



## 2023 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study Competition Endicott College

### **Contact info:**

Carly Thibodeau, Associate Director (Office of Sustainability)

Endicott College

[cthibode@endicott.edu](mailto:cthibode@endicott.edu)

978-232-2195

### **Focus of Case study:**

Show the Waste focuses on food waste reduction by putting “wasteful plates” on display in the main dining hall through a meal period.

### **Detailed description of campaign or effort:**

Show the Waste is an event co-run by the Office of Sustainability and Dining (Sodexo). The idea originated from the Dining Director, and has been a staple event at major programming periods like Campus Race to Zero Waste since about 2017.

This awareness effort takes “wasteful” plates of food off of the conveyor belt where diners (students, faculty, and staff) put meals when they are finished eating, and places them on a high visibility front table where diners swipe into the dining hall to encourage them to be mindful of taking only what they will eat. A “wasteful” plate, for example, would look like a plate full of mostly untouched food, a plate full of French fries (or other common food like pasta where most people would know what it tastes like), or full beverage cups. Plates are grabbed after diners have left the area, but before they reach the back kitchen- the goal of the event is not to call out or shame people who produced food waste, but rather to make incoming diners think more critically about their plates. Mostly clean plates and empty cups are considered not wasteful. Informational signage, as well as Office of Sustainability staff, educates observers about what happens to leftover food and food waste at Endicott, how much food waste Endicott diverts from the landfill, and statistics about food waste country-wide.

By the end of the meal period (typically lunch), the table is completely full/double stacked with wasteful plates; food is then scraped into buckets and weighed at the end of the meal period. During the 2023 Campus Race to Zero Waste Show the Waste event, we added an additional interaction component to get diners (students, faculty, and staff) to engage more directly with the event vs passive observation; people could guess how many pounds of food waste would be collected by the end of the dining period to be entered into a raffle to win a sustainability prize pack (mason jar, tote bag, Sustainable Endicott sticker, and packet of pollinator seeds).

### **Planning steps & timeline to implement:**

- ~1-2 months before event date: Connect with Dining Services on date of Show the Waste event, confirm use of table and empty pickle buckets to weigh food in
- ~2 weeks before event date: Make sure all informational signage is created, secure staffing for event (2-3 people over 2-hour period), start promoting via social media/campus outlets
- Day of event: Build in time for table set up, ensure staff have gloves to be able to handle plates
- Event: Staff cycle through grabbing plates from the conveyor belt and manning the table to speak with diners and collect pound guesses.
- Cleanup: Weigh food collected in pickle buckets using a fish scale, place food buckets on conveyor belt to be dumped into compost bins, contact winner with closest guess of pounds of food

### **Resources and stakeholders involved:**

- Office of Sustainability and Sodexo Dining Services partnership event
- No budget required- most supplies are reused year to year
- Supplies- gloves, informational signage, pickle buckets (or similar container), fish scale, giveaway prize
- Staff- 2 or 3 Office of Sustainability staff/student Fellows during 2-hour period

### **Describe the Results of this campaign component:**

- **General results:**

Event is typically featured on campus social media/newsletters, noticeable decrease in wasteful plates by end of the lunch period. General engagement from diners is typically awe of volume/type of food waste, and learning tips on how waste can be reduced.

- **Specific measurable impact:**

45 people made poundage guesses (up from 16 people during the Fall 2022 Sustainability Week Show the Waste event), plus an estimated 200+ more passerby passively engaged. 35 lbs. of food was collected during the lunch period (down from 52 lbs. during the Fall 2022 event).

### **What would you do differently in the future?**

Make “enter to win” signage more visible to encourage more direct interaction, also work with Sodexo to provide smaller portions unless diners specifically ask for larger portions.

### **What advice would you give to another college that wanted to do a similar effort?**

This is a really simple, high visibility event to put on in terms of resources! Though it only directly impacts one meal period, the goal is to have it a few times a semester to keep the reminder of taking only what you will eat fresh, but not so often that it becomes white noise.

### **Photos and Graphics:**

All photo credits to David Le, Endicott College Photographer): Captions: Endicott College Show the Waste event, staffed by Office of Sustainability Associate Director and Student Fellow