

## REUSABLE “ECOCLAMSHELL” PILOT

### Basic Organizational Information:

We are students in Dr. Lisa Barlow’s Sustainable Solutions Consulting course, ENVS 3001. Our group is committed to several projects that aim to create a more sustainable campus environment. The focus of this particular group is to assist CU Dining Services in the implementation of a pilot project that will reduce packaging waste generated by Grab-n-Go venues on the CU campus.

### Primary Contact Person Students:

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### Project Description:

Our project aims to decrease the disposable waste sourced from the University of Colorado at Boulder's Grab-n-Go venues operated by CU Dining Services. Examples of such waste include plastic clamshells, plastic wrap, aluminum containers, paper bowls, and plastic lids currently used at the C4C’s “CU On the Run”. Some of these products are recyclable, but there is no guarantee that the students will recycle them. This is further indicated by observing the trash cans and recycling receptacles in and around the dining hall and residence hall facilities. Grab-n-Go venues (Fresh at Farrand, Lickety Split, 2.1.3, Zellers, and CU on the Run) serve over 3000 meals per day, in single use packaging that would predictably be discarded in the nearest trash can.

In taking a step towards eliminating such waste, our group will provide approximately 300 on-campus residents with reusable plastic “ecoclamsshell” containers. These sturdy containers are made of #5 (polypropylene) plastic and can house both hot and cold foods. They would serve the purpose of not only reducing CU’s landfill waste, but also reducing the amount of energy used in producing, transporting, and disposing of food containers.

With the supervision Sustainability Director Lauren Heising of CU Housing and Dining Services, and our group’s coordination efforts, participating student volunteers will be able to pick up an ecoclamsshell at the C4C Grab-n-Go by use of an Ozzi token system that will track student use. Ideally, this token method would be replaced by a swipe of students' BuffOne cards by the conclusion of the pilot period. The Grab-n-Go staff will then serve the customer’s food into the clamshell container, which is notably the same size as the disposable containers normally provided. At the customer’s convenience, the container may be later returned to the Ozzi machine in exchange for a new token. The ecoclamsshells will be cleaned and kept by dining services for the next participant who presents a token.

As such, this pilot project seeks to reduce disposable waste on campus and also raise awareness of the issue to the freshman class, leaving an impression of the importance of sustainability that will be embedded in them for the rest of their college careers. This pilot project will pave the way, identifying

and removing the kinks so that CU Dining Services may expand the reusable ecoclamshell program in coming semesters.

#### Student Impact:

This clamshell pilot project is dependent primarily on student participation and involvement. Through the option of eco-friendly, reusable containers as an alternate to single use plastic, aluminum, or cardboard packaging, students are able to learn about sustainability and resource preservation through either participation or observation. We will be posting fliers and running tables in various residence halls, publicizing this pilot to the proper audience, ensuring that each resident has the opportunity to partake. We will remain in touch with those residents who are participating via email and meetings, seeking feedback and providing surveys. Through surveys we will gather data on what works and what needs to be changed to facilitate ease of use and to increase student enthusiasm for ecoclamshells. By giving residents the ability to make a difference not only here at CU Boulder, but also in the world surrounding the brick walls of campus, they are left with a feeling of satisfaction in helping to promote a more “green” atmosphere.

#### Sustainability:

Though the CU Grab-n-Go currently allow ample opportunities for residents to recycle their various to-go containers, there are a number of issues that accompany the current system. For example, many students simply take the containers back to their dorm rooms and proceed to throw away the containers. In all cases, leftover food is a contaminant, and few students go to the extent of cleaning out containers before recycling; it is simply more convenient to throw the container in the trash. Other residents may opt to dine in, thus wasting unnecessary single use packaging. Even if customers do opt to recycle their trash, it is proven that valuable energy is wasted in the recycling process. By turning to reusable clamshell containers, the issue of wasted materials is minimized, contributing to a more sustainable approach to Grab-n-Go dining.

#### Innovation:

This pilot project is highly innovative, in that it will change the way hall residents will view their dining experience. Dining Services has been working toward changing their operations model at Grab-n-Go venues to facilitate counter service and decrease complete reliance on prepackaged meals for over four years, and they are very interested in implementing a successful program based on the results of this pilot study. Last year, the UMC dining area introduced “Al’s Exchangeables” in an effort to address some of these same concerns, and UMC dining is hoping for a more educated population of students coming out of the residence halls to bolster participation in their program. We hope that with the completion of this pilot program, the sustainability goals of CU Dining Services will be strengthened, and that students entering CU will experience the value of a lifestyle of less trash that they take with them into their future.

#### Budget and Funding

Each clamshell costs \$5. We are requesting \$1000 to provide 200 clamshells. 25 additional clamshells will be funded through the Baker RAP Program, with additional funding currently being requested from Baker Hall Council. We are hoping that individual students and staff will become interested in our sustainability efforts, and therefore be willing to purchase their own individual clamshells through Munch

Money. Eventually, we hope to establish a policy in which Munch Money, inclusive with all student meal plans, may be used to purchase these containers.

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