

# **A Policy on Sustainable Business Practices in Penn State's Hetzel Union Building and Across Campus**



Image from: <https://www.architectmagazine.com/project-gallery/hetzel-union-building-hub-roberson-center>.

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## **Executive Summary**

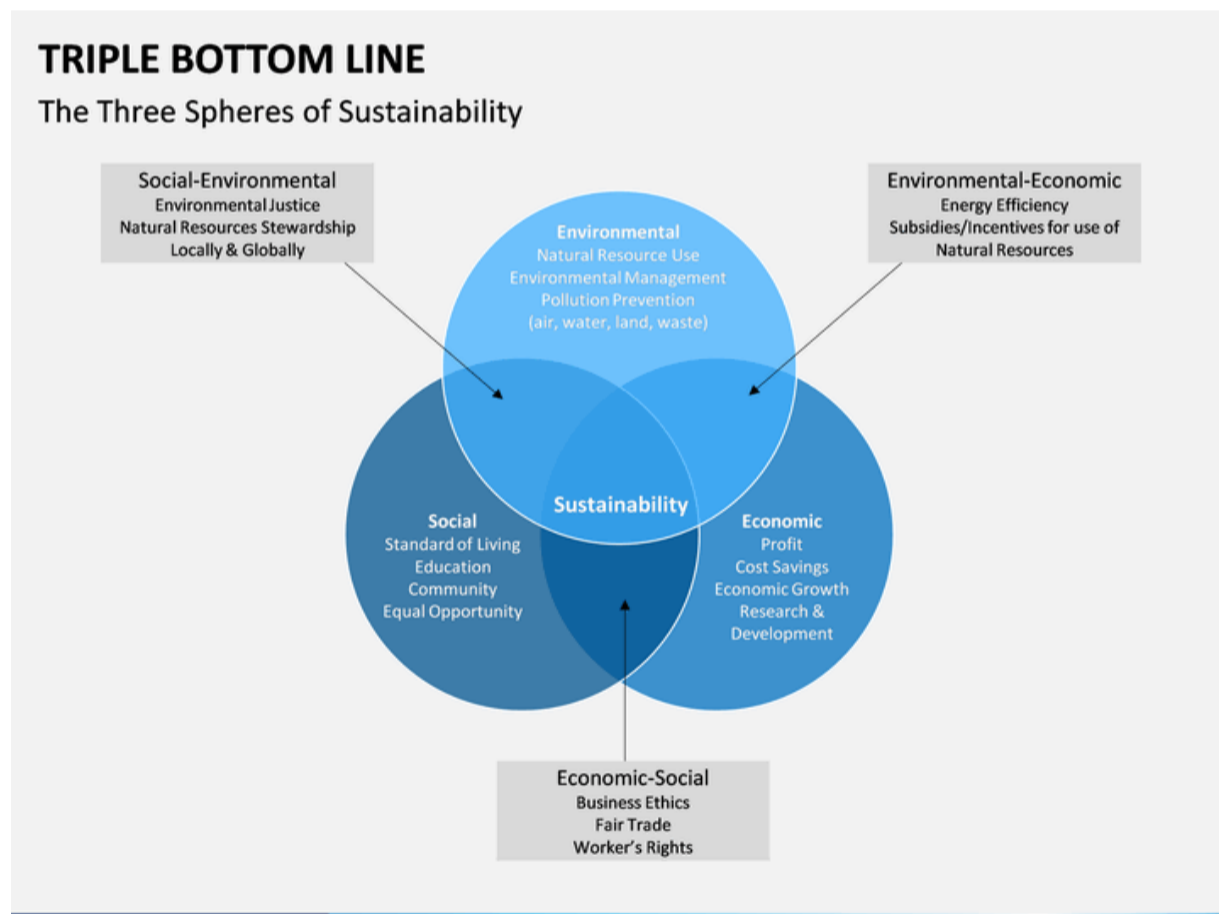
The Hetzel Union Building (HUB) is the center of student life on campus at the Pennsylvania State University. This modern building is located at the center of campus, atop a well-kept lawn that is popular for student hang outs and gatherings. Throughout the day, over 20,000 go through the HUB. On a campus of over 40,000, this equates to about half of the entire student body entering this building daily. It is also a center of commerce on campus. Restaurants and cafes, such as Starbucks, Panda Express, and Sabaro, offer meals to students while HUB's own dining system provides options such as a large salad. The building operates 24 hours a day and houses student offices and most of the infrastructure for student affairs. This building is simply the place on Penn State's campus where life happens. In order to support Penn State's sustainability goals, the HUB must be a leader for the university and its efforts in creating a sustainable campus, commonwealth, and world.

The United Nations has 17 sustainable development goals meant to lead the world and guide policy and practice. In order to align the HUB sustainable policies and the United Nations' vision, this policy will focus on goals #2, zero hunger, and #12, responsible consumption and production. Zero hunger, a goal based in humanitarian ethics, will be aligned with this policy's missions in regards to food recovery and reduction of food waste. Responsible consumption and production would also apply to food waste, and expand to policy recommendations around packaging and food distribution.



## Introduction and Background

Business sustainability can be described as trying to reach the ‘triple bottom line.’ This metaphor represents the three facets of business sustainability: people, planet, and profit. People represents health and well-being, social factors, and performance. Planet refers to sustainability in the traditional sense: keeping the planet clean and healthy while protecting natural resources and processes. Profit, the most obvious of the three, represents the traditional bottom line of the business. This includes profit margins, dividends to boards, and overall economic growth and well-being. While antiquated business models may see these three parts as incompatible or even actively competitive, the triple bottom line presents them as complementary goals which can enhance and support each other for overall growth and improvements.



<sup>1</sup> Triple Bottom Line. (n.d.). Retrieved April 29, 2019, from <https://www.sketchbubble.com/en/presentation-triple-bottom-line.html>





These spheres of interest combine to form a platform of sustainable business. Using this lense to guide policy, the HUB can reimagine its business practices and food distribution efforts. The social implications of this building are huge, as it represents the center of student life on Penn State's campus. Some believe that implementation of sustainable initiatives in a center like this may detract from the ease of social use of the building. However, when implemented correctly, sustainable initiatives will supplement student engagement, empowerment, and efficacy. Profit is often seen as the largest opponent to planet and overall sustainability. However, by implementing sustainable choices that replace repeated purchases profits can actually rise after an initial investment in sustainable infrastructure. In the case of Penn State specifically, the integrated systems of compost, recycling, and waste management provide a full loop in which these sustainable profit increases can be truly seen and quantified.



## **Current Practices**

### **A. Dining Policies**

Food waste is a critical issue in sustainability. Sustainable development goal #2, end hunger, highlights the importance for reducing food waste worldwide.<sup>2</sup> This is because the unequal distribution to healthy food creates a mentality of expendability for those fortunate enough to have constant nutritious food easily available. This mentality leads to wasted resources, such as soil and water, while obviously wasting food that could be used elsewhere to curb food insecurity or malnourishment. Wasting food also poses a threat to the environment when not disposed of properly; organic materials sent to landfills in closed plastic bags may ferment and break down in unideal conditions and produce harmful greenhouse gasses instead of reentering the soil and trapping their carbon there while they break down. Without a doubt, food waste poses threats to the environment and sustainability, and must be addressed through structural changes in food production.

Leanpath is a system that was designed to reduce food waste in food production sites and restaurants. This system uses technology to track food waste, then makes recommendations for purchasers and kitchen managers to reduce food waste through purchasing, repurposing, and other methods. This prevents the current systems of most food waste remediation, such as composting or donations, by addressing the problem from the earliest point and using recommendations to change the whole system of food production for the better. The implementation of Leanpath at University of Illinois reduced food waste by 63%.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, this

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<sup>2</sup> Goal 2: Zero Hunger - United Nations Sustainable Development. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/hunger/>

<sup>3</sup> Prevent Food Waste with Leanpath Technology. (n.d.). Retrieved April 29, 2019, from <https://www.leanpath.com/>



system has strong promise for reducing food waste, which is both an economic incentive for businesses and a more sustainable means of food production.

At Penn State, Leanpath is already showing promising results when implemented on campus. South Dining, in Redifer Commons, implemented Leanpath in the 2018-2019 school year, and has already seen dramatic improvements in food waste. Leanpath not only tracks how much food is wasted, but also what kind of food is wasted, when it is wasted, and why. It then uses this information to make recommendations to kitchen staff about how to reduce waste, and provides post-consumer promotional materials to educate about food waste. After implementation in January 2019, South Dining was able to nearly halve their monetary waste from food purchasing.<sup>4</sup> The nearly \$35,000 waste of overproduction loss is being mediated through thoughtful menu planning and employee education through Leanpath programs. All in all, this program has proved to be so successful that it has reduced food waste by almost 25% in this dining hall.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Carey, L. (2019, April 12). Leanpath discussion [Personal interview].

<sup>5</sup> Sostarecz, A. (2019, April 18). HUB Sustainability Discussion [Personal interview].



## B. Student Engagement

Furthermore, Penn State University employs a group of sustainably conscious students as a part of its Eco Reps program. These students are employed under the branch of Penn State Housing and receive a payment stipend every semester to support them in their endeavors.<sup>6</sup> Currently, there are Eco Reps that work in both Pollock and East Halls, with plans of expanding the program to the remaining residence areas in the future. In each of the residence areas that currently are working with the Eco Reps program, each residence hall is paired with about two to three Eco Reps.<sup>7</sup> In each hall, Reps work to engage with students to inform them about how to lead a more sustainable lifestyle here at Penn State. This could include, but is certainly not limited to, education focused on how to be a better energy consumer in the dormitories. Eco Reps also assist students in connecting with any number of other sustainability programs that Penn State offers, like the Sustainability Institute. The Sustainability Institute develops sustainability curriculum, plans for green buildings, and partners with the various Green Teams that operate across campus.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, Eco Reps are occasionally stationed in dining halls to perform waste audits to monitor food waste from students. When students go to discard uneaten food and waste from their meal, Eco Reps are there to help students properly dispose of their waste. Eco Reps may help students determine what to compost, what can be recycled (and if so, where to recycle it), and what must be sent to a landfill.

Aside from simply working with students in a direct sense, Eco Reps are responsible for holding a variety of on campus events throughout both semesters to encourage sustainable living. Recently, an intercollegiate student group with a branch at Penn State, called the Take Back the

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<sup>6</sup> “Eco Reps.” Sustainability.psu.edu, sustainability.psu.edu/eco-reps.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> “The Sustainability Institute.” Sustainability.psu.edu, sustainability.psu.edu/sustainability-institute.





Tap challenge has been promoting attempts to greatly reduce plastic water bottle consumption. Take Back the Tap is a nationwide initiative that encourages students to opt for refilling reusable water bottles with tap water, as opposed to buying a single use plastic water bottle.<sup>9</sup> Aside from Take Back the Tap, Eco Reps have held events such as Sustainability Bingo, and energy saving competitions among residence halls. Perhaps one of the most successful Eco Reps projects has been the Green2Go program that operates in the dining commons here at Penn State. With this program students can give a small fee as collateral (which they will get back at the end of the semester) to receive a reusable to-go container as opposed to a traditional styrofoam one. After use, these containers can be returned to the dining commons to be washed and then recirculated back into use. Green2Go has helped to drastically cut down on Penn State's consumption of styrofoam, which can take hundreds of years or more to naturally decompose. It is important to note that Penn State's Eco Reps come from all facets of the University. The program is not exclusive to sustainably focused majors, but rather attracts student from all majors and parts of the university to become involved.

Other efforts currently in practice at Penn State include the Sustainability Showcase. Helmed by Penn State's Council of Sustainable Leaders, the Sustainability Showcase is a weekly event that occurs within the HUB that works to highlight efforts by students and faculty that would positively relate to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. At the Showcase, various research is discussed, and an overall dialogue is had regarding sustainability at Penn State. Speakers are brought in for a thirty minute talk on their respective topics; this is followed by a question and answer period. Speakers are then encouraged to stay and interact with

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<sup>9</sup> "Take Back the Tap." Food & Water Watch, 26 Apr. 2019, [www.foodandwaterwatch.org/campaign/take-back-tap](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/campaign/take-back-tap).



attendees of the showcase.<sup>10</sup> This Showcase is another way in which Penn State is currently working to educate its students and faculty about sustainable living practices. As an incentive to encourage students to attend the Showcase, a free lunch is provided for anyone who RSVPs to the event. In requiring students to RSVP in order to get a meal, Penn State is ensuring that they do not provide an overabundance of food that would end up going to waste.

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<sup>10</sup> “Showcases Spring 2019.” *PENN STATE COUNCIL OF SUSTAINABLE LEADERS*, [www.pennstatecsl.com/showcases-spring-2019.html](http://www.pennstatecsl.com/showcases-spring-2019.html).



## C. Food Recovery

### Central PA Food Bank

The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank (CPFEB) is a non-profit organization founded in 1982. The organization serves 27 counties in Central Pennsylvania by providing individuals and families with necessary services to fight food insecurity in the area. They recognize the harrowing statistics that describe hunger in Central Pennsylvania, and work to bring awareness to the data that shows that 1 in 9 Central Pennsylvanians, including 1 in 6 children, suffer from hunger every day. Fueled by this disparity in access to basic resources, their “bold goal” is to be able to provide every Central Pennsylvanian in need with nutritious food. As an affiliate of “Feed America” and “Feed Pennsylvania” -- they work with their federal and state counterparts to ensure that the people in their purview have sufficient and healthy food options.

Originally located in Steelton, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank has used generous donation to expand operations to include a central location in Harrisburg, and recently opened another in Williamsport with the goal of reaching more people in need. These locations are called “Healthy Food Hubs” and focus specifically on providing services to forgotten areas in rural Pennsylvania, which at many times can be in the middle of food deserts with the nearest healthy food options long distances away.

To meet the demand of feeding people over such a vast expanse of space, the food bank follows a long process, beginning with the collection of donations through fundraising campaigns and ending with the distribution to partner agencies who are more centrally located in communities that have demonstrated high need. The first campaign, which allowed the Central



Pennsylvania Food Bank to purchase their Healthy Food Hub in Harrisburg, raised over 1.3 million dollars.

In addition to providing vital services and support to communities in need, the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank also ensures the education of interested volunteers and anti-hunger advocates in the area by equipping their Healthy Food Hubs with Community Learning Kitchens, which they describe as spaces that allow for the collaboration and engagement of community members, volunteers and government officials to educate themselves and become educators about nutrition.<sup>11</sup>

#### Abba Java Coffeehouse

One of the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank's local agencies, Abba Java Coffee House, give the Penn State community a unique opportunity to participate in local food recovery efforts, in addition to providing access to a safe space with ample volunteer opportunities. Abba Java Coffee House is a local ministry of St. Paul's United Methodist Church & Wesley Foundation. Located just a block off of campus, Abba Java Coffee House aims to provide a haven for students and community members of all backgrounds and beliefs. With free coffee and food, as well as a study space tailored for students of Penn State, Abba Java has quickly become a staple of the Penn State community, as well as of the downtown State College area.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Who We Are," Central Pennsylvania Food Bank, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.centralpafoodbank.org/who-we-are/>

<sup>12</sup> "Abba Java Coffeehouse," Wesley Foundation at Penn State, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://wesleypsu.org/abba-java-2/>





Over the last year, Penn State’s Retail Dining venues have looked for opportunities to improve their food recovery practices and reduce their waste. When the Starbucks leadership specifically reached out to find local partnerships, Abba Java was the clear choice. Coming up on a year of this pilot program, both Starbucks and Abba Java have benefitted from the beginning of what is shaping up to be an all inclusive food recovery effort for every dining service at Penn State. The Central Pennsylvania Food Bank’s Executive Director, Joe Arthur, has noted his excitement and willingness to expand the collaboration.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “Penn State Retail Dining Partners with Central Pennsylvania Food Bank to Reduce Food Insecurity,” Penn State Finance and Business, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://fandb.psu.edu/features/penn-state-retail-dining-partners-central-pennsylvania-food-bank-reduce-food-insecurity>



## **Comparable Policies**

In order to further understand the feasibility of our initiatives and goals, our group looked to universities of comparable size and makeup. These universities provided background information necessary to create strong policy. In reaching out to these institutions, our objective was to identify programs that may be similar to the ones we hope to create on our own campus and uncover any challenges they faced in actualizing these goals.

Our best resource was other B1G Ten institutions. These universities are classified as “B1G Ten” because of their athletic teams, but they are also similar in that they have the tendency to be on the forefront of progress in higher education on a national level. Made up vastly of public or state-related institutions, these 14 universities span over 11 states and represent over 500,000 undergraduate students in the country.<sup>14</sup> This sections contains information about several of the institution whose policies are the most relevant to our own.

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<sup>14</sup> “Should I go to One of The Big 10 Schools?,” PrepScholar, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://blog.prepscholar.com/big-10-schools>



## A. Indiana University at Bloomington

Indiana University at Bloomington's sustainability efforts are housed in their centralized sustainability office, created in 2007. Similar to Penn State's Sustainability Institute, this office engages in both student led and administrative advocacy for the creation and execution of sustainability standards and initiatives on and off campus.<sup>15</sup>

A few years back, Indiana University decided to replace the vendors in their Union building with restaurants and shops that were run through the university's own dining services, effectively gaining almost complete autonomy in their on campus dining and food services. Exceptions included a few Starbucks and a Denny's in one of the dining halls. In addition, the University decided not to renew their contract with Sodexo, a large multinational company that had previously provided several of their dining locations with food.<sup>16</sup> These decisions were made for a variety of reasons, but ultimately have saved costs, and allowed the university to prioritize sustainability. This has been done through ensuring the use of local produce in the new restaurants, and has had the added benefit of being more inclusive of dietary restrictions and different cultural cuisines.

This transition was met with little pushback, as the new dining services have made the effort to provide quality alternatives to the food that had been there previously. As an example, a new burger restaurant opened up in place of a Burger King with a wider variety of plant based and vegetarian options. There was a noticeable perception that the new alternatives were healthier, and of higher quality, which helped to quell any hesitancy at the change.

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<sup>15</sup> "About: Sustain IU: Indiana University," Indiana University, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://sustain.iu.edu/about/index.html>

<sup>16</sup> "Food and Facilities Management," Sodexo, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.sodexousa.com/home.html>



To ensure that the remaining vendors are adhering to sustainable practices, Indiana University's director of food services has taken a very strict approach to negotiating the contracts with the vendors. Every effort is made to find compostable and recyclable materials that could be used in place of ones that would end up in a landfill, and negotiate rebates to offset the added costs of purchasing these products that are at a higher price. These negotiations have been incredibly impactful, specifically in the case of the few university wide contracts with larger companies like Coca Cola that provide beverages over the entire campus.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Sustain IU Staff (2019, April 16). Food Dining and Services discussion [Phone interview].





## B. University of Iowa

Similar to Indiana University's structure, the University of Iowa has a central office of sustainability called "The Office of Sustainability and the Environment". This office has overview of sustainability programs, both academic and outside of the classroom, that align with the university's goal of sustainable research, engagement and leadership. This office is distinct in that it is housed under the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. There are several programs that reside in this office similar to ones we have at Penn State. One of these is the Eco Hawks, which closely resembles our Eco Reps and also mainly focus on promoting sustainable practice in residence halls. Another is the student garden, which enables students to foster their farming and gardening skills while providing local food for the food pantry and the community.<sup>18</sup>

A strong suit of the dining and food service programs at the University of Iowa is their commitment to zero waste dining halls and cafeterias. The kitchen staff focuses on pre consumer waste moderation by outsourcing their efforts and utilizing Winnow, a tool used to track and interpret data on food waste, while encouraging best practices to reduce it.<sup>19</sup> Winnow is extremely similar to Leanpath, which Penn State uses to the same end. There have been several attempted movements to moderate student consumption of meat. These efforts have used values of sustainability as a central argument, but have unfortunately been met with backlash from student populations, and political groups who had vested interests in the meat industry. Because of this, there are programs that seek alternatives and instead encourage moderate consumption.

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<sup>18</sup> "Office of Sustainability and the Environment," The University of Iowa, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://sustainability.uiowa.edu>

<sup>19</sup> "Winnow Solutions," Winnow, accessed April 17, 2019, <https://www.winnowsolutions.com>



The University of Iowa is unique in terms of vendors in that they do not own any property that they rent out to franchises, and therefore do not have any existing contracts with vendors. This is both beneficial and limiting in that there is no responsibility for the school to have to control the practices and management of these vendors, but they also have no way to leverage influence over them to reconsider their current policies and seek solutions to encourage sustainability.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The Office of Sustainability and the Environment Staff (2019, April 16). Food Dining and Services discussion [Phone interview].



## Policy Recommendation

### A. HUB recommendations

The HUB is the center of student life on Penn State's campus. Over 20,000 people walk through the HUB every day. HUB Dining is a thriving business community within the HUB, with over 17,000 transactions a day, 70% of such occurring at lunch.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, this is an area of Penn State's dining and student life that deserves great attention and can serve as an example for sustainable initiatives. Implementing sustainability initiatives in this crucial location would not only have a great impact on the HUB's environmental footprint, but serve as an example for other campus retailers and even similar centers on other college campuses. The following three recommendations would create systems within the HUB to promote sustainability on both the pre-consumer and post-consumer end, while also empowering students and laying a groundwork for future sustainable extensions.

#### 1. HUB Green Team

In this proposal, a group of students will work as sustainability officers for the HUB in order to empower students through sustainability advocacy, reach students through peer-planned outreach, and provide valuable insight to the systems managers of the HUB from the student perspective. This proposal is modeled after the Eco Reps in Penn State's residential housing. However, this group will be uniquely designed to address the needs of the HUB and the exciting challenged that a building of this caliber presents.

The Green Team will be composed of both HUB employees and student sustainability advocates. Each retail dining location within the HUB would be required to have at least one

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<sup>21</sup> Raco, V. (2019, April 7). HUB Dining Discussion [Personal interview].



representative on the Green Team, serving on an advisory board for the student advocates. These members should be knowledgeable about their employer and passionate about business sustainability. Their time on the council would be compensated at their usual wage through HUB dining services. This way, the needs and capabilities of the retailers are properly considered when planning student action. The members of the Green Team would be selected from applicants by their staff advisors, who would be a HUB dining professional and a member of Penn State's Sustainability Institute, in order to align both missions in the strategic leadership of the team. HUB workers could also apply for this group and would be greatly valued for the team. The selected members of the Green Team would be compensated at a flat semester rate (similar to that of Eco Reps, which is \$500 baseline), and meet weekly to both develop their advocacy plans and to implement them during planned programs in the HUB. This push for student-led advocacy is fundamentally based on the idea that students know what their peers are or aren't willing to do in regards to behavioral change and making sustainable choices. By tapping students to lead these programs, there will be the most poignant and effective advocacy that could realistically change students behavior.

## 2. Leanpath expansion

As evidenced in both national data and Penn State's Redifer Dining Commons, Leanpath is a system which reduces food waste in a dramatic and sustainable way. In order to extend the good work that Leanpath has already accomplished on this campus, this policy proposed introducing the Leanpath system into the HUB dining kitchen facilities. The upfront cost of this system would be shortly offset by savings in purchasing and reduction in compost costs by the





university. Through the introduction of Leanpath, food waste in HUB dining facilities would be drastically decreased and HUB Retail dining would save money in the long run.

The kitchen facilities in the HUB are unique in that certain retailers have different facilities all housed within the same building. Because HUB dining specifically is the largest of the kitchens and the most receptive to mandated changes, Leanpath will first be introduced in that kitchen to test its waste reduction abilities in a center like the HUB, and can then be offered to the other food preparation centers once the HUB dining kitchen can display food waste and cost reduction due to the technology.

### 3. Packaging and Serving Waste Reduction

Although recycling and composting are good steps toward sustainable facilities, preventing the creation of waste in the first place is far preferable in regards to total carbon emissions, energy needed, and overall waste reduction. Therefore, we propose a system whereby HUB dining can offer and encourage dining in as opposed to dining on disposable materials. The lack of any non-disposable dining options leaves students who may prefer dining in and not mind using reusable dishware with no other option than to use wasteful disposables. However, simply introducing non-disposable options is not enough to encourage behavior change and could possibly create a huge cost for HUB facilities in regards to purchasing, washing, and replacing dishware.

The first way to combat the need to change student behavior is through economic incentives. Using the money that the HUB would save from not needing to order as many expensive compostable and recyclable disposable food containers, students who choose to use non-disposable would receive a 25 cent discount on their meals. This incentive would be a push



for students to choose sustainable options, and reach students who may not be already sustainably informed or inclined. This method also does not prevent students from using disposable containers in a way that could raise resentment toward sustainability initiatives. Actually, it would create a sense of goodwill toward sustainability initiatives in that choosing the sustainable option would become a benefit for students.

In regards to facility capabilities with introducing this dishware initiative, the HUB's current dishwashing facility could be rearranged in order to accommodate the higher amounts of washing needs that this program would require. The compensation of the workers in the dishwashing station and the collection of the dirty dishware from around the HUB could be offset again by the cost of disposable materials decreasing and through Penn State composting facilities, as they save money with a decreased compost load from HUB dining's compostable containers that are currently in use.

The recollection stations for dishware would be strategically placed near all trash collection stations in the HUB, so that using dishware is no less convenient than using a plastic plate and having to recycle it or throw it away. Licensed and franchised food retailers in the HUB could agree to join the system and offer these reusable options, in order to expand this mission and make the whole HUB more sustainable together. This participation would create no cost to the retailer, and further incentivize them by having the HUB dining offset the discount given at a 5% increase, so that they will benefit from student sustainability and encourage students to choose non-disposable options. The implementation, motivation, recollection and washing of dishware would require strategic planning and implementation, but the benefits of this program running successfully would be hugely sustainable in waste reduction in HUB dining.



#### 4. HUB Food Recovery Systems

The implementation of food waste prevention technology, such as Leanpath, is only part of the solution to food waste in the HUB. There is still an inevitable amount of fresh food waste created, especially at establishments like Starbucks who pre-package fresh food and have strict serving deadlines. Usually, the food is still totally safe after this date, but the company's headquarters require them to dispose of the food anyway, to ensure freshness. In order to avoid wasting this food, the HUB will partner with the Central PA Food Bank in its fresh food recovery programs. As already modeled in the Starbucks at Penn State's Library, the food bank will collect the food and deliver it at no cost to the institution, so all packaged foods from HUB dining or vendors could be donated at no cost or extra labor. Since the majority of HUB dining stations close after 3 pm, the pick-up time would be scheduled to not disrupt these busy hours and allow ample time for collection and sorting from food bank employees. This change could be easily implemented without disruption to any HUB operations, and members of the HUB Green Team could join a special task force to ensure participation from vendors and HUB dining in this new policy.

#### B. Vendor Recommendations

While there is much room for Penn State to improve its sustainability policies, the onus does not lay solely on the university. As a vast number of retail dining options on campus, and especially in the HUB, are leased out to vendors, from a legal standpoint, Penn State has little



ability to mandate what sustainability standards vendors implement. Where Penn State can assert its control, however, is in the selective leasing of retail spaces in locations like the HUB. The retail spaces in the HUB operate on a series of contracts that go up for renewal every five to ten years depending on the specific vendor. When these contracts are to be renewed, Penn State can state that vendors must adhere to the following sustainability standards in order to maintain their lease.

1. Each vendor in the HUB must use napkins that are made with recycled paper
2. Pledge to completely eliminate styrofoam from their locations 3 years after contract renewal.
3. Advertise sustainability discounts
  - a. Reusable cup discounts
  - b. For-Here options
4. Successfully integrate LEANPath and Food Recovery Programs 6 years after contract renewal.
5. Train 1 HUB Green Team Representative
6. Participate in the Central PA Foodbank's fresh food recovery program to reduce food waste and fight hunger.

It may be easy to think that large corporate vendors with locations at Penn State would have little impetus to comply with directives from the university, but many vendors rely heavily on the business revenue generated from their locations on campus. For example, as a conglomerate, the Au Bon Pain locations which are situated around Penn State's campus





combine to form the second busiest ABP location in the U.S., second only to New York City<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, the Starbucks in the HUB is among the busiest Starbucks locations in Pennsylvania.

Many of the vendors at Penn State have expressed a willingness to develop their sustainability efforts, but would require the impelling force of the university to act. As a part of a large corporate enterprise, many vendors receive sustainability procedures directly from a centralized and far removed corporate headquarters. Through interviews conducted with various vendors on campus, it was made clear that the mandates which vendors receive from corporate are a baseline, but not a cap on what vendors can do.

Simple changes will be implemented, like the better advertisement of discounts for customers who bring their own reusable cup as opposed to a disposable one. All of the vendors on campus are authorized to provide this cup discount, but not many students are aware of this. We suggest that vendors be required to display the fact that they offer this discount as a way to encourage students to bring their own reusable drinkware, and thus reduce our consumption of single-use disposable cups.

Another program that could be greatly benefitted from better advertising is the food recovery program as explained above. By making students more aware of these programs, they would be more likely to restructure their buying habits in an effort to reduce waste. Also, by better advertising this program students in need of free or reduced price food would be better equipped to receive it from places downtown from the State College Food Bank, Abba Java, or the Lion's Pantry. There are vendors that currently practice this policy, but they are few and far between. Starbucks' policy on fresh food requires that unsold food be donated to the community.

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<sup>22</sup> Krauth, D. (2019, March 28). Au Bon Pain Discussion [Personal interview].



Our policy proposal would require this food recovery program to be expanded to all vendors that serve food in the HUB and around Penn State's campus. After implementation, each vendor would be required to reduce their food waste by 25% after the successful integration of Leanpath.



## **Conclusion**

The HUB on Penn State's campus can serve as a model for sustainable food vendor and business practices through the interventions that this policy proposes. Business sustainability represents an intersection between people, planet, and profit, all of which intersect to build strong but sustainable businesses. The role of policy in this context is to encourage and motivate businesses to operate sustainably and provide incentives for compliance with sustainable standards. Through the HUB, Penn State can implement sustainable policy that will both have positive impacts on people, planet, and profits, and can also serve as an example for other Penn State enterprises, commonwealth campuses, and other universities or institutions. Through student engagement, the behavioral change aspect of this initiative will be based in the most knowledgeable and passionate groups. By implementing food waste reduction, the HUB dining budget, environmental impact, and staff efficiency will improve. Through non-disposable dining options, the waste problem of the HUB will be mitigated through thoughtful planning and implementation. In dealing with vendors, the contract renewal proposal will allow Penn State to take an active role in business sustainability in the companies renting their space, and ensure that the University's sustainable standards are being met and/or exceeded by all businesses who occupy this campus. By supporting the Central PA Food Bank in fresh food recovery programs, these policies also aim to fight hunger in State College and around the commonwealth of Pennsylvania as a whole. In conclusion, these recommended policies are founded in strong research and have the potential to dramatically impact HUB functioning, impact, and sustainability.



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