



Miami University 2025 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

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Focus of Case study:

This case study focused on waste diversion strategies at Social Innovation Weekend 2025 for Miami University to reduce trash sent to the landfill.

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

Social Innovation Weekend integrates key public and private stakeholder organizations at the state, county, and local city-level with students to solve significant societal issues during a 48-hour weekend. The Office of Sustainability offered waste diversion events at meal periods and provided education on sorting waste, recycling, and composting beginning in 2023 due to the event's "climate change" theme. This is a tradition that has now been carried on for the last three years at the event.

The planning process for the waste diversion aspects of this year's Social Innovation Weekend began in February 2025. The Director of Sustainability, Olivia Herron, and Sustainability Engagement Coordinator, Alex Miller, met with organizers to plan for waste diversion. The Office of Sustainability conducted outreach and requests for student volunteers to help with the process, along with contacting our local Food Recovery Network Chapter to facilitate donations of excess food to a local pantry. This initiative promotes sustainability and waste reduction in a holistic approach from repurposing food scraps as compost, recycling materials that can be, and donating what would have otherwise been valuable resources of healthy food options. This not only showcases Miami University's values and commitment to environmental sustainability, but also social sustainability.

Planning steps & timeline to implement:

- Miami University entered the Campus Race to Zero Waste Per Capita Recycling competition in January 2025. The University collected data for this case study on March 9th to be submitted to Campus Race to Zero Waste.
- The Office of Sustainability collaborated with the Farmer School of Business and those who are helping plan the event to create a game plan for meal periods starting in February 2025. The plan entailed a request for as many BPI compostable products as possible to be purchased for the meals, reaching out to catering sources to let them know about our processes, and gathering materials for proper waste management and food donation processes. The office provided pop-up trash bag holders, compostable bags, Hefty ReNew Recycling bags, clear bin liners, extra trash bags, and signage for the waste stations along with gloves and a scale to note collected pounds of waste from the meal period.
- Alex and Olivia scheduled a time split so that there was one full time employee and one volunteer at least for each meal period. There were five total meals provided to participating students and organizers, which occurred from March 7th-9th.
- The Office of Sustainability looked to educated students, direct disposal methods, sorted waste, and weighed the final totals for each waste location. All weights were documented on Google Sheets and used this data to measure success with the initiative. Data from March 9th was utilized for this Case Study to submit.
- After all waste was collected, sorted, weighed, and disposed of, the unopened food was put in the flash freezer in the Farmer School of Business. This was then to be picked up and dropped off by a member of the Food Recovery Network to donate to locals in need.

Resources and stakeholders involved:

- Financial Resources
 - Director of Sustainability and Sustainability Engagement Coordinator position pay/salary for time working and planning the event.
 - The Office of Sustainability purchased the gloves, bags, waste station stands, and signage for the event.
- Volunteers
 - Student volunteers signed up to help with the sorting process at waste stations, set up and tear down, waste weigh/audit, and waste disposal at the end of the event.
- Partner Organizations
 - At the meal periods, some of the food providers were able to bring and purchase compostable products to allow for more compost to be created from the event (plates, cups, bowls, utensils, etc.).
- Facilities Cooperation
 - Farmer School of Business cooperated well with our requests to not have custodial services take out the trash and allow us to weigh and dispose of the waste as required for an audit.
 - Miami University's Global Health Studies, Social Work, and Social Entrepreneurship programs hosted Social Innovation Weekend and were very accommodating to our audits during and after each meal period. They were also involved in our waste diversion efforts by managing the food donations of leftover meals that were sent to a local food bank.

Describe the Results of this campaign component:

82% of waste from this event was diverted from the landfill to be either recycled or composted. 74% of waste was composted while 8% was recycled, leaving only 18% of the total waste to go to the landfill.

What would you do differently in the future?

One aspect of the competition that we would do differently next time would be to request that no single-use plastics were to be brought by food providers, and all BPI certified compostable products would be used.

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

Our advice to another institution that would want to do a similar effort would be to provide incentives to volunteers for coming to help with the event. We advertised that at every meal period, someone came to volunteer to direct waste and sort at, and they could have a free meal. This was something that was not an excessive addition to spending because there were still large amounts of food left over, and some students mentioned how they came to volunteer to have a nice meal opportunity. Social Innovation Weekend partnered with local businesses for almost every meal period so the students could have access to good, quality, homemade food while also focusing on the importance of shopping local.

Photos and Graphics:

Results: Social Innovation Weekend Waste Audit 2025

Category	Weight of Waste (lbs.)	Percent of Total Waste	Percent of Waste Diverted From Landfill
Total Waste	10		
Landfill Waste	1.8	18.00%	
Compost Waste	7.4	74.00%	
Recycling Waste	0.8	8.00%	82.00%

Table 1. Weight of waste generated from the event on Sunday March 9, 2025. 82% of the waste during this meal was diverted from the landfill to be composted and recycled.



Figure 1. Student volunteers to help manage, weigh, sort, and man the waste stations at the event. Set up shows that composting, single stream recycling, landfill, and specialty recycling through the Hefty ReNew program was offered at the meal periods for this event.