

SUSTAINABLE ENDOWMENT INSTITUTE'S
"CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY REPORT CARD 2009"

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
DINING SERVICES SUSTAINABILITY POLICY SURVEY RESPONSE

INTRODUCTION

Virginia Tech has a national award winning dining program that is committed to innovation and student satisfaction. We serve more than 5 million meals each year at our 11 conveniently located restaurants. For detailed information on our dining program please see <http://www.studentprograms.vt.edu/dining/>

1) Concerning purchasing and use of locally grown food:

Note: Geographical location and seasonal availability are taken into account in assessing your response.

1a) From how many local farms and/or other local producers do you make purchases?

13 local farms and distributors

1b) How much do you spend annually on purchasing locally grown food?

8-15%

1c) Are you contracting with a local dairy?

Yes.

1d) Do you source any food from an on-campus farm or garden?

Currently no, but we are working with our horticulture department on a plan to harvest herbs and produce for our Dining Centers. We are currently working with our prime vendors (U.S. Foodservice and Sysco) to identify local sources of food and hopefully increase our local purchases of food.

2) What type of organic or other sustainably-produced products are you purchasing?

For example: Fair-trade coffee, fair-trade bananas, cage-free eggs, free-range chicken, cage-free pork, grass-fed beef, organic produce, organic bread or baked goods.

Our specialty, coffee shop currently offers fair trade coffee and has been for the last five plus years. They will be offering organic products on a daily basis. This will include direct relationship coffee, organic produce, and other items.

3) Do you offer specifically-labeled vegan options on a daily, weekly or other regularly-scheduled basis?

Yes, in all of our dining centers, we offer daily options for both vegan and vegetarian diets. In our largest dining center, D2, we have an entire restaurant and kitchen area dedicated to vegan and vegetarian items.

4) Concerning waste reduction:

4a) Does your school's dining services department have a program to address the waste generated by to-go containers?

For example: Reusable dishware, recycled, biodegradable, or eco-friendly to-go containers. (See below)

4b) Has dining services reduced to-go waste and/or have you eliminated the use of Styrofoam products? (See below)

4c) What incentives are you offering students to encourage use of reusables?

For example: Discounts for using reusable cups and bags. (See below)

We are currently in negotiations with a local composting farm, PME in Riner, VA, to handle our compostable materials. Through setting up an agreement, we will be switching all our Styrofoam products and to-go containers including everything from trash bags, to-go bags, silverware, cups, lids, and straws to a compostable product line. In addition, we will be providing all students with a canvas reusable to-go bag. When we make the switch to the compostable line, the customers that do not get their meals to-go will get a discount off the retail price as an incentive to eat in and take the to-go products.

5. Does your dining service have a recycling program? If so, what materials are recycled?

We currently recycle our cardboard, used oil, plastic bottles, aluminum cans, and paper.

6. Does your dining service have a composting program? If so, please provide annual composted tonnage and/or other relevant specifics.

We are currently in negotiations with a local composting farm, PME in Riner, VA, to handle our compostable materials. When we do start the program, we estimate our annual compostable tonnage will be 930,560 lbs. during the academic year.

7) What is the dining services' current waste-diversion rate (the percentage of recyclable and/or compostable waste diverted from traditional disposal)? If there are separate rates for recycling and composting, please make that distinction.

In past years, some pilot initiatives to divert compostable waste from dining service facilities were undertaken. Currently, so far as I know, no compostable waste from dining services facilities is being diverted from traditional disposal. Should a contract for compostable waste hauling & processing be negotiated with PME, a waste-diversion rate for this material can be made available.

Currently, recyclables collected from dining facilities (corrugated cardboard/commingled bottles & cans/paper) are not identified in our reporting documents by location of origin, but by type, as called for in our annual VA Department of Environmental Quality Recycling Report. Nevertheless, I can say with reasonable accuracy that approximately 85% of corrugated cardboard is diverted from traditional disposal, through twice-daily collection by VTR from all dining facilities during the academic year.

It may be possible in future, especially if a composting contract were in effect, to determine with reasonable accuracy a diversion rate from dining facilities for commingled bottles & cans.

8) Is the dining services director, or another dining services staff person, a member of any campus-wide environmental/sustainability initiatives or committees at your school?

On April 25, 2008, President Charles W. Steger charged the Energy and Sustainability Committee to develop a draft Sustainability Plan and Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment (VTCAC), with the goal of having both documents reviewed and approved by the University Council at the end of the 2009 Spring Semester. The Energy and Sustainability Committee has established a VTCAC Subcommittee to execute this extremely important mission. Rick Johnson, the Director of Housing and Dining Services, volunteered to serve as a member of the VTCAC Subcommittee. His expertise is critical to this process.

In addition, prior to the end of the 2008 Spring Semester the Energy and Sustainability Committee unanimously agreed to recommend the Director of Housing and Dining

Service position for “Ex-Officio” membership to the Commission on University Support. We anticipate expeditious approval of this recommendation and approval by our University Council at the beginning of the 2008 Fall Semester. For Virginia Tech to have a successful Sustainability Plan and Program, the Director of Housing and Dining Services, must be involved in the formulation of all policies and procedures.”

Rick Johnson, the Director of Housing and Dining Services, also chairs the Student Advisory Committee, which offers students a chance to give input on campus issues. Over the last two years, discussions on sustainability issues have been frequent. Robert Coffey, the Senior Associate Director of Dining Services, is a member of Team E.C.C.O. (Education, Collaboration, Cooperation, Operation), Student Programs’ sustainability committee. We recently hired a full-time Sustainability Coordinator just for Dining Services to focus on our unique issues.

9) What is your total annual food budget?

\$10,200,000

10) In what other ways has your school's dining services department made sustainability a priority?

For example: Donation of excess food to local shelter, recycling used cooking oil for biodiesel production.

On July 1, 2008, we went tray-less in all of our all-you-care-to-eat dining centers, to help cut back on wasted food and resources. We are planting our own herb garden, so that we can grow and harvest our own herbs. Leftover food is donated to the local Salvation Army with the help of Jacob Moyer, a Virginia Tech student, and the Student Government Association. Currently, we are researching the best method to gather and distribute used cooking oil that can be used to fuel biodiesel vehicles. Any company vehicles that are purchased in the future will be biodiesel.