



**University of Colorado at Boulder**  
**Department of Housing & Dining Services**

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**Sustainable CU: The Environmental Improvement Initiative**

**Proposal: Can Crushers for Recycling in Dining Centers**

Submitted by Dining Services - February 23, 2009

**1. Basic Organizational Information**

CU Housing & Dining Services provides an exceptional residential and dining experience in support of the mission of the University of Colorado at Boulder. Dining Services provides about 2 million meals to the residence hall student and guests each academic year.

**2. Primary Contact Person**

Lauren Heising  
Coordinator of Sales & Nutrition  
Housing and Dining Services  
154 UCB  
Boulder, CO 80309-0154  
Phone: 303-492-3311  
Fax: 303-492-4646  
Email: [Lauren.Heising@colorado.edu](mailto:Lauren.Heising@colorado.edu)

**3. Project Description**

Project Introduction

Dining Services requests funds for the purchase of 4 can crushers to be set up in the Sewall, Kittredge, Farrand, and Darley dining centers to facilitate increased recycling. Currently there is a can crusher in use at Libby dining center and it significantly reduces the overall volume of the recyclables, making it much easier to handle them which in turn encourages increased recycling. We would like to be able to put a can crusher in each of the dining centers to facilitate the recycling process – for dining staff as well as CU Recycling Program staff.

Currently in many dining center locations, recycling actually becomes more difficult the more the employees engage in it simply because of sheer volume. The bins quickly fill up putting increased pressure on the CU Recycling Program. In response to the expressed need to increase pick-ups/arrive at certain locations earlier in the day, Jessica Bradley, Program Supervisor of CU Recycling & Solid Waste, stated, “though we would like to be able to increase the frequency of pick-ups, the recycling program does not have

enough staff or equipment to do so and though staff try to get to everyone as early as possible, they are not allowed to pick up before 7am and pick-ups can be further complicated by traffic, weather, equipment problems/delays, holidays, etc.” (It must be said that Jessica and the staff of the CU Recycling Program work very hard to respond to the demand despite these limiting factors.)

The model of can crusher currently in use at Libby is the CH5000 made by Edlund Co., which costs \$5700. Thus, the total request for funds would be: **\$22,800** (\$5,700 x 4). We would like to be able to outfit each dining center with a can crusher – however, if the board is not able to fund the total amount, Dining Services would like to discuss the option of partial funding, providing can crushers to as many dining units as possible.

### Project Timeline, Scope and Feasibility

This project can be completed within a month of receiving funding since it focuses on the purchase of can crushers for dining unit recycling purposes, and involves no major installation. All that the project requires is the procurement of the can crushers and a table to set them on near an outlet. In-house Dining Services staff would be able to set up the can crushers and get them ready for use. Dining Services also has a facilities coordinator and equipment mechanics with extensive technical experience that would be able to assist if necessary.

Also, Eco-cycle has approved the use of the can crushers and has confirmed that it will not interrupt their sorters and other equipment needed to provide this invaluable service to the CU and larger Boulder area community.

### Student Involvement/Impact

Student staff are an integral part of dining services operations and their role is invaluable to the level of service the dining centers are able to provide. During their time with Dining Services, students gain valuable work experience and skills development through both formal and “on the job” training. One of the most valuable educational experiences offered to students is exposure to the process of recycling as many come from areas where recycling is not prevalent. Students learn what is recyclable and what is not, and get a feel for how easy it can be, both of which have been found to be the most important ways to overcome barriers to recycling, consequently facilitating the development of recycling as a norm/habit - both in and out of the work setting.

### Social Equity

The dining centers also employ staff from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds as well as demographic groups (including students, temporaries, and permanent staff) who may not otherwise have exposure/access to education about the importance of recycling as well as proper procedures for recycling. Their work with Dining Services affords them this opportunity. Furthermore, the level of interest in and

support of sustainability initiatives among Dining Services staff has been steadily growing and we would like to encourage this trend rather than have staff, particularly the student staff as they are just starting out, feel disempowered and dissuaded from activities such as recycling as they see the backlog get thrown into the trash.

### Innovation

Given the space constraints at the back dock areas of many of the residence halls, just adding bins to accommodate the volume of recyclables is not feasible. Therefore, Dining Services believes that these can crushers provide a simple, practical, and resourceful solution to a situation that has impacts on many different levels, from the human component of the recycling system to the larger environmental issues at stake as a result of recycling (or not). The pressure upon those involved can be alleviated through the use of can crushers since they reduce the size of the cans (#10 steel cans - the large cans that commercial kitchens use) by up to 85% - “so you can fit six times more cans in your recycling bins.”<sup>1</sup> And, they are made in the U.S.A.!

### Environmental Impact

The obvious environmental impact is that fewer natural resources have to be mined from our earth as a result of increased recycling. Jessica Bradley has also indicated that there may even be the added benefit of fewer pick-ups due to less (more consolidated) volume of recycling, which would mean less fossil fuel being used for transport as well as fewer carbon emissions being released into the atmosphere.

### Detailed Project Budget and Savings

CH5000 model can crusher- \$5,700 x 4 = **\$22,800**

### Project Longevity

The longevity of this project in the most concrete terms is that of the length of time the can crushers are in existence and working properly. The longevity of this project in terms of its impact extends into perpetuity because of its potential for increased awareness and education about recycling, the lessons of which student staff can take with them beyond the bounds of CU and which temporary and permanent staff can take home and share with their families and friends – hopefully helping to create an ethic of recycling indefinitely into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.edlundco.com/pdf/crManual.pdf>