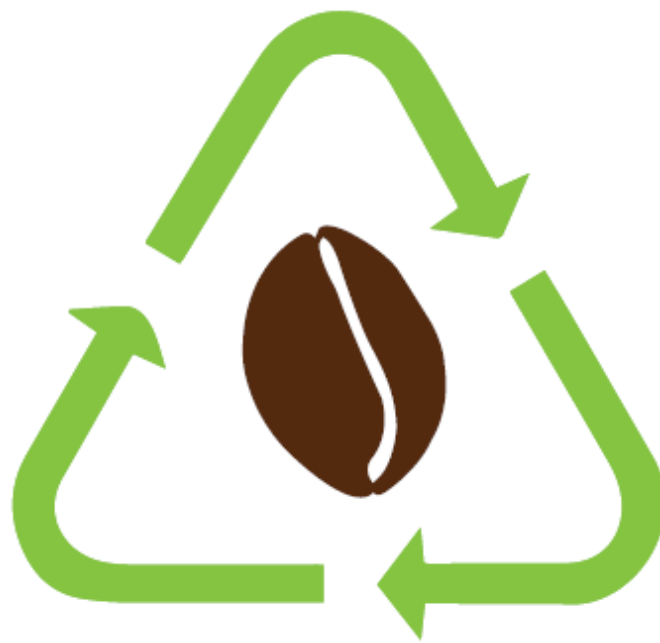


# **Coffee Ground Repurposing Program Completion Report**



**COFFEE GROUNDS**

**University Housing  
December, 2014**

## **PROJECT PURPOSE**

In April of 2014, University Housing was awarded \$1,820 in grant funds from the Student Sustainability Committee for the Coffee Ground Repurposing Program. The project, aside from supporting the i-CAP goal to increase waste diversion to 75 percent by 2020, had two main objectives. First, the project further minimized the amount of food waste being directed to the landfill from University Dining Halls. Second, the project is an educational tool to demonstrate to our students how nearly every item they dispose of has an alternative use as opposed to being sent to the landfill.

## **PROJECT SUMMARY**

During the summer of 2013, Dawn Aubrey, Associated Director of Housing for Dining Services, came across the Ground to Ground program managed by CompostCoalition.com based in Austin, Texas. According to [www.compostcoalition.com](http://www.compostcoalition.com), “Ground to Ground is a city-wide network of cafes offering nutrient-rich, post-use coffee grounds to customers for use in their gardens.” Adopting a similar coffee ground program among the six University Housing operated dining halls would be a highly visible and educational sustainability opportunity.

After receiving notice from the Student Sustainability Committee that grant funds would be provided to help launch the program, the remainder of the 2014 spring semester and summer break period were used to identify program needs, and analyze existing processes to determine the most efficient method for collecting and redistributing post-use coffee grounds. The key items identified to ensure a successful program include:

1. A central location to store the large amount of post-use coffee grounds that are produced at the dining halls.
2. A storage location that is cooled to prevent the product from spoiling.
3. A collection method at the dining halls that is efficient and meets food handling guidelines.
4. A low cost method for collecting and transporting the product to the storage location.
5. An easy way for customers to order and pick-up the post-use coffee grounds.

With these criteria in mind, we began searching for an adequate location. The search did not take long. Housing Food Stores (HFS) located at 1321 S. Oak Street in Champaign would address many of the items identified for a successful program. HFS is essentially a large warehouse with

multiple coolers for storage of food. Finding a dedicated space in one of the coolers to place the post-use coffee grounds produced by the dining halls would not be a problem. The facility is equipped with a loading dock to simplify handling of product on and off the transport trucks. HFS is located on the edge of campus with metered parking immediately in front of the building, so vehicular access to the facility by customers will be relatively easy. However, the real benefit to utilizing HFS as the central storage location is that University Housing Dining Services already has trucks running from HFS to all the dining units on a daily basis. No additional trucks or shipments will be needed to bring the post-use coffee to HFS.

With the location identified, the focus was shifted to developing a process for collecting the post-use coffee grounds at the different halls and shipping them to HFS. Five gallon buckets, used for setting the World's Largest Serving of Salsa, were repurposed for this program, minimizing the number of buckets that were purchased.

Collection points were identified at each of the dining halls, and staging

locations were set up at the loading docks. Labels were also created to clearly identify the buckets as part of the Coffee Ground Repurposing Program. Full buckets are placed on the next available truck going back to HFS and stored until requested by a customer.

A partnership was created with Zachary Grant, Visiting Research Specialist in Agriculture, to use a large portion of the post-use coffee grounds at the Sustainable Student Farm. Other units on campus, individual staff members, or community members may request the coffee grounds by contacting Mike Olinger at 300-4535 or [molinger@illinois.edu](mailto:molinger@illinois.edu).

The Coffee Ground Repurposing Program officially launched with an announcement in the September 14, 2014 issue of E-week.



## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

<b>Income</b>		Actual	
Student Sustainability Council Grant		1,820.00	
University Housing Dining Services		761.75	
	<b>Total Income:</b>	<b>2,581.75</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>		Projected	Actual
<b>Materials</b>			
5 Gallon Buckets (200ea. @ 4.31)		1,620.00	862.00
Bucket Lids (200ea. @ 1.47)		-	294.00
Shipping and Handling of bucket/lid order		-	250.75
Labels for buckets (200ea. @ 1.75)		-	350.00
Additional label order (300ea. @ 1.75)		-	525.00
		<u>1,620.00</u>	<u>2,281.75</u>
<b>Labor and Transportation</b>			
N/A		-	-
<b>Publicity &amp; Communications</b>			
University Housing digital signs for 1 month		200.00	200.00
NACUFS award submittal		100.00	100.00
Fact sheets for dining halls (1,000ea. @ 0.10)		100.00	-
		<u>400.00</u>	<u>300.00</u>
	<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>2,020.00</b>	<b>2,581.75</b>

## GENERAL SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

From a process standpoint, we have not encountered any challenges. The procedures that were outlined are ensuring the post-use coffee grounds are properly collected at the different dining halls and shipped to HFS without issue. The biggest hurdle we have had to overcome is the overwhelming response to the program. In the first week, we received requests for 39 five-gallon buckets of post-use coffee grounds. Through the end of November, more than 230 five-gallon buckets have been collected and redistributed. Other units on campus have joined the program by collecting post-use coffee grounds within their unit and delivering them to HFS for redistribution.

Although we intended to reuse 5-gallon buckets from a previous project, it quickly became evident that the amount of buckets on hand would not fully support the program. An order had to

be placed for buckets, lids, and additional labels. As we move forward with the program, we will have to continue to monitor inventory levels and order additional buckets as necessary to keep the program going.

## **MARKETING AND PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS**

To promote the new Coffee Ground Repurposing Program, announcements were run in multiple media across campus. Samples of all the announcements are provided in the appendix; however, below is a list of the media and message that was conveyed.

1. An announcement was placed in the September 14, 2014 issue of E-week to officially launch the new program.
2. Accompanying the kick-off announcement in E-week, University Housing Marketing Staff created a digital sign that aired from September 15, 2014 through October 1, 2014 on all digital signs within University Housing. The sign was an informational piece to make students aware that University Housing, in partnership with the Student Sustainability Committee, is now diverting 100 percent of post-use coffee grounds from the landfill.
3. In the September 24, 2014 issue of the Daily Illini, Aixin Li, writer for the Daily Illini, published an article covering the new Coffee Ground Repurposing Program.

In addition to the promotional efforts identified above, two other marketing pieces will be issued. First, we will apply for The National Association of College & University Food Services (NACUFS) Sustainability Aware for Waste Management award. Submittal for the award cannot take place until the spring semester. Second, we have a flyer ready for the participants of the garden plots located at Orchard Downs. However, Facilities and Services Grounds has asked us to wait until spring before issuing the mailer.

## **SPECIAL APPRECIATION**

University Housing would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to the Student Sustainability Committee for their support to develop this program. The benefits that come from our collaboration reach far beyond the basic goals of the program. We look forward to a continued partnership as we continue to strive to become a more sustainable operation.