



Spelman College

2025 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

Contact Info

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Focus of Case Study: Building food waste infrastructure through back of house composting with Bon Appétit and CompostNow, resulting in 100 percent compost acceptance and over 33,000 lbs diverted from landfill.

Detailed Description of Campaign or Effort:

During the 2024–2025 academic year, Spelman College expanded its commitment to food waste reduction by building composting infrastructure in partnership with Bon Appétit and CompostNow. Bon Appétit’s institutional alignment with zero waste goals made them a natural partner for this initiative. Over Summer 2024, the Spelman sustainability team met with Bon Appétit leadership to understand shared composting goals and plan for operational improvements. These conversations revealed the need for more CompostNow bins, prompting leadership engagement to approve the investment. By August 2024, additional bins were ordered and installed to support a back of house only composting approach.

Throughout Fall 2024, efforts focused on strengthening relationships with composting partners and collecting baseline data about student, faculty, and staff attitudes toward composting. To evaluate the feasibility of expanding composting efforts, the team piloted a front of house composting test during Fried Chicken Wednesdays, a high traffic dining event. The pilot revealed high contamination rates, signaling that additional staff training and education would be needed to maintain the

program's 100 percent acceptance rate if front of house composting were to be implemented at scale.

During Spring 2025, the team began conceptualizing a campus wide food waste education campaign. The goal of this upcoming campaign, launching in Fall 2025, is to raise awareness of Spelman's composting efforts, increase student and staff participation, and build pride in sustainable dining practices.

Planning Steps & Timeline to Implement:

Summer 2024 Met with Bon Appétit to align composting goals requested and secured new CompostNow bins Leadership approved investment .

August 2024 Bins delivered to campus.

Fall 2024 Focused on data collection around composting knowledge and attitudes. Additionally, we piloted a front of house composting during Fried Chicken Wednesdays and identified support and services needs to maintain low contamination rates and quality standards.

Spring 2025 Began developing campus wide digital food waste campaign to launch Fall 2025.

Resources and Stakeholders Involved:

- CompostNow (hauler and composter)
- Bon Appétit (kitchen staff compost in the back end of the cafe)
- Facilities Management and Services (manage relationship with CompostNow and Bon Appetite)
- Campus Leadership (approved funding for additional bins and support for developing composting infrastructure)
- Spelman Sustainability Office team (lead front of the house pilot program)

Describe the Results of This Campaign Component:

- 33,000+ lbs of food waste composted during the 2024–2025 academic year.
- 8,600+ lbs diverted during Campus Race to Zero Waste.
- 100% bin acceptance rate from CompostNow.
- Front of house pilot data collected to guide next steps for new bins and infrastructure secured to support expansion

What Would You Do Differently in the Future?

We would prioritize telling the food composting story more clearly and consistently across campus. While our system has worked well operationally, many students, staff, and faculty still don't know Spelman composts food waste. This limits community engagement and participation. To change

that, we're launching a new food waste campaign in Fall 2025 focused on storytelling, education, and building awareness. Our goal is to build long term buy-in and eventually scale composting to front of house dining areas with the same quality outcomes.

What Advice Would You Give to Another College That Wanted to Do a Similar Effort? Start with a system that minimizes contamination such as back of house composting and build credibility with compost haulers. Use pilot programs and data to inform scaling, and ensure you have leadership and facilities support before launching campus wide campaigns.

Photos and Graphics:



[Pictured: Olivia Robinson, Sustainable Spelman Student Associate C'2025. Composting in the front end of the cafeteria]



[Pictured: Compost Now Bins]