Zero Waste SWATeam Meeting

Date: 2/12/21

Time: 4PM CDT

Attendees: Julie Cahillane (Northwestern), Sarah Levesque (Compass), Meredith Moore (iSEE), Tim Stark (co-chair & faculty), BK Sharma (co-chair & Faculty), Tim Stark (co-chair & faculty), Shantanu Pai (Zero Waste Coordinator), Mike Olinger (Dining), Adam Volk (staff, non-voting) Cassidy Steel (student), Maddy Liberman (student), Leah Courtney (student), Justin Holding (student, non-voting), Jenna Schaefer (student, non-voting), Nate Sun (student, non-voting), Julija Sakutyte (clerk)

Agenda

* Presentation from Julie Cahillane and Sarah Levesque from Northwestern
* Northwestern included expectations for dining vendor (Compass) to hire sustainability coordinator
	+ Sarah Levesque works for Compass as a sustainability coordinator.
* Slide deck presentation
	+ Background
		- Considerations for dining program post-COVID:
			* Must be safe/sanitary.
			* Must be reusable/compostable/recyclable
				+ Did not consider non-recyclable (i.e., Styrofoam) materials for program.
			* Must make business sense
				+ Must have reasonable ROI.
		- 500 students returned for FA20.
	+ OZZI To-Go Program
		- Student
			* Tap ID to receive clean OZZI
			* Receive food (served by staff) and eat either in-dining or for take out
			* Return dirty OZZI to carousel dish return when finished
		- Staff
			* Cashiers have PPE (mask and gloves, plus a plexiglass panel)
			* Staff serving meals have PPE (mask & gloves)
			* Dishwasher PPE: Mask, single-use gloves under reusable rubber, elbow length gloves, apron).
			* All tables and chairs are spread minimum 6ft
	+ Behavior Patterns: Getting students to adopt OZZI
		- Students handed individual OZZI at last quarantine meal
		- First two lunches and dinners had dining managers present to answer questions
		- Results
			* 819 meals served on campus per day, 99% used OZZI container
			* 6-month ROI and 36K in savings of first year
	+ 2021 updates
		- Winter quarter
			* 2500 students returned
			* ~4k meals per day with 99% using OZZI
			* With additional students, ROI within 1 month (so savings observed)
			* 15% of meals had to use an additional compostable clamshell
* Questions
	+ How many students refused OZZI containers?
		- Minimal numbers of refusals. Students accepted it, especially after initial concerns.
		- COVID created an air of compliance, which made implementation easier, especially with press, engagement, and outreach done by Compass.
	+ Does each student only get one OZZI? How many students need more than one container (and therefore needed an additional compostable container)?
		- Not tracked by Compass.
		- Extra units ordered to compensate for loss of OZZIs.
	+ What was the anticipated breakage ratio/how many containers were purchased/have you cut into your storage?
		- Meal participation rate (of AY2019) + 15%
			* Working really well, no anticipated need for purchase.
	+ What is the durability of the OZZIs? What about after washing?
		- 1000 uses
		- OZZI has been responsive to any defective units.
	+ Was staining of OZZIs a concern?
		- Durability study showed no concern.
			* Condiments, silverware damage, testing outdoor durability, dye
	+ What about allergies?
		- No cross-contamination.
		- Procedure sends students through allergen-friendly station first or will be given a compostable clamshell.
	+ ADA concerns?
		- None.
		- Some students need additional assistance which is accommodated by staff.
		- Boost Mobile Ordering
			* Compostable clamshell.
			* Grab and Go.
	+ End of life cycle?
		- Number 5 plastic, so fully recyclable.
	+ Cost per OZZI?
		- Contact OZZI for a meaningful estimate.
		- There is an estimate of $5 per OZZI.
	+ Student culture?
		- Emphasize program logistics during initial press.
		- Northwestern has fewer and more condensed spaces.
			* 4 AYCE locations.
			* Waste reduction culture at Northwestern due to decades of outreach.
		- There are several schools in other states (AZ, CO) with reusable dining programs that may provide more meaningful insight.
	+ What is the OZZI loss rate?
		- No strict number, but not enough to raise alarm.
	+ Change in dishwashing procedure?
		- Purchase of OZZI racks + OZZI return bins.
		- No change to dishwashers or washing process (except high temperature aid rinse for COVID).
	+ Were there any education initiatives of compostable containers?
		- Not all students have access to composting, so no numbers on the composting rates.
		- No educational initiatives for the compostable containers.
	+ What were the mechanisms that a person would return/grab OZZI?
		- If a student ate in person, they would drop the box after their meals.
		- If a student ate outside of dining, they would drop it off at their next meal.
		- No rigid tracking system; based on honor.
	+ Food costs?
		- Not a noticeable increase in food cost.
		- Difficult to gauge.
	+ Labor increases?
		- Reduced labor (due to decrease in student numbers).
		- Difficult to gauge.
	+ Prior to COVID, was there a to-go option?
		- Had OZZI containers available for $5 deposit.
	+ OZZI has an option for a “token” system through a vending machine.
	+ Why OZZI?
		- Already had reusable dining operations with OZZI prior to the pandemic.
		- Prior to COVID, they appeared to be the most experienced program.
		- OZZI fit student culture, whereas other companies and additional purchases may be required for additional scopes.
	+ Were there additional purchases from OZZI?
		- No, just drying racks and containers.
		- Fit operations best.
	+ Future Tracking plans?
		- Primary goals are to ensure that everything is sustainable, but Compass has lofty tracking goals for the future.
	+ What is the per unit price of a compostable clamshell container?
		- UIUC pays 0.16 per unit.
	+ Reduction rates (compostable clamshells vs reusable OZZIs)
		- Difficult to gauge, as the use has changed (prior to COVID, no compostables, some OZZI reusables, during COVID lockdowns, compostable clamshells only, and after initial lockdowns, mainly OZZI reusables with some clamshells).
	+ Composting program for containers?
		- There is “back-of-house” composting system which still needs work.
	+ How many containers were planned for distribution? How many per student?
		- Used recommendations from OZZI to determine how many containers to purchase.
		- Meal participation rates + 15%.
	+ What were the participation rates prior to COVID?
		- Substantial use of the program.
	+ Additional questions about the Northwestern Reusable Dining Operations can go to: Sarah.Levesque@compass-usa.com
* Reusable Containers Discussion
	+ What are the next steps to implement a reusable containers program?
		- There is a team within Dining perusing reusable dining operations, so the information from today, plus information from J. Holding will assist in the process.
			* A student member drafts an initial recommendation.
				+ Consider Dining (operational), iSEE (educational and outreach), and Waste Transfer Station (recycling/waste stream) impacts.
				+ Consider financial impacts (could receive SSC funding).
			* T. Etchison will speak to team members within internal committee about this idea, send presentation, etc.
			* After the leadership team has an internal discussion, ZW SWAT can consider any concerns in the recommendation.
		- Dining needs to assess the initial capital required for reusable dining operations.
		- Single-use containers are a large impact on the waste stream.
			* Reusable containers would reduce operational costs for the waste transfer station.
		- Recommendation for reusable containers.
	+ Should the program be implemented across campus or as a pilot project?
		- If piloting, maybe LAR or ISR?
	+ Should it be a Long-term plan or just for COVID?
		- More buy-in if program extends beyond COVID?
			* Seems to make more sense to plan for long-term.
* S. Pai Updates
	+ Recycling operations have resumed.
	+ Plastic bag recycling.
		- 10% decontamination rate.
		- All plastic bags are available for recycling. Literally ANY plastic bag.
			* Bubble wrap.
		- The plastic bags are cryofrozen, pulverized, and made into plastic lumber.
		- Post-recycling material can be made available for use.
		- Treks is recycling them.
		- Lincoln hall, Illini Union (2), Carpool Garage, and Wohlers’ Hall.
			* Will see how it goes and potentially expand to one location at each quadrant.
		- Working to develop reasonable access to recycling on the service map.
	+ Hardhat recycling.
	+ CO2 container recycling.