

# Reusable Bag Pilot Study for Waste Reduction from Grab-n-Go's

## Basic Organizational Information

ENVS 3001 is a course dedicated to involving students in aiding CU to realize its goals for a sustainable future set forth in the Blueprint for a Green Campus. This semester, some students from ENVS 3001 are working with CU Dining Services in finding ways to reduce trash from the popular Grab-n-Go venues on campus. All students working on this project are enrolled in ENVS3001, and there is no pay linked specifically to this project for the Instructor or Dining Services staff.

## Contact Information

Kyle Baker (primary contact)  
[Kyle.Baker@colorado.edu](mailto:Kyle.Baker@colorado.edu)  
281-650-0114

Lauren Heising, RD  
Coordinator of Sales and Nutrition  
Housing and Dining Services  
24 Hallett Hall 159 UCB  
303-492-3311

Dr. Lisa Barlow  
Senior Instructor  
Baker RAP, Environmental Studies  
303-492-3428 176UCB  
[Lisa.Barlow@colorado.edu](mailto:Lisa.Barlow@colorado.edu)

[Lauren.Heising@colorado.edu](mailto:Lauren.Heising@colorado.edu)

## Project Description

As CU Dining Services seeks to accommodate its students with more Grab-n-Go options, the university has seen an increase in the amount of waste the campus sends to the landfill; so much so that this new waste stream is threatening to reverse the decreasing trends we have seen over past years. Piazanos natural and organic Grab-n-Go serves over 2500 meals a day and currently offers plastic bags to all customers. It is with this in mind that we make Piazanos customers our target for a pilot project to cut down on the number of plastic bags being used and thrown away every day. The goal of this pilot is to get 500 students to use a compactable reusable nylon bag in place of the single use plastic bags provided. We will table at Piazanos and recruit volunteers, distributing the bags for free in exchange for a signed pledge to use the bags at Grab-n-Gos on campus, as well as willingness to respond to e-mail inquiries about the barriers and benefits of using the bag. After weeks of the bag pilot and responses from volunteer users, we will report to Dining Services on the effectiveness of the pilot as well as on barrier and benefit feedback from volunteer users and Piazanos staff. We will also provide suggestions for successful implementation of a campus-wide reusable bag program for all Dining Services venues. In addition to reducing plastic bag trash from the Grab-n-Go venues, this project will educate and involve students in a sustainable behavior which they will then be able to take with them as they move off campus and into their future.

## Project Scope and Timeline

The funds requested from Sustainable CU are \$1300 for 500 ChicoBag™ reusable nylon stuff-sack bags with clip, and \$150 for education and outreach materials (flyers, pledge cards, pamphlets); a total of \$1450.

### Timeline:

*Upon notification of approval of funding (hopefully March 3, the sooner the better!):*

Order bags (2 week delivery- ChicoBag™ will accept payment within 30 days of order). Promote the giving away of the reusable bags through posting signs at Piazanos, spreading flyers, as well as by finding students with a general interest in reducing their carbon footprint.

*Mid-late March* (depending on notification of funding)

Table at Piazanos in Cheyenne-Arapahoe Hall and give out the bags, collect pledges contact information. Volunteers will be given a few weeks to use the bags before sending out emails to determine the barriers and benefits of the pilot. Compilation of responses.

*Mid-late April*

Report to Dining Services on the results and effectiveness of the pilot.

Present strategies for future reusable bag programs for Dining Services on a campus-wide scale.

This project will be implemented by myself and fellow students Kana Costello-Ladoux, Elena Pellicer, and Erik Burns, in cooperation with Lauren Heising, the Piazanos staff, especially Chef de Cuisine Billy Kardy and Piazanos Manager Esam Loza, and with Residence Hall staff at Cheyenne-Arapahoe Hall.

#### **Detailed Project Budget**

500 ChicoBags™ - \$1300

Flyers, pamphlets, pledge cards - \$150

#### **Environmental Impact**

· This project will help fulfill the following environmental goals of the 2006 Blueprint for a Green Campus: Achieve “Zero Climate Impact” by 2025, by lowering our carbon footprint; Create a “Waste Free Campus” and double recycling diversion rates, by removing plastic bag use from CU Dining Services ([www.reusablebags.com](http://www.reusablebags.com)); Continuously reduce campus waste generation and Increasing pollution prevention by raising awareness in freshmen students living off campus in the future.

· This project will also help fill the following Campus Purchasing and Recycling goals of the 2006 Blueprint for a Green Campus: Educate the campus community about Environmentally Responsible Purchasing programs and policies; Train the Campus Purchasers to apply an environmentally-responsible purchasing framework in purchasing decisions; Provide adequate resources and administrative commitment to waste reduction and recycling; and Connect recycling with other sustainability and community development efforts in innovating and exciting ways.

· The project will further help fulfill the following environmental literacy goals: Create a culture of sustainability among all on campus through traditional and more inventive educational approaches; Equip every CU graduate with a basic understanding of environmental processes and the role they, as individuals, play in this process; and Ensuring that faculty and staff act as environmental stewards who are trained and motivated to follow positive environmental practices.

In the long term, the replacement of plastic bags with reusable bags will help the environment by decreasing use of petroleum and the release of CO<sub>2</sub>, the primary greenhouse gas responsible for global warming, into the atmosphere.

### **Quality of Life**

For students, this pilot study has the ability to instill a sustainable behavior. For most of the incoming first-year students, this is the first time they have lived on their own and the behaviors they pick up while living in the dorms will stick with them as they move off campus. Eliminating a large portion of the plastic bags on campus will help reduce the impact we have on soil and water pollution, and reduce ecological disruption. For the students, staff, and visitors, reducing plastic bag usage also means a cleaner campus with less bags littered about.

### **Saving Money**

Dining Services spent just over \$18000 on plastic bags for the 06-07' academic year. If they were to order 5500 bags at the cost we were quoted for the 500 bag pilot test, this would be a grand total of just over \$14000. This means that if Dining Services were to divert the funds spent on plastic bags to spending on reusable bags, they could afford to give every incoming freshman a bag and order extra to be sold to students who lose their bag or want a second.

### **Project Longevity**

All information on the pilot study will be reported to Dining Services. Based on the success of the pilot and the information presented, Dining Services will make a decision as to whether they will implement a reusable bag program for all CU students on the meal plan, or will require further study before sweeping implementation. If Dining Services adopts the reusable bag program, this permanently eliminates a growing wastestream. In addition, reusable bags have the potential to improve recycling diversion rates; customers will have to consciously remove recyclables and trash from their reusable bags instead of using it as a mini trash-can which can be tossed without thought into the trash.

### **Social and Environmental Equity and Justice**

For custodial staff, reducing plastic bags on campus means less stoop-labor in picking up bags that have been blown by the wind. Furthermore, ChicoBags are manufactured by a fair labor, fair wage manufacturing company in China (ISO certified), allowing ChicoBag to make adopting a reusable bag habit affordable while promoting a positive environment and social impact. Each ChicoBag™ comes with a 1 year warranty after purchase against defects. ChicoBag even has a recycling program for all expired ChicoBags that will be made into door mats, dog beds and prayer flags as part of a healing arts program in a local battered women's shelter in Chico, CA . Advertising the social equity actions of the ChicoBag company helps to raise awareness of social and environmental equity and justice issues for Grab-n-Go customers (mostly students) and for Dining Services staff.