



## 2023 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study

### *Salisbury University's Food Waste Challenge*

#### **Contact info**

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

Salisbury University's (SU) main focus was to bring awareness to post-consumer food waste generated by the campus community and visitors of the Commons Dining Hall.

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

Salisbury University's Food Waste Challenge was created in the Fall of 2022 to bring awareness to post-consumer food waste in the Commons Dining Hall, while also reducing the food waste generated during the lunch shift. A food waste weighing event has never been done before at SU and this event created a new partnership between SU's Dining Services and the Recycling Department. The Recycling Department was interested to see how much food was being wasted at the post-consumer level and how a repeated, awareness activity would affect those results.

Salisbury University's Commons Dining Hall is a pay as you enter facility where once inside, it is an all you can eat setup. With this type of setup, SU enforces a "go eat and come back" system for those who want second servings to reduce food waste and long lines. During the COVID Pandemic, Dining Services also started a Carry-Out Program for students who did not wish to eat inside the Commons Dining Hall due to exposure risks. The Carry-Out Program is still being used at SU, which reduces food waste at the Commons Dining Hall facility but may increase food waste elsewhere on or off campus. In the Spring of 2022, a student submitted a Green Fund Project to update the Commons Dining Hall serving utensils to smaller serving utensils to allow the portions to be smaller, which further reduces food waste.

During the Food Waste Challenge, the Recycling Department and volunteers had set up outside the dish return station. They weighed food scraps continuously on a digital scale with a live reading. Students could see how much food waste accumulated during a lunch shift as they entered and exited the Dining Hall. The Recycling staff and volunteers would also answer any questions or concerns related to the Food Waste Challenge. The Recycling Department used a whiteboard easel for customers to see what the current weight was at when entering the

Commons Dining Hall and the goals they had set. Dining Services helped promote each event on their Instagram account through Live videos, stories, and collaborative posts. Dining Services measured how many customers entered the Dining Hall during the events. While the Recycling Department would report back the total weight at the end of each event and the average food waste per participant. We encouraged the SU community to think about the impacts of post-consumer food waste on the environment and to make the conscious decision to waste less food.

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

- Early September 2022: Recycling Department discussed the idea of hosting a food weighing event at the Commons Dining Hall
- September 22, 2022: Recycling Department and Dining Services meet to discuss food waste weighing event and logistics\*
- October 12, 2022: Hosted our first Food Waste Challenge
- November 2, 2022: Hosted our second Food Waste Challenge
- December 14, 2022: Hosted our third Food Waste Challenge
- February 2, 2023: Hosted our fourth Food Waste Challenge
- February 22, 2023: Hosted our fifth Food Waste Challenge
- March 15, 2023: Hosted our sixth Food Waste Challenge

*\*Note: The dates that were agreed upon had the same food menu-cycle to avoid skewed data from differing menu options.*

### **Resources and stakeholders involved**

The Recycling Department and Dining Services worked closely together to plan this event and make it a reality. Dining Services provided the trashcans, stanchions, and advertisement on Instagram. While the Recycling Department provided the digital scale, gloves, whiteboard easel, advertisement and the staff to run each event. Individuals in Salisbury University's Horticulture Department, Environmental Student Association, Student Government Association and Environmental Studies Program volunteered to run the food waste event alongside the Recycling Coordinator.

### **Results**

Our goal to raise awareness on post-consumer food waste at Commons Dining Hall was achieved. Table 1 shows the participation results of the Food Waste Challenge events. On average, we interacted with 880 participants made up of students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors during each 2.5-hour event. Our Instagram posts related to the Food Waste Challenge increased from 753 accounts viewed to 1,732 accounts viewed. SU President, Dr. Lepre and her Executive Board attended and participated in the Food Waste Challenge on February 22<sup>nd</sup> as well.

Table 1. The Food Waste Challenges' participation results

	10/13/2022	11/2/2022	12/14/2022	2/1/2023	2/22/2023	3/15/2023
<b>Participants*</b>	937	981	698	939	868	862
<b>Instagram Reach</b>	753	647	451	451	809	1,732

*\*Participants were those who entered Commons Dining Hall between 10:45am and 1:15pm, which was measured by Dining Services.*

Our second goal, to decrease SU's post-consumer food waste at Commons Dining Hall, was also achieved. Figure 1 shows the average weight of food waste in ounces (oz) per participant at each Food Waste Challenge event. Our first event had the highest average weight of food waste at 3.04oz per participant and it has decreased down to 2.32oz per participant. This is a decrease of approximately 23% of post-consumer food waste per participant.

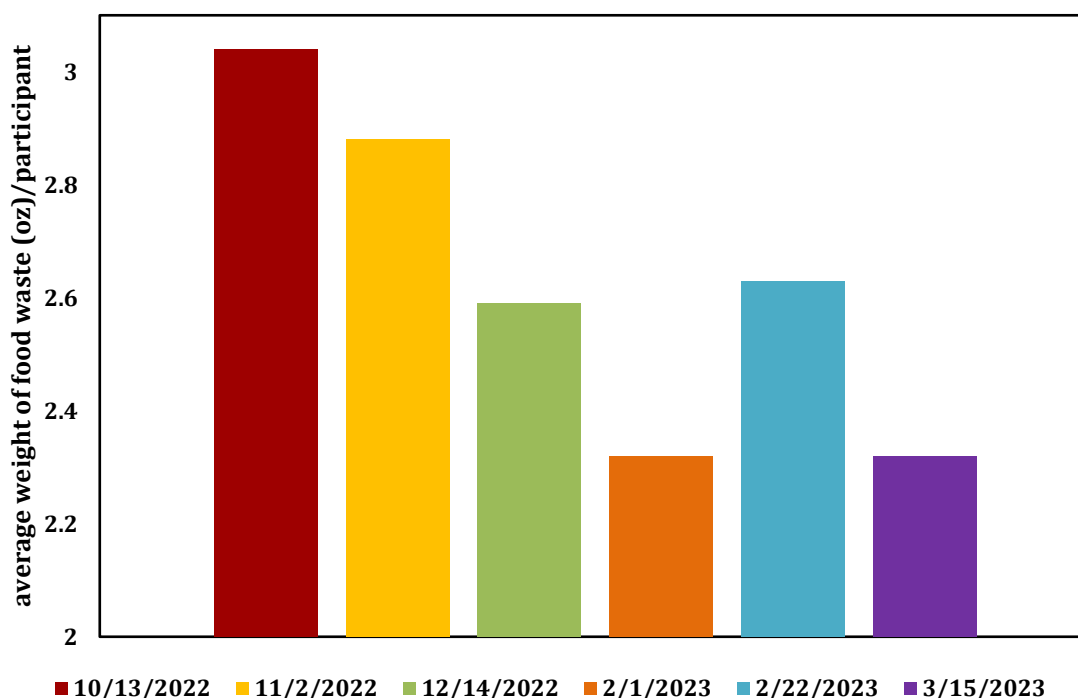


Figure 1. The average weight of food waste (oz) per participant for each Food Waste Challenge.

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

Next year, we would like to start the program earlier in the Fall semester. Introducing Commons' customers to the Food Waste Challenge right after their arrival at SU may increase the positive behavioral changes related to food waste. Because we started around the halfway point of the Fall semester and it was a brand-new event, we believe there was more resistance amongst the students to participate. Since Freshman are the primary customers at Commons Dining Hall, we want to have a big impact at the beginning of their college experience that minimizing waste is something we prioritize here at SU. We are planning to make this a regular event with the goal of increasing the positive behavioral changes related to food waste at SU.

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

Keep your message positive, start as early as you can in the Fall semester, and have fun with it. It is a great opportunity to meet many individuals who you may not normally get the chance to meet. Work closely with your Dining Services because they want to reduce the amount of waste generated as well.

**Photos and Graphics**

Social media posts can be found at [www.instagram.com/salisburyuniversity\\_recycling/](https://www.instagram.com/salisburyuniversity_recycling/) or [https://www.tiktok.com/@salisburyu\\_recycling](https://www.tiktok.com/@salisburyu_recycling)

See posts below.

The image shows an Instagram post from the account 'salisburyuniversity\_recycling'. The main visual is a promotional graphic for the 'SALISBURY UNIVERSITY Food Waste Challenge 2022'. The graphic features a variety of fresh produce including tomatoes, bell peppers, eggplants, broccoli, kiwi, and limes. The text on the graphic provides the event details: 'SALISBURY UNIVERSITY Food Waste Challenge 2022 Wednesdays • October 12 & November 2 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. • Commons Dining Hall'. It also includes a call to action: 'VISIT @SALISBURYUNIVERSITY\_RECYCLING ON INSTAGRAM FOR MORE INFORMATION'. The Instagram post interface shows the post was made by 'salisburyuniversity\_recycling' on October 11, 2022. The caption reads: 'GUESS WHATTTTT?!?!? SU Recycling Staff and volunteers will be hosting a FOOD WASTE CHALLENGE inside COMMONS DINING HALL @eatatsalisburyu !!! We will be located right beside the dish drop off station, ready to weigh post-consumer food waste and educate everyone on food waste issues. I hope to see you all there! 20w'. The post has been liked by 'suenvrdept and 13 others'.

Instagram post advertising our October Food Waste Challenge 10/11/22

“GUESS WHATTTTT?!?!? SU Recycling Staff and volunteers will be hosting a FOOD WASTE CHALLENGE inside COMMONS DINING HALL [@eatatsalisburyu](https://www.instagram.com/eatatsalisburyu) !!! We will be located right beside the dish drop off station, ready to weigh post-consumer food waste and educate everyone on food waste issues. I hope to see you all there!”



 **salisburyuniversity\_recycling**  
Ed Sheeran • Bad Habits

 **salisburyuniversity\_recycling** Thank you so much for everyone who participated today! It was a great learning experience for us all!

And a huge thank you to the Dining Staff @eatatsalisburyu for allowing us and for ESA volunteers for helping!


Watch video to find out our total food waste (lbs) after a Wednesday lunch shift!

20w

 **nicolewolf\_** Awesome !!!! 

20w 1 like Reply

Boost post

 Liked by [mk.salisburyu](#) and 30 others

OCTOBER 12, 2022

 Add a comment... [Post](#)

Instagram post from our first Food Waste Challenge event 10/12/22 (Video Credit: Rachael Faust)

“Thank you so much for everyone who participated today! It was a great learning experience for us all! And a huge thank you to the Dining Staff @eatatsalisburyu for allowing us and for ESA volunteers for helping! Watch video to find out our total food waste (lbs.) after a Wednesday lunch shift!”



salisburyuniversity\_recycling Salisbury University

salisburyuniversity\_recycling Guess who's coming back November 2nd?!

The Recycling staff!!!

Our goal is to minimize how much food waste is generated post-consumer during lunch!

Last time we were around 180lbs in 2.5hrs.

Let's see if we can beat that!

18w

View insights Boost post

Liked by sualumni and 14 others

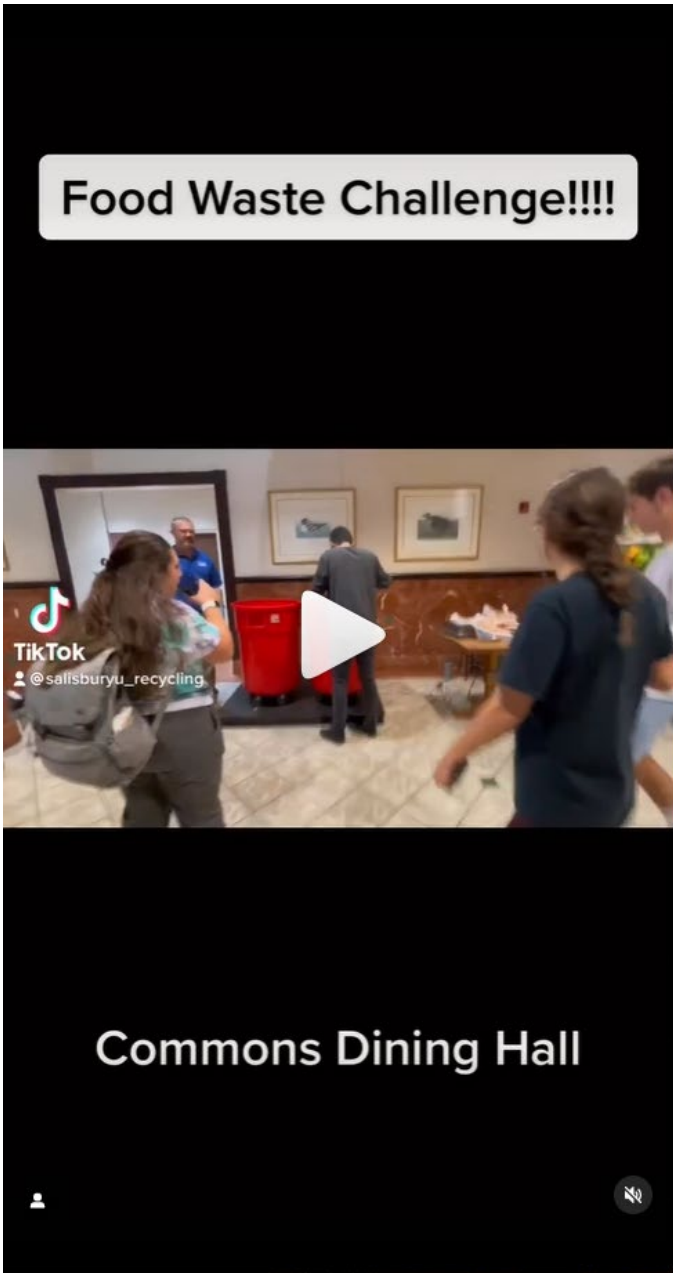
OCTOBER 26, 2022

Add a comment... Post

Instagram post advertising our November Food Waste Challenge Event. Posted 10/26/22

“Guess who’s coming back November 2nd?! The Recycling staff!!! Our goal is to minimize how much food waste is generated post-consumer during lunch! Last time we were around 180lbs in 2.5hrs. Let’s see if we can beat that!”





salisburyuniversity\_recycling

Original audio



salisburyuniversity\_recycling Food Waste Challenge!!! We got 179lbs but had 50+ more people come in for Wednesday lunch!

Making progress  
#cleanplateclub

17w

Boost post



Liked by [salisburyuniversityarboretum](#) and 29 others

NOVEMBER 2, 2022



Add a comment...

Post

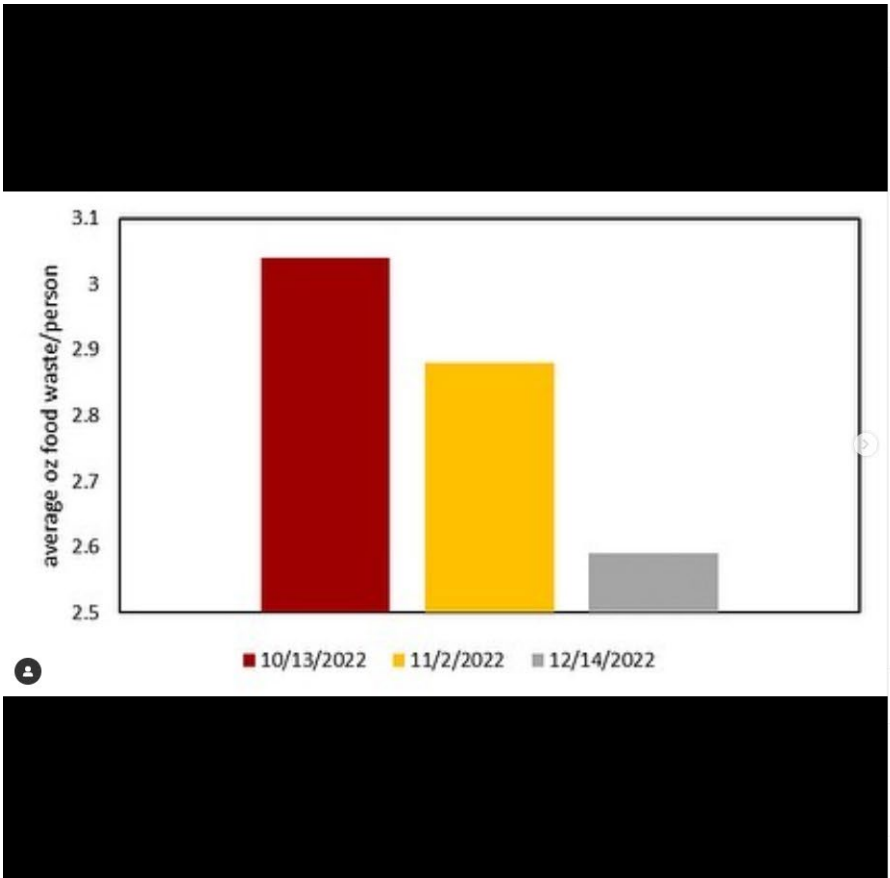
Instagram post of our second Food Waste Challenge. Posted 11/2/22 (Video Credit: Rachael Faust)  
"Food Waste Challenge!!! We got 179lbs but had 50+ more people come in for Wednesday lunch! Making progress [#cleanplateclub](#)"



Instagram post advertising our December 14<sup>th</sup> Food Waste Challenge event. Posted 12/2/22 (Photo Credit: Rachael Faust)

“Help us eliminate post-consumer food waste at Commons on December 14th from 11-1:30pm! We are spreading awareness of how much food the average Commons’ customer wastes. If you’re in need of more volunteer hours or wanting to advocate for this cause, please comment or DM for more info!”





salisburyuniversity\_recycling  
Salisbury University

salisburyuniversity\_recycling Our Food Waste results from yesterday! We saw a lot of people with no food scraps on their plates!  
We'll be back at it in the Spring!  
#cleanplateclub  
Edited · 10w

elenatlopez @cailey.tebow who is sheeeee 🤔🤔 10w 2 likes Reply

suenvrdept #cleanplateclub 🙌🙌 10w 2 likes Reply

nicolewolf\_ Yahoo ! 10w 3 likes Reply

View insights Boost post

Liked by food4theflock and 47 others  
DECEMBER 15, 2022

Add a comment... Post

Instagram post of our results. Posted 12/15/22  
 “Our Food Waste results from yesterday! We saw a lot of people with no food scraps on their plates! We’ll be back at it in the Spring! [#cleanplateclub](#)”



salisburyuniversity\_recycling  
Wiz Khalifa • Work Hard, Play Hard



salisburyuniversity\_recycling Today's food waste event! Today we were able to continue decreasing the average post-consumer food waste! See you all on the 22nd!  
4w

Boost post



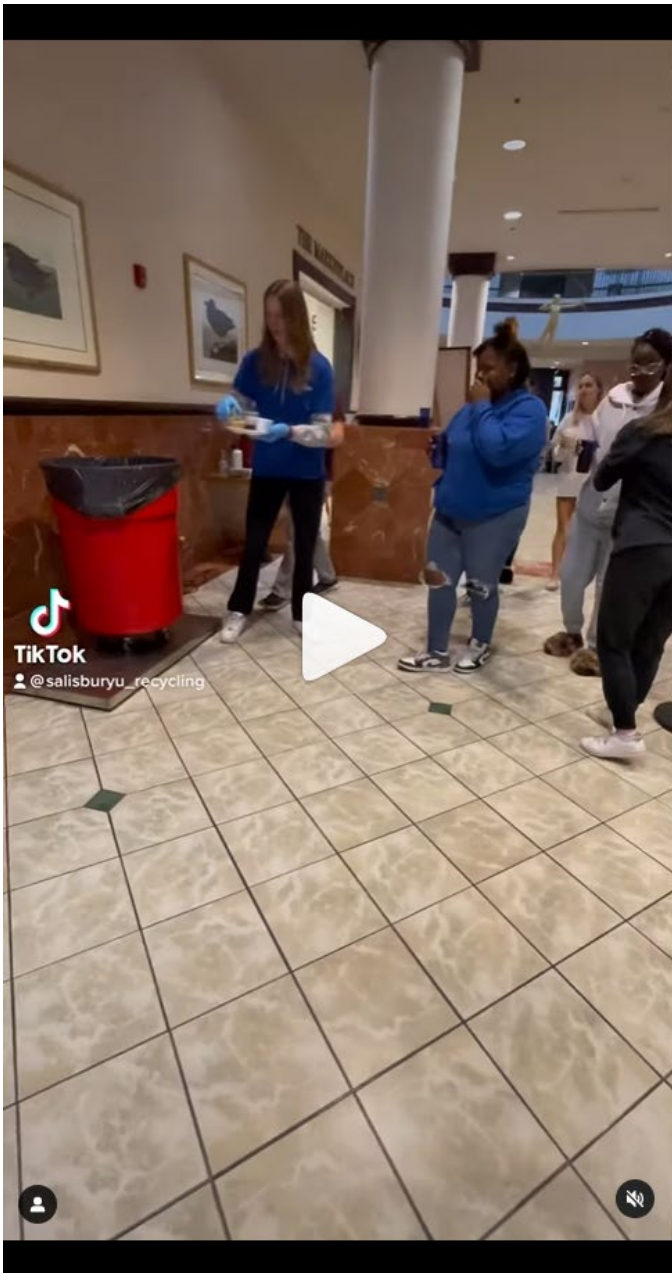
Liked by suenvrdept and 26 others


FEBRUARY 1

Add a comment...

Post

Instagram post of our February 1<sup>st</sup> Food Waste Challenge event. Posted 2/1/22 (Video Credit: Rachael Faust)  
“Today’s food waste event! Today we were able to continue decreasing the average post-consumer food waste!  
See you all on the 22nd!”



 **salisburyuniversity\_recycling** Original audio ⋮

 **salisburyuniversity\_recycling** Yesterday we hosted our 2nd food waste weighing event this semester! We are collecting data and bringing awareness on post-consumer food waste here at SU! Our efforts will be submitted to [@campusracetozerowaste](#) 's Case Study Competition.

I also want to thank our Executive Staff and [@presidentlepre](#) for stopping by and supporting our efforts 🌱♻️

6d

 **salisbury\_gsc** 🍌 ♡


6d Reply

 **nicolewolf\_\_** Yahoo ♡

6d Reply

Boost post

♡ 💬 📌 🔖

 Liked by [salisburyuniversityarboretum](#) and 29 others

6 DAYS AGO

 Add a comment... Post

Instagram post of our February 22<sup>nd</sup> Food Waste Challenge event. Posted 2/23/22 (Video Credit: Rachael Faust) “Yesterday we hosted our 2nd food waste weighing event this semester! We are collecting data and bringing awareness on post-consumer food waste here at SU! Our efforts will be submitted to [@campusracetozerowaste](#) ‘s Case Study Competition. I also want to thank our Executive Staff and [@presidentlepre](#) for stopping by and supporting our efforts 🌱♻️”



salisburyuniversity\_recycling and eatatsalisburyu  
Migos • Stir Fry

salisburyuniversity\_recycling Our 3/15/2023 Food Waste Challenge! We lowered our average ounces per person to 2.53! #cleanplateclub #cleanplatechallenge #minimizewaste #sustainability  
5d

belladavis5419 I love this!  
5d Reply

spencer\_blade damn @lwoody\_7 @carterfusto looked like a lot of food there 🤪  
4d 4 likes Reply

Boost post

🤍 💬 📌

👤👤 Liked by suenvrdept and 70 others  
5 DAYS AGO

😊 Add a comment... Post

Instagram post of our March 15<sup>th</sup> Food Waste Challenge event. Posted 3/15/23 (Video Credit: Rachael Faust)  
“Our 3/15/2023 Food Waste Challenge! We lowered our average ounces per person to 2.53! #cleanplateclub #cleanplatechallenge #minimizewaste #sustainability”















