

Eat, Drink and Be Green

at Concordia College



College students at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minn., are able to dine comfortably, knowing they are leaving less of a footprint on the environment. Dining Services has gone green to reduce its negative impact on the environment, encourage green practices throughout campus and raise green awareness throughout the community.

“Last year the campus embarked on developing what it calls the Roadmap to a Sustainable Campus, even though this is something in Dining Services

we’ve embraced for a long time or have worked to be environmentally conscious, as well as financially conscious, and sometimes the two go hand in hand,” said Janet Paul Rice, associate director of Dining Services. “It is in keeping with the mission of the college to be good stewards of not only the resources we have on campus, but our environment and our community. It fits in, it makes sense. It is timely.”

The Roadmap focuses on five themes: food, water, waste, energy and transportation. “The food was the leading one,” she said. “They put it first in their roadmap because the consulting folks who did it from the University of Minnesota Center for

Sustainable Building Research felt it was a good place to start, because we had something of a headstart out of the shoot, unlike some of the other departments on campus; but also there was a great opportunity to make an impact quickly.”

Rice said Dining Services is doing its best to follow the Roadmap despite a few things that are a little “out there.” “There is one step in sourcing local and sustainable foods,” she said. “Step three says to make local and sustainably grown foods the lead criteria in food purchasing, and in italics it says: ‘Above cost and consistent availability.’ What world are you living in? They are setting the bar high and we are taking it as such.”



Elimination of Plastic Bags

This fall the Korn Krib, an on-campus convenience store, is plastic bag free, encouraging the use of Chico reusable bags available on site for purchase. First-year students will receive a complimentary ChicoBag courtesy of Dining Services and Hands for Change. Initial surveys have shown a positive student reaction to the reusable bag initiative, with more than 40 percent of those polled stating they will stop using plastic bags completely and start using reusable bags.

“When we did that survey, one of the suggestions was to, instead of just getting rid of them altogether, just do a sur-

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Concordia College's Environmentally Friendly Equipment/Products

Dishwasher featuring Waste Heat Recovery System
Meiko

Dishroom Scraper
Salvajor

Intelli-Hood
Melink

ChicoBags
Reusable Bags

Used Fryer Oil Recycler
Lynn Brakke Organic Farms

Grease Inceptor
Zurn

Fair-Trade Certified Coffee & Cups
Upper Midwest Gourmet

Products Made from Renewable Resources
Pactiv
Innoware
Biocorp

Green Cleaning Chemicals
Buckeye International

CU Boulder Switches to Reusable Bags

Each semester at the University of Colorado (CU) at Boulder, a course is held that is dedicated to involving students in aiding CU to realize its goals for a sustainable future set forth in the Blueprint for a Green Campus, which outlines the campus' green initiatives.

"One of the things that we talked about was to come up with some other kind of bag to use at our grab 'n gos and our convenience stores," said Lauren Heising, coordinator of Sales and Nutrition and Registered Dietician on staff with Housing and Dining Services. "It started out as 'Can we use a reusable container at our grab 'n gos?' As our grab 'n gos have become more popular, more students use them and there is more trash and/or recycling."

The class decided to do a pilot study to see if students would switch to reusable nylon ChicoBags to lower the number of plastic bags - 608,000 a year - used on campus. "The class did a pilot study where they went and purchased 500 of these reusable ChicoBags and gave them away outside of our largest grab 'n go," she said. "They were gone within 3 1/2 hours. They divided it up - two on one day and 1 1/2 the next and they were gone."

During the pilot study, students noticed that the use of plastic bags cut into the amount of materials recycled. "I haven't done a scientific study, but 70-80 percent of our containers that are in the grab 'n go are recyclable," said Heising. "What customers would do is they would come in, they would get their plastic bag and they would fill it with whatever they wanted, and they would check out and go out and enjoy the nice sunny day. What they would do is use their plastic bag to collect their containers after they had eaten out of them. They would eat their pizza out of it and stick it in there. They would drink their water and stick it in there. It was all collected in this nice plastic bag and they would just put it in the trash. They were less likely to recycle what could be recycled. It is a lot easier to stick it in one place."

After the positive results of the pilot study, Heising was able to successfully obtain funding to spread the program to all students - and eliminate the use of plastic bags in the school's grab 'n gos and convenience stores. "We got funding to purchase



6,200 ChicoBags for all incoming residents. It is not cost neutral, but we also feel like we are doing something for the environment. It did end up costing more, but you also have the added benefits of, I don't think customers are going to be putting their dirty containers in their ChicoBag and dumping it in the trash. They will be more likely to recycle those containers. We are hoping to see an increase in our recycling rates too."

The students were the ones who decided to use the ChicoBags. "This is something the students decided to do in this class because they looked at mesh bags; they are really in," she said. "But they thought, 'No, stuff like silverware is going to fall right through it.' You don't want something you get at a grocery store, you don't need something that large and how are you going to stick that in a backpack. It's stuffable, it's washable. It is colorful. They are really bright. You can see these all over the field when students are out."

They were also chosen because they fit in small places like backpacks and coat pockets. "They are manufactured, unfortunately outside of this country like a lot of other things, but their company has been inspected by a third party and have a third-party-verified fair labor policy," Heising said.

In case someone forgets his or her ChicoBag or is not a student, paper bags are offered, but only by request.

Students have taken to the widespread ChicoBag program. "What we are finding is that they are using them more now than they were in the beginning," she said. "I think they are getting the idea what they are used for. I think it has been very positive. Right now I am taking tallies from the units. I asked them to take a tally of who walked in with a ChicoBag. I had an informal study done by a couple of our units last week and they said it was positive. It is a great idea."

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How Many Plastic Bags Have You Used Lately?