



Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas
Dining Services - Cafeteria Food Waste Composting Program

SCHOOL

Texas State University, public, 4-year, 29,125 students, San Marcos, Texas

ABSTRACT

Bobcat Blend is a cafeteria composting project, where students compost post-consumer food waste out of one dining hall on campus. This project is currently in the startup stage, and the goal is to make this project sustainable to the point where the students compost all of the university's organic waste. The cost for this pilot program is \$38,168.00. This does not include the collection vehicle, the compost site and its construction, and the fuel because these costs were occurred through another compost study. This project has the potential to save the university over \$12,000 in waste hauling fees and compost/ mulch use on campus grounds. Currently all of the cafeteria's organic waste is being hauled to the landfill which is the largest contributor to methane, so this program will instantly start reducing the university's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Goals

Bobcat Blend hopes to achieve a full scale, sustainable campus wide composting program. The university's short term goal is to compost all of the organic waste from one cafeteria for the next year, and the students will be studying the economics of the program, through these studies, the students hope to convince the university that this program needs to be in all cafeterias within 3-5 years.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

So far the project is on target with the pilot study goals. The university has a 5 acre compost site with a retention pond, fence, and equipment. Eleven sortable waste bins are being delivered and placed in the cafeteria. The students have started 3 pilot compost piles, which contain cafeteria food waste along with coffee grounds from a local coffee shop. Once the project starts collection on a full scale, then the students will meet the project's goals.

This program has created a new organic recycling policy. Students are to source separate their waste into new waste stations that are divided into organic waste, recyclables, and trash. The organic waste is then composted along with local tree waste and poultry litter from Tyson. The finished compost will be returned to the campus to better support the landscape and wildlife community at Texas State University.

Challenges and Responses

The major challenges that this project has faced is finding adequate funding for the project to fully take off. Bobcat Blend has had great support from the campus Environmental Service Committee, Associated Student Government, Chartwells Food Service, and the LBJ Student Center. This project has plenty of willing workers and lots of waste; it just needs the financial support to carry it campus wide.

One other major challenge is getting rid of the non-biodegradable serving utensils in the dining facilities. The dining halls currently serve plastic and polystyrene containers that could be converted to bio-polymers. The university is currently in the process of converting to these earth friendly materials.

Campus Climate Action: Your School's Carbon Footprint

This project has fully addressed the climate crisis. Composting the cafeteria's organic waste saves the climate by reducing methane emissions from landfills, and composting sequesters carbon in our soils. On a 20 year basis, methane is seventy two times more potent of a GHG than CO₂. This is one reason why the university feels that composting is the best short and long term solution to lowering the university's carbon footprint.

Commentary and Reflection

Texas State University highly recommends recycling organic waste at all universities. It is a wonderful life tool that all students should use. One inspiration of this project is that it teaches students how to conserve resources. They learn this at school, and take it home with them to their own home compost pile. It has to be done in order for future generations to enjoy the lifestyles that we live today. Composting has been Mother Nature's recycling method of the past and present, and Texas State University is here to see that it is the method for the future.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The university has been very fortunate to have the support that it has received. The research and guidance for this project comes from Dr. Tina Cade with the Department of Agriculture and Dr. Michael Abbott from Rivers System Institute. Jason Sanders and John Montoya are graduate students from the Department of Agriculture and he is coordinating the collections of the organics and the composting of the organics at the compost site. Andy Rhoades from the LBJ Student Center has fully welcomed this program to take place at the LBJ Lair Food Court. We have also received full support from Leslie Bulkley and John Root from Chartwells, our dining service provider, as well as Christopher Covo our President of Associated Student Government. They have both worked together in supplying funds and student support for the program. Bobcat Blend also has full support from John Montoya chair of the Environmental Service Committee. This committee has supplied funding and educational events that have broadened the success of this program.

Funding and Resources

The project cost \$38,168.00. All of the funds for this project have come from grants. The Environmental Service Committee has contributed \$30,197.00, Chartwells has contributed \$2,657.00, and the LBJ Student Center has contributed \$5,314.00. The location of the compost site is located on school property and the funding for the site and equipment was supplied by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Education and Community Outreach

Students had set up an educational booth at a community event on Earth Day. They had built an active compost pile the night before, so that they could illustrate a "hot" pile for the event. The students had also brought a vermi-composting bin, a compost tumbler, finished compost, and compost literature. It was a big success and the community really loved seeing the advances that Texas State University is making towards a sustainable future. The graduate students will also be presenting this program at the 12th annual Texas Recycling and Sustainability Summit.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program

By listening to what other universities have been doing, Texas State students' have been able to adopt their models and adjust them to where they work at Texas State University. Texas State students' have used the *Chill Out: Campus Solutions to Global Warming* initiative.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contacts

Dr. Tina Marie Cade- Associate Professor- 512-245-3324- tc10@txstate.edu

Dr. Michael Abbott- Associate Director Rivers System Institute- ma01@txstate.edu

Jason Paul Sanders- Graduate Research Assistant- 512-228-0874- js1731@txstate.edu

John Montoya- Graduate Research Assistant- jm50373@txstate.edu

Case study submitted by: Jason Sanders, Graduate Research Assistant, Dec. 2010, js1731@txstate.edu

MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL

Campus Sustainability History

Texas State University campus is becoming greener every year. The university has a committee called the Environmental Service Committee (<http://www.txstate.edu/esc/>) which is supported through student funds. This committee has supported several “green” projects including Texas State’s full scale recycling program, living library which is a large campus landscape that carries hundreds of different species of plants, a Chinese Tallow remediation program, Food for Thought a student directed community garden, a bee keeping project that supports pollination of the campus ecosystem, and the Bobcat Blend cafeteria food waste composting program. The university also has a compost study that is means of killing the water hyacinth seed. This study has made Bobcat Blend possible by helping supply the necessary composting material and equipment. The university is currently working on green roofs, rain gardens, and solar panels.