



## Dining Services Proposal for Sustainable CU funding – Phase 2

### Introduction:

Dining Services at CU, Boulder has been working for many years to continually increase the sustainability of its operations, introducing new initiatives and making new strides each year. Dining Services has addressed issues in a wide range of areas within the realm of sustainability, from water and energy conservation to waste management to customer and staff education. The department has a track record of reacting to opportunities to increase its sustainability as they arise, including introducing pre- and post-consumer composting, recycling commingled and cardboard packaging generated by its vendors, and holding customer education events such as Scrape Your Plate Day and Fall Harvest Fest, just to name a few! Dining Services also recognizes that the field of sustainability is an every-changing and developing field, with new information and innovative ideas constantly emerging. It finds itself in an exciting and challenging position...

### Description of Project:

Deliverable: Ideas for specific ways that students can get involved in sustainability initiatives in CU Dining Services (feasible projects, programs, research, assessment)

Dining Services would like to conduct a study to identify ways that students can get involved in helping the department continue its quest toward sustainability in various aspects of its operations, whether it be energy/water conservation, waste management (i.e. recycling, composting, used oil, reduced packaging, etc.), customer outreach campaigns, sustainable food, or other areas.

For example, we would like to research the feasibility of creating something like a Student Sustainability Corps to assist Dining Services in tackling current challenges and identifying new opportunities to become increasingly sustainable as a department. We realize that students bring energy and passion to this work and we would look forward to finding innovative ways to leverage those traits and engage their creativity in the process. Together, we could lead the nation in developing the tools necessary to create and maintain such a partnership!

Dining Services could also benefit from students' ability to network amongst each other and generate ideas for how to direct awareness campaigns to reach their peers.

Students could benefit from real-world, hands-on learning experiences which would provide them with a fuller understanding of the complexities of pursuing sustainability in an operational context, experiences that would not only serve them in a practical way, but would also provide them with professional references for future endeavors.

Maybe Dining Services could recruit students from different academic programs, from the engineering school to the environmental studies program. We believe that this would be a great way to increase collaboration among campus entities as well as practice a multi-disciplinary approach to sustainability, offering a real-world laboratory to the students involved.

The reason that we would need to do further research into these ideas is that given the realities of our operational environment, it is difficult to find areas/tasks for students to get involved in where they could really feel like they are making an impact. As we all know, issues of sustainability are complex and solutions to challenges are quite often interconnected and elusive of simple answers. Thus, creating and maintaining successful sustainability initiatives is not for the faint of heart or short in attention span! Consequently, we would need to look into whether or not identifying smaller projects within our larger initiatives – something that could fit into a semester perhaps – would be realistic.

The overall goal would be to find some smaller projects that students could complete, while giving them a window into further possibilities and creating a desire to get involved in more long-term projects that would make an even bigger impact.

We also need to look into our capacity to direct and supervise students working on these projects.



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**Student Involvement:**

The student involvement in this initial phase would be to act as a “sounding board” for Dining Services staff and administration to bounce ideas off of as they identify possible projects. Though we would try to find as interesting projects as possible, we want to see if there would be a gap between what we need and what students would be willing to do.

Ultimately, the whole point is for there to be as much student involvement as possible as we work together to move forward on issues of sustainability!

**Budget:**

We would ask that a current Dining Services staff member who works on sustainability initiatives for the department and is familiar with our operational context serve as a consultant on this project. For the purposes of maintaining this consultant role, with a clear set of objectives and finite period of time in which to achieve them, this person would only be working on this project during the timeline set forth (meaning that the consultant fees would not go toward funding time spent on any other ongoing sustainability initiatives undertaken by the department during this time).

Budget: Consultant fees of \$20/hr. x 160 hrs. = \$3200  
Requested funding from SCU: \$2200  
Matching funds: \$1000 in-kind contribution from consultant

**Feasibility:**

The feasibility for this project is quite high, we believe, since we have already identified the consultant, who is already up to speed on the day-to-day realities of the Dining Services working environment and would be uniquely positioned to identify opportunities as well as potential pitfalls to avoid. This person has experience working with students in both short- and long-term capacities, is a graduate student and understands the academic requirements of any type of internship possibilities that could be created, and has been involved in prior collaborations between Dining Services and student groups such as ENV5 3001 and CU Going Local. The consultant would have time during the summer to dedicate to this project so as to complete it in time to “hit the ground running” in the fall.

**Student Impact:**

The potential for student impact is great and three-fold: the students who would be working with Dining Services would have the opportunity to make tangible contributions to the departments’ sustainability initiatives; if some of the student projects revolve around reaching out to their peers, Dining Services will be able to make its student customers more aware about the importance of their role in sustainability; finally, the students who eat in our dining halls would be served by a more sustainable Dining Services department.

**Sustainability:**

The goal of this project would be to involve students in making Dining Services more sustainable in any/all of the three aspects of sustainability, be it social, environmental, or financial – we are confident that projects in each of these areas can be defined and we would work with students to match a project to their area of interest.

**Innovation:**

Is this project an earth-shattering idea, no – but is it an important one that could likely lead to eye-opening experiences for students? Absolutely!