COMPOSTING ON VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY’S CAMPUS TO REDUCE FOOD WASTE AND DECREASE OPERATING COSTS

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Introduction

Problem: There is an ongoing concern from scientists on the increase of decay in the environment from overuse of resources here on earth. Specifically in the world today, “more than 40% of the food produced from consumption in the United States will never be eaten,” (Palmer, 2010). Soon that will be tailored to even more hungry and starving people in the world but also the eradication of certain to all food in years to come. Universities are also spending a significant amount of money on food yet many students are not eating it all and causing waste. Universities are also losing a significant amount of money for the over making of food and without proper disposal of the uneaten food or waste they are taking up our landfills and causing a decay in our earth.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to provide research and supporting evidence that Valparaiso University should implement compost trash cans and a food reduction program to save money for the university and to use proper disposal techniques to make an impact on the environment. It will reduce costs, reduce waste, and reduce landfill space.

Measures

Independent Variable: Time across a timeframe of a year
Dependent Variable: Food Waste Avoided in Tons

Other measures included our survey from the sorority complex of Valparaiso University

Processes

The literature review was the biggest part of conducting our research. Through the literature research the focus was on the LeanPath System for waste weighing. This became the foundation of many questions to our interviewees. The first interview was with the Director of Dining Services. He described their efforts for cost effectiveness as pulping as well as buying in bulk, and pre fabricated foods. However, he did bring up that he was approached to use LeanPath System and needs to look into it more. That is where the research from the literature supported the argument that this is a system that would benefit the Valparaiso community. Following this interview there were interviews within the Residence Hall Coordinators and an employee of the Café in the Union. These didn’t go as positive as the other due to the concern of the time, money, and student involvement. The wrap up to the accumulation of research came from the Earthtones club who has been in the works for some time to compost but not to the extent to which there is a plan to fully implement from start to finish. These specific insights gave conclusions that will be beneficial to all stakeholders in future progression of this study.

Results

From the research and data collected, conclusions were drawn on a wide array of spectrums. From the 51 responses in the survey given to the sorority population, 86.3% said that they believe that compost trash cans would be beneficial to the student body.

The second point made from the survey is from the responses on what can be composted and what cannot be composted. The results from the responses show that there is a lack of education in what can be composted. These results support the reasoning for education along with implementation of compost trash cans for proper usage.

Discussion

Conclusion: The conclusions that were gathered is that faculty, staff, and students are aware of the problem and are wanting to do something about the ongoing problem of food waste here on Valparaiso’s campus. However, there is an issue on education and awareness of how to properly compost, recycle, and reuse the wasted items.

The data gathered was significant in finding out if this could possibly work on Valparaiso’s Campus. We were able to see similar institutions who had a significant impact from the use of LeanPath and also composting the wasted food. They were able to save tons of food over a 6 month period which is an almost instant result. Below we were able to gather the costs and benefits from our research, interviews, and overall thoughts to provoke further discussion on the topic.

Future Endeavors: The future will be determined by the impact on educators and administrators here at the University. Hopefully, in the next 5 years there will be a program in place because of the research done over the past year.

References