

Introduction to Composting

SUNY Potsdam has been working to create a more sustainable campus since 2023 when our food audit was done. We have continued working with PACES to ensure all food waste is composted at Whitten Family Farm. Dr. Jess Pearson & Dr. Page Quinton received a grant from the Arconic Foundation that helped to purchase 25 compost cans that student use in the townhouses.

Our Composting Goals

This semester our first project focused on expanding composting from the dining halls to the townhouses on campus and improving the accuracy of composting in the dining halls.

History of Campus Composting

Prior to the start of composting, SUNY Potsdam's dining facilities generated nearly 3,000lbs of food waste each week, including kitchens scraps, unserved prepared food, and plate scrapings. In compliance with New York State law, our campus is required to compost given there is a composting facility within 25 miles of our campus. Our campus began a large-scale composting initiative in partnership with the Whitten Family Farms in Winthrop, NY. Previous interns implemented this effort by introducing new composting bins in the Barrington Student Union, the BearCave, and Performing Arts Center dining facilities. This marked the transformation of SUNY Potsdam's waste management into a more sustainable system.

Applied Learning

As sustainability interns, our class collaborates to learn more about sustainability through hands-on experiences. We lead projects where we apply our knowledge from the classroom in real-world scenarios, implementing sustainable practices on campus and in our community.

ENVR 470 – Applied Sustainability

ENVR 470- Applied Sustainability is the capstone for the Sustainability Minor where students get hands-on experience promoting sustainability at SUNY Potsdam. We aim to gain practical experience implementing sustainable practices that can be applied outside of class.

2025 Spring Semester Achievements



Coordinated with PACES to develop a more efficient arrangement of composting, waste, and recycling bins.



Implemented composting in townhouses by providing cans, eleven townhouses participating.



Worked with Whitten Family Farms to provide compost bins by the townhouses for students.



Presented our composting work at SUNY Canton's Sustainability Day Fair.



Educated students in the dining halls on the importance of composting & its role in sustainability.



Designed a website to inform students of our sustainability goals and to provide guidance on composting.



Bins for the Free Cycle that will be distributed across campus

Next Steps for Sustainability at SUNY Potsdam

- Expand composting into dormitories and off-campus housing.
- Increase the accuracy and efficiency of composting on campus.
- Organize a Freecycle program to collect donations of unwanted dormitory items that would otherwise be discarded and redistributing these items free of charge for students in need.

Introduction to Freecycle

A Freecycle will take unwanted items from students at the end of the semester that would otherwise be thrown away and make them available to others. Any items that students do not take will be distributed across campus the following semester. Dr. Kate Cleary and the Environmental Club first started the Freecycle in May of 2022. Their aim was to help reduce the amount of waste created by students moving out of the dorms.

Our Freecycle Goals

Our goal of the freecycle is to prevent items from going to the landfill. By collecting these items, it will allow students to leave items but also to take items that they want for free.

Plans for Freecycling on Campus

From May 9th to May 14th we will put bins in 6 locations across campus – Bowman East, West, South, Lehman South and the Townhouse Laundry Rooms. They will collect anything students want to donate, and students can take anything they like. After the Freecycling, we will distribute any remaining supplies all across campus. Volunteers will help collect and distribute everything

LOCATIONS:

- Clothes – Distributed by Center For Diversity
- School Supplies – Loughheed Library and Free across campus
- Toiletries and Food – Prometheus Food Pantry

We hope to store any remaining materials to provide freely to students during orientation in the Fall Semester.

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