**SWATeam Recommendation**

Name of SWATeam: Zero Waste

SWATeam chair(s): BK Sharma and Timothy D. Stark

Date submitted to iWG: 4/2/21

Recommendation title: Reusable Dining Containers Program

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*For internal use only*: Date reviewed by iCAP Working Group:

Specific actions/policy recommendation:

Where possible and applicable, campus restaurants and foodservices should adopt the use of a reusable containers instead of disposable or compostable containers for take-out food. At a minimum, this should become an option for customers.

Suggested unit/department to address implementation:

Initially, this could start with University Housing assuming they continue to incorporate a takeout option into their all-you-care-to-eat Dining program. The program could be expanded to include other Certified Housing foodservices, Illini Fuel, and possibly vendors in the Illini Union.

Rationale for recommendation:

Disposable and compostable containers create a huge waste stream that could be avoided to some degree. The use of reusable containers could dramatically reduce the waste and the containers could be recycled at the end of their life cycle. The use of reusables would potentially save money as compared to disposables. There would also be saving in the cost of waste disposal for campus.

Connection to iCAP goals:

From the 2020 iCAP - "Objective #5.3 ensures that items used on campus-particularly at large events- are durable, repairable, and reusable, and that they contribute to our university-wide culture of reuse."

Perceived challenges:

Challenges would include startup costs as in the initial costs of the reusable containers, collection bins for returning the items and the cost of any needed equipment such as drying racks etc. There may also be space and ware washing considerations including additional labor costs. Another potential challenge is customers who prefer not to use reusables or who will have difficulty returning the container. For example, a customer who is just visiting campus.

Anticipated timeline of implementation:

Timelines would depend on the individual unit.

Anticipated budget (identify if cost is up-front or continuous):

Long term, the budget impact should be low with a larger initial investment and a smaller reinvestment at the beginning of each school year.

Individual comments are required from each SWATeam member (one or two sentences):

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| Team Member Name | Team Member’s Comments |
| BK Sharma  (co-chair) | This is a great way to increase campus sustainability and move us closer to a zero-waste target, so I fully support this recommendation. I am very excited to see its implementation on our campus. |
| Timothy Stark  (co-chair) | I fully support this proposal. This system has been effective at Northwestern University and will reduce a significant waste stream from our campus with significant cost savings. |
| Yuanhui Zhang | I fully support this proposal. Reusable dinning containers not only helps campus to achieve zero-waste, bur also educate students for sustainable living habit. |
| Caitlin Aylmer | I fully support this proposal. This is an excellent opportunity to reduce waste and model re-use on a daily basis. |
| Thurman Etchison | I support this proposal. My team in Housing Dining I have been studying ways to implement a reusable program. For us, I see no downside. We are planning to offer a to-go option on some scale after covid and reusable containers will be a part of it. If we had known the pandemic would last so long, we likely would have implemented this the past Fall. From March of last year till the middle of February, Dining purchased more than 800,000 clamshell boxes. All of these will ultimately end up in a landfill. While in the future we will only have a small fraction of our orders will be take-out, reusables will pay for themselves if implemented correctly. |
| Aaron Finder | This seems logical and I support this recommendation. I do see operational challenges regarding container returns. How do we ensure these containers don’t wind up in the trash? Would there be a penalty for non or late returns or would this be an acceptable loss? Interested to see what Housing can do here. |
| Michael Olinger | I support this proposal. Housing Dining Services is always looking for ways to reduce waste, save money and be enviromentally friendly. |
| Shantanu Pai | *No comment available.* |
| Leah Courtney | I fully support this proposal. Students will start to think about their waste and it will reduce waste from the dining halls. |
| Maddy Liberman | This recommendation is important in creating a culture of re-use on our campus and I fully support it. |
| Cassidy Steel | I fully support this proposal. A lot of students are looking forward to a sustainable option like this. |

Further explanation and background (can be supplied in an attachment):

Comments from consultation group (if any; these can be anonymous):