

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



## OnCampus ecoAmbassadors

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 largest waste stream entering U.S. landfills.
- The United States creates over 34 million tons of food waste each year.
- Food waste is more than 14% of the total municipal solid waste stream.
- Nearly 98% of food waste generated goes to a landfill.

### Learn More

WasteWise is an U.S. EPA program that 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/foodrecovery](http://www.epa.gov/foodrecovery)



Preserving Resources,  
Preventing Waste

## Food Recovery Challenge

How much food and money is your campus literally throwing away? The WasteWise Food Recovery Challenge encourages participants to reduce, donate, and recycle as much of their food waste as possible — thereby saving money and helping protect the environment. Most food “waste” is not waste at all, but actually safe, wholesome food that could potentially feed millions of Americans. Any food scraps that are not fit for consumption or donation can be composted into a nutrient rich soil amendment. Participants in this challenge will conduct a food waste assessment, undertake specific waste reduction activities, create a food waste recovery plan, and report progress using WasteWise ReTRAC.

### Goals of the Food Recovery Challenge

- Reduce the volume of food waste that is unnecessarily sent to landfills
- Donate safe, uneaten food to a food banks, food rescue organizations, farms and zoos
- Increase the use of composting to reduce food waste
- Provide educational and leadership opportunities to students

### 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 experience in project management and basic data analysis
- Applying your skills to real issues

**... then the Food Recovery Challenge is for you!**

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



### 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.

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

## Checklist for the Food Recovery Challenge

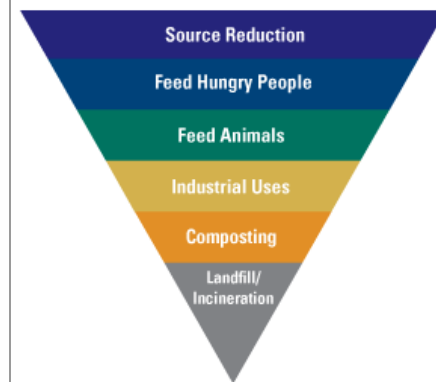
Follow the steps below to complete the Food Recovery Challenge on your campus.

- ☐ **1. Find out what's 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 food recovery project and lend administrative support.
- ☐ **3. Assess it! Conduct a baseline food waste assessment.**  
Where do I start? Is too much food being bought? What is being thrown away? Conducting a baseline food waste assessment will answer these questions and help to identify reasonable goals. The assessment should contain at least 30 days of food waste tracking data. EPA's WasteWise program tools can provide assistance.
- ☐ **4. Plan it! Create a food waste reduction plan.**  
Set yearly food waste diversion goals for a 3-year period, using the data obtained during the baseline food waste assessment as a guide.
- ☐ **5. Do it! Reduce food waste.**  
Commit to undertaking at least three activities to reduce your food waste. Examples are modifying food purchasing, changing food production and handling practices, and reducing excessive portion size.
- ☐ **6. Track it! Report progress using ReTRAC.**  
ReTRAC is a web-based data management and reporting system that can be used to track your organization's waste generation and reduction activities, including changes in purchasing, food donation, and composting.
- ☐ **7. Get the word out.**  
Use multiple media outlets to share information on your projects and events. If possible, have your projects and events sponsored by relevant student organizations and campus officials to reach a larger audience. Celebrate your success and record lessons learned so you can make your next project or event even better.
- ☐ **8. Keep up the good work.**  
Maintain your relationships with your campus' dining services and facilities staff to ensure that food waste efforts are continued beyond the challenge.
- ☐ **9. 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

### Food Recovery Hierarchy

EPA recommends the following food recovery hierarchy as the preferred options for excess food.



### 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

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

### EPA OnCampus Websites

Visit the EPA website at  
[www.epa.gov/ecoambassadors/oncampus](http://www.epa.gov/ecoambassadors/oncampus)



Join the conversation at  
[www.facebook.com/epaoncampus](https://www.facebook.com/epaoncampus)