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CAMPUS
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**Grinnell College
Grinnell, Iowa
Spring 2008, Waste Reduction**

BACKGROUND

Campus Profile

Grinnell College is a private liberal arts college located on a 120 acre campus in Grinnell, Iowa. Founded in 1846, the college serves 1,500 students from every state and approximately 50 countries. The College's primary mission is to provide students with a broad, deep and life-enhancing education, preparing them for professional success, personal growth and social responsibility. Grinnell is implementing a number of "greening" efforts including eight Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified buildings, a rigorous recycling program, a food-waste composting program and a substantial wind energy installation.

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GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goals

The goal of this project was to divert all food waste to a composting facility in order to reduce the college's landfill contributions as well as contribute to the fertility of a nearby farming operation.

Accomplishments

The building of a new central dining facility allowed for the design of a relatively efficient food waste collection system. A food-waste pulper was integrated into the dishwashing system. This pulper accepts all food waste in addition to paper products. The waste is pulped, dehydrated, and collected in large barrels that are taken to the composting facility near the campus. The system has worked well for almost two years, yielding approximately 3,000 pounds of food waste per week when school is in session.

Challenges and Responses

There was interest in pursuing a food-waste composting program for a number of years. The old dining facilities consisted of two different cafeterias. Neither cafeteria allowed for an easy retrofit, nor did the existence of two separate facilities allow for efficient transport of the waste. A new centralized system solved both issues. The waste is currently delivered to a local farm, which composts the waste and incorporates the compost into the crop fields. If that particular farm should decide to no longer participate, finding another so close to campus may be difficult.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

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In order to be successful, the project required cooperation from three parties: Grinnell College Dining, Facilities Management, and the farmer. Dining staff designed the dishwasher system and integrated the pulper seamlessly. Dining also dedicates the needed staff time to running and cleaning the pulper, as well as transporting the food waste to a nearby loading dock. Facilities Management devotes staff time to transport the barrels from Dining's loading dock to the farm. Facilities Management staff pile the waste and mix in wood chips. The farmer has allocated the needed space for composting, completes the composting process, and spreads the compost on his adjacent crop fields.

Funding and Resources

The actual pulper cost about \$25,000 which was just worked into the cost of the new building. About one hour of facilities staff time is spent per day on transporting the compost.