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Performance Improvement: Composting at Foster Quad
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Introduction

My objective for this internship was to develop and implement a composting plan at Gresham Dining Hall at Foster Quad. We hoped to illustrate what composting is to the students who reside in the neighboring dorms. We also hoped to illustrate to IU the practicality and effectiveness of composting and be a pilot program that the remaining campus to develop.

Overall Objective

Concurrently with the compost, there would be a garden at Foster Quad. It would be a community garden and space for the students to plant would be available. Eventually, the space would include a tool shed for tools and a sitting area for students to study and enjoy the garden. The space identified was a grassy area between Shea and Martin . That area also had an enclosed dumpster. Adjacent to the dumpster is where the compost would take place.

Our plan for composting includes two bins and an open heap compost. The bins were bought by RPS and have been stored in the basement of Gresham. The location is close enough to Gresham that the compost materials can easily be walked or carted over. A spot next to the open heap will also be available for depositing dry materials. Every day, the dining hall creates 2-3 gallon buckets of compostable waste. This waste consists of vegetables scraps, coffee grinds and filters. Bread crumbs are reused as croutons at the salad bar.

Improvement Plan

The compost must be taken the compost area everyday as it is a health code violation to leave rotting food sitting in the dining hall overnight. The kitchen is done with food preparation around

7:00pm. At this point, the kitchen staff would take the compost buckets to the basement loading dock for pick up. Individuals responsible for picking up the compost will meet at the loading dock and, using the tools supplied, transport and dump the materials at the site. Bins will be filled first. Once these are full, the open heap can be started. All staff will be trained by the dining hall manager and intern when needed on what materials may be placed in the compost buckets. The intern will also provide signs for kitchen staff for convenience.

Students will be an intricate part of this plan. They will be responsible for taking the compost from Gresham to the compost site every night. The intern will work with the service-learning intern of the task force to identify courses in which this opportunity will be appropriate. Having this task as part of a class requirement, increases the chance that students will actually show up at designated times. However, if students fail to show up on any occasion, custodial staff is prepared to do the task. Students will have the opportunity to sign up for a day that works with their schedule and should only have to do the job two to three times a semester. By seeing the compost several times throughout the semester, students will see the physical breakdown in the compost and will increase understanding.

Compost pile maintenance is the responsibility of the intern. The piles should be checked on and turned once or twice a week. The pile's temperature is a good indicator of how often it should be turned. Worm's Way has provided a compost thermometer that can be used.

Foster Student Participation

Students living at Foster Quad will also be able to contribute to the compost. While most food consumed by students cannot be contributed, a few items from the salad bar and whole fruits can be contributed. A bucket and sign will be sitting in the dining hall area for students. Extra care will be needed by those collecting the compost from the dining hall to make sure unacceptable items are not in

the bucket. Education for the students at Foster will be critical to its success and opportunities for education are described further below.

Donors

The Bloomington community at large is very willing to assist IU in this endeavor. I set out to find sponsors who could donate small supplies since our budget is limited to non-existent.

Lowes

Lowes was more than willing to donate wood pallets and fence posts to create the open heap. I requested 16 pallets and 4 fence posts. The store manager is Mike Boshell. He needs to be emailed when we are able to pick up the items. His email is mike.a.boshell@store.lowes.com.

Worm's Way

Worm's Way holds great promise to be a strong sponsor the entire community garden model. They are also interested in providing manpower in the future. At the current time, they are short staff. They are currently providing compost accelerator. Kyle Jones is the contact and his email is kjones@wormsway.com.

Bloomington Hardware

They are more than willing to donate any supply we need. They currently have a list with remaining supplies such as a wheelbarrow, garden gloves, and shears. They have participated in several garden programs at various schools throughout Bloomington. The store manager is Vicky Davidson. She is able and willing to donate whenever the compost is ready to begin.

Opportunities, Challenges, Things to Develop

Service-Learning

While working with the service-learning intern, we identified a professor who wanted to add this task to his syllabus in Fall 2009. However, this professor will now be teaching at a different institution so a new professor should be located. Intro SPEA courses have been suggested as possible opportunities since they have hundreds of students. Future interns should continue to collaborate with the service-learning intern.

Student Education

As previously mentioned, students at Foster will have the chance to participate. However, few students have a thorough understanding of composting and should be educated if it is to be successful. Simply posting flyers does not seem a reasonable educational tool as the campus is inundated with flyers on a daily basis. One suggestion is to do an educational program during first semester dorm meetings. This should be done with the Garden intern and illustrate the community garden model and how it ties in with composting. Foods that can and cannot be contributed to compost should be strongly emphasized.

Dry Materials

One last item that needs to be developed is the source of dry materials for the compost. Food from the kitchen will be largely composed of wet materials. Since compost pile needs a good mixture of wet and dry materials, a source of dry materials is needed. Campus Division may be able to provide the necessary materials. Good Earth Compost in Bloomington (812-824-7928) has also been suggested. They may want to sponsor the compost.

Location Difficulties

At the end of my internship, it was discovered that the Foster Quad area is unsuitable for digging. So this will not be the place where the community garden will occur. However, Linda McCoy, the Gresham Hall manager will be continuing her efforts to compost. Future interns may be able to work with her and use the dining as a model for other dining halls. The Task Force continues to look for a plot where the community garden can be developed.

Evaluation

At the end of the first semester, the improvement plan should be evaluated. Things to consider will be if the compost pile is decomposing into usable material, are the students fulfilling their service-learning requirement, and were the education effective for the students at Foster. Dining staff considerations are important as well. After a full year, cost analysis on garbage can be performed.