www.epa.gov/foodrecovery/)

### WasteWise Re-TRAC

For more information on tracking your waste, please go to:

[www.epa.gov/epawaste/partnerships/wastewise/retrac.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/partnerships/wastewise/retrac.htm)

### Tips for Successful Events

1. Find a suitable space.
2. Put up posters to advertise the event.
3. Create a Facebook event.
4. Ask friends to spread the word.
5. Plan to have snacks available – find out if you can get donations.
6. Arrange for music at the event.
7. Arrive early to set up the space, including snacks and music.
8. Use sign-up sheets to record attendance.
9. Create a written summary of the event.

### EPA Contact Info

#### WasteWise

(800) EPA-WISE

[oswwastewise@epa.gov](mailto:oswwastewise@epa.gov)

Allow a few days for a return call. Contact the OnCampus team if there is no response from the WasteWise helpline.

#### EPA OnCampus Team

[EPAOnCampus@epa.gov](mailto:EPAOnCampus@epa.gov)

### EPA OnCampus Websites

Visit the EPA website at

[www.epa.gov/ecoambassadors/oncampus](http://www.epa.gov/ecoambassadors/oncampus)



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[www.facebook.com/epaoncampus](https://www.facebook.com/epaoncampus)