

ST. NORBERT COLLEGE

Moving Toward a Zero-Waste Dining Program



St. Norbert College serves about 2,200 students out of one main kitchen on two floors in its newly renovated Ruth's Marketplace dining hall. With a goal to be a zero waste dining program, they had already transitioned to "trayless" dining, started a composting program, and purchased a waste pulping machine. However, they were still experiencing a lot of waste and had a hard time controlling ever-rising food costs. At the start of the fall semester in 2014, they decided to implement the LeanPath 360 Food Waste Prevention program to help prevent food waste at its source and reduce food costs.

"Our full time staff are really passionate about sustainability. The food waste was really hurting them on an emotional level—enough so that some of them had come to talk to me about it."

MELISSA DA PRA // MANAGER, RUTH'S MARKETPLACE

Getting Team Buy-In and Creating a Positive Culture

Before implementing the LeanPath program, the St. Norbert College dining management team took a trip to another nearby college dining program already using the system to see it in action. A few of the managers had been concerned about the time it would take to weigh all of the waste, but when they saw how seamlessly the organization had integrated the program into their day-to-day operations, that concern disappeared.

When the management team unveiled the program to their staff, they made sure to emphasize the key points recommended by LeanPath that this program was going to help everyone come together to solve food waste issues, rather than highlighting or punishing individual behaviors.

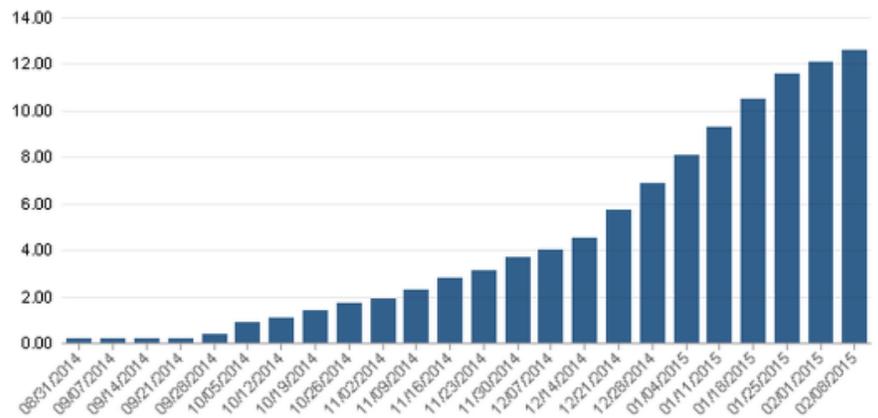
Taking Action on Food Waste Findings

With a menu that changes four times a semester, the St. Norbert dining team worked hard with LeanPath to establish a consistent way of tracking food waste that would apply to all menu cycles. The team set out with the goal to first establish a baseline and look for trends in frequently occurring waste. They immediately spotted an opportunity to reduce vegetable waste by using smaller pans, adjusting labor rhythms and converting to more cook-to-order approaches. They also saw that hot casseroles were a top wasted

"I'm much more aware of our waste when writing menus and recipes. We started developing recipes that could be batched easily, which has cut down our casserole waste. We're also making our own stocks now—cutting down on waste and costs."

DAN FROELICH // EXECUTIVE CHEF

Cumulative Food Waste Avoided (in Tons) from Aug. 2014 – Feb. 2015



item, so they went back to standardized recipes and found ways to do more efficient batch cooking. On the weekends, the dining team discovered that the salad bar was hardly being touched by students, so they created a new concept to minimize the waste that was occurring. They reduced the salad bar and shifted it to the less prominent display side, then used the found space to create a build-your-own yogurt station, which was much more popular with students. They also found that composed salads that were being made to last through the dinner shift were regularly getting tossed, so they transitioned the dwindling pans into individual cups to move away from the impression that they were running low on an item, while still offering it to students in a convenient grab-and-go fashion.

Leveraging Photos for Further Insight into Wasted Foods

The team at St. Norbert's has found great value in the photo that accompanies each waste transaction in the LeanPath Online reporting dashboard. The team regularly scans through the photos as a way to assess opportunities and trends. The images allow them to get more insight into what a specific item is (for example, for something recorded as "casserole," they can see what type of casserole it was specifically). Photos also allow them to confirm that items are being entered correctly and follow-up with staff if they identify a training opportunity. Each week the management team comes together to review the photos and reports, pinpoint opportunities, and make adjustments to minimize waste.

Food Cost Savings Evident After Just Five Months

Just five months into using the LeanPath program, **the St. Norbert's team has already reduced pre-consumer food waste by 32%** compared against their baseline established in the first 4 weeks. They report that **food costs are down from where they were at the same time last year**, and they attribute much of that change to the LeanPath program.

"We will for sure see profits over and above our investment. I can't imagine being without the [LeanPath] program and we've only been using it for five months. It changes the way we do things."

MARY JO MORRIS // DIRECTOR OF DINING & CONFERENCE SERVICES

To learn more about the LeanPath 360 Food Waste Monitoring System, contact us at info@leanpath.com or call +1.877.620.6512.



"The relationship between our dining team and the LeanPath team is a wonderful partnership. Unlike some other vendors that disappear after they sell you a product, LeanPath has provided excellent support, are easy to reach, and make the process smooth and easy."

**RUTH JOHNSON //
DIRECTOR OF AUXILIARY SERVICES**