



The path to food waste prevention starts here.

Food Waste Prevention Spotlight

The Organization | Michigan Technological University

Michigan Technological University (Michigan Tech), located in Houghton, Michigan, enrolls approximately 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students from across the nation and around the world. There are approximately 2,100 students on their unlimited suite meal plan, offered at 3 residence halls.

The Challenge | Stop Throwing Out Valuable Food

Many of the dining hall staff members noticed that there was a lot of food waste. Rather than just accept that food waste was part of doing business, the management decided to do something about it. In the fall of 2009, they launched a pilot program at one of the residence halls implementing the LeanPath automated food waste tracking system.

The Solution | Food Waste Tracking

For six weeks, Michigan Tech dining staff used the LeanPath Tracker (automated scale and touch-screen terminal) to record their pre-consumer food waste. They reviewed the dashboard reports from the integrated LeanPath Advantage software each week and a small team met to review the data and discuss what changes could be made. By the end of the six-week study, they had experienced over a 50% reduction in waste. They saw this as an opportunity to reduce waste campus-wide and made the decision to implement LeanPath across all three dining halls as well as at the retail food operation.

Opening Eyes to Small Changes that Add Up

Michigan Tech continues to track food waste daily and review the dashboard reports every Monday. They use the information to discuss the biggest losses, why it's happening and what they can do to fix it. They have created a two-pronged approach to minimize waste. First, they have become very focused on not over-producing, employing a "just in time" approach to cooking which provides students with a fresher product while reducing the amount left-over. Secondly, for the food that is left-over, the staff has gotten creative with how to safely re-use it, creating menu items like the popular mac 'n cheese pizza and ice cream sandwiches that utilize the soft-serve ice cream when machines are cleaned out.

Creating a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Another benefit of the program was creating a culture focused on continuous improvement. Michigan Tech is currently adopting LEAN processes, and the LeanPath tracking program gave the foodservice department a head start on building effective communication and creating a daily culture focused on improving.

The Results | \$1,000/week savings in food waste reduction

Across the four locations where food waste is tracked, Michigan Tech has cut its waste in half and is saving about \$1,000/week. They saw complete return on investment in less than one year and they continue to experience ongoing savings using the LeanPath system.

"LeanPath makes recording waste so simple. You get so much information out of such a little amount of time invested—and it's information you can turn into action." Kathy Wardynski

"None of these changes alone would have a very big savings, but one little thing after another really adds up."

"This has been the single biggest thing that involves all of the people in our department—staff, management and students all have a part in this. It's been a great tool to help us implement culture change."

Kathy Wardynski, Manager of Purchasing and Process Improvement

To learn more about LeanPath Food Waste Tracking Systems, call (877) 620-6512, email info@leanpath.com or visit www.leanpath.com.