

UC Merced Sustainable Food Services Report

Office of the President

FY 2010-11

Introduction

UC Merced's commitment to sustainability sets forth a clear list of expectations for the campus in the future. As a stakeholder on the Chancellors Sustainability Committee, UC Merced Campus Dining Services is committed to increasing awareness about sustainability, defining it both technically and in practice for our customers to view and model. As a small University, we have an opportunity to build sustainable practices from the ground up. Since the University's inception in 2005, a multitude of sustainability efforts have been implemented with an emphasis on responsible purchasing, customer education and waste reduction.

Organizational Structure

In 2010-11, UC Merced Dining provided food service to the entire campus community through three revenue centers. The Yablokoff-Wallace Dining Center provided an average of 4,500 meals a day and is a very congested facility. The campus does not have the funding or reserves to build a second dining facility at this time and, as a result, our focus has shifted to satellite operations in an attempt to take pressure of the Dining Center and increase revenue.

Yablokoff-Wallace Dining Center	\$4,600,000 annually
Lakeside Catering	\$500,000 annually
The Lantern Café	\$460,000 annually
The Summits Marketplace	TBD - Opened August 2011

Our key partners to success include:

- UC Merced Campus Purchasing
- Dining Advisory Board (currently being developed)
- Prime Vendor – US Foodservice (green business)
- Chancellors Sustainability Advisory Committee
- Local growers and vendors
- UC Merced Green Club
- UC Merced Green Hall
- Systemwide food service colleagues

With the goal of educating customers to enhance sustainability of our food service and minimize waste, UC Merced Dining Services developed three objectives that align with UCOP's Sustainability Plan. This report addresses progress within each of these objectives and highlights new initiatives and challenges associated with each.

Objective 1

Provide objective specific education to customers to promote healthy living and sustainability.

New and Existing Initiatives

- Revamp nutritional information labels for all in-house made items.
- Dedicate the tray return area in the Dining Center as a "Sustainability" marketing location.
- Partner with UCM HEROES to provide support for customers who have questions about specific dietary needs.
- Survey residential students as to why they "take out" meals. Nearly 35% of all meals are taken out of the Dining Center. Feedback from the survey indicated the DC is too loud and crowded to be considered conducive for studying. The survey results also indicated that students manage their time down to the minute and often identify walking to class as good time to consume a meal.
- In an attempt to promote, "in-house dining", servers now assume all customers are ordering "for here" unless stated otherwise.
- All departments in Student Affairs are required to produce an annual Assessment Report. One of our Assessment goals this year is to further increase awareness around the amount of waste generated by "take out" orders, with a goal of decreasing the amount of meal "to go" orders by 5%.
- Campus Dining's "Food for Thought" committee will be holding its first meeting in October 2011. One of the top topics for the meeting is, "Waste reduction and how you play a role".

Objective 2

Purchase locally grown and regional goods whenever possible.

New and Existing Initiatives

- We are investigating the potential to partner with Taylor Farms to produce and brand off-site pre-packaged "Grab n Go" salads and sandwiches for Dining Services. Taylor Farms has a plant in Salinas, California and utilizes produce local to the Central Valley and coastal communities.
- Our partnership with Shasky Farms has had continued success over the last few years. We purchase stone fruit and a variety of dried fruit and nuts to sell at all Dining locations on campus.
- We plan to offer a "Farmers Market" concept at the Summits Marketplace, allowing campus patrons the opportunity to pre-order and/or pick up produce while at work.
- Summer food service at UC Merced is nominal due to the lack of summer residents on campus. As a result, we are not able to take full advantage of local summer produce available in our region.
- We will undertake an analysis of all in-house produced menu items with the goal of identifying opportunities to substitute ingredients with local/regional ingredients.

Objective 3

In step with the campus commitment, work towards 95% compost and 2% disposables of total sales.

New and Existing Initiatives

- Purchases of disposable packaging were 3.3% of sales for 2010-11. This is progress, however we are entrenched in a culture of 'take out' that will continue to be difficult to influence.
- Establish simple and easy to read signage at waste management areas to educate customers on how to manage waste and why we need their help.
- We currently charge \$0.50 for "To Go" orders. As a result we experienced an increase in the amount of plates and flatware removed from the Dining Center, resulting in the loss of thousands of dollars. The "Food for Thought" committee will be looking into other approaches to discourage takeout orders.
- "You Wasted This" v2.0 campaign to launch in Spring 2011. The goal of this campaign is make customers aware of the amount of waste generated by one weeks worth of take out meals versus one week of eating in-house.
- The "Green Container Initiative" was a major success with our customers, however we found logistical problems in the way the program was set up related to the return of dirty containers and reissuing a clean container. We are looking into a vending machine that cleans, sanitizes, and dispenses clean containers as a possible option for UC Merced.
- We are considering purchasing reusable hot/cold mugs for all campus residents to use in the Dining Center, which could result in thousands of coffee and soda cups not being used. Aladdin produces a mug made from 97% recycled food grade polypropylene containing 25% post-consumer content that is recyclable at the end of the mugs life. <http://shopaladdin-pmi.com/detail/TCL+10-01088-002> Dining Services would partner with the Green Club, Sustainability Committee, and any other campus entities interested in this initiative in hopes of both subsidizing the cost of the mug and branding it in a way that is attractive to our customer base.