

College of William and Mary Food Services Audit Proposal

Campus Sustainability Seminar 250-08

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I. Project Description

We are all connected through a shared love and need for food. Every member of a community, whether that community is the world or a college campus must eat — an action so common that is often made with little thought or deliberation. In the past few years however, the concept of sustainable food has been gaining more attention, especially among institutions of higher learning such as Yale University, Brown University, and the University of Northern Iowa. Sustainable food is generally defined as food that is grown locally, with ecologically sound and seasonally sensitive methods.¹ By eating sustainable food, we have the potential to decrease our individual and communal environmental impact.

In order to determine how best to move forward in this endeavor, this proposal calls for a comprehensive audit of the financial and environmental costs of the food that passes through the College of William and Mary, from growth and production, through transportation, preparation, consumption, and disposal. The report will focus on five areas: (1) production methods and origins of the food that comes through our campus, (2) packaging and storage of food, (3) methods of waste disposal, (4) monetary cost, and (5) the collective carbon footprint of Food Services. An audit is needed because it will provide a benchmark for the College. We need to know where we stand in order set goals and move forward.

A number of avenues are available to implement this proposal. Our first recommendation is that this audit be conducted through an Office of Sustainability, as its final report would carry a greater deal of clout and confidence. This office does not currently exist at William and Mary, however, but reports of equal professionalism could be produced through a student internship, an Environmental Studies capstone, a senior thesis, a summer research project, or an Environmental Studies 440 seminar.

II. Needs Assessment

A thorough evaluation of the environmental impact of campus food has never before been performed at the College. Presently, there is very little information readily available on either William & Mary's Dining Services website or *greeningwm.com* pertaining to our food's origin, disposal and overall environmental impact. The College of William and Mary Food Services Audit will produce a comprehensive assessment of this information, a necessary step in our progress towards the goal of sustainable campus food. In order to remain competitive with our peers, The College must demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. However, we must first evaluate our existing impact. The proposed audit will facilitate the identification of opportunities for reducing the environmental impact of our campus' food services. Additionally, the food audit will serve as a baseline for later comparisons (chiefly of Food Service's carbon footprint), which will provide us with quantifiable evidence of improvements in the future.

¹ Horovitz, Bruce. "More University Students Call for Organic, 'Sustainable' Food." *USA Today* 27 Sept. 2006. 20 Mar. 2008 <<http://www.usatoday.com>>.

III. Objectives and Outcomes

The College of William and Mary Food Services Audit aims at producing a detailed, comprehensive report regarding:

1. Production Methods and Origins of Food

- The exact location of all food items used at The College's various campus locations (The Commons, The UC, the Dodge Room, the Mews, and The Marketplace) will be cataloged, including:
 - The distance traveled by all food reaching campus
 - The method of transportation
- Production methods of all food items will be listed with focus on:
 - Organic vs. non organic produce
 - Fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals used on the land from which the College's food items are harvested
 - Food processing methodology and quantity of processed food that is utilized (canned, frozen, pre-made, etc.)

2. Tracking and Quantifying Food Packaging and Storage

- The average amount of packaging in which food comes to campus will be measured with focus on:
 - Methods of food packaging
 - The necessity of packaging (i.e.: is unnecessary packaging being used?)
 - Food storage:
 - Re-usable storage containers vs. disposable ones
 - The energy costs of storage (refrigerators, freezers, etc)

3. Waste Management Practices

- The amount of waste that Food Services produces
- Disposal methods for food, its packaging, and other items utilized in Food Services (composting, recycling, reuse, thrown away, etc.)

4. Finances of Food Services

- The total monetary costs of food, waste disposal, shipment, supplies, staff, and management including:
 - A thorough break-down of what costs and
 - How Food Service's budget is allotted

5. The Collective Carbon Footprint of Food Services

- Taking all of the above information into account, the carbon footprint of Food services will be quantified (in metric tons of CO₂) to understand the general impact Food Services makes on the earth

The main goal of this report is to provide an accurate picture of the current impact the College's Food Services has on the environment. We cannot move forward towards sustainability if we do not know where we are starting from; this report ensures an accurate portrayal of current practices, a necessary step for future planning and goal-setting. Through this we would be able to move on to the next step — advising on the most environmentally sustainable and the most economically efficient options for progress regarding Food Services.

The potential outcomes of this project could include expanded utilization of local farms, innovative storage and disposal ideas, wider use of composting, and increased recycling.

As we have seen from the limited (but growing) success resulting from the energy audit, and such programs as the Campus Kitchens Initiative, there are many positive changes that can be both environmentally and financially friendly.

IV. Resources

The purpose of The College of W&M Food Services Audit is to create a report detailing the origin, disposal and carbon footprint of the food that comes through our campus. Since the final product of the proposed project is a written report, the vast majority of the required funds are directly related to the human resources necessary for collecting and compiling information. The audit could feasibly be conducted in a variety of ways: as a project coordinated by a Director of Sustainability in conjunction with student volunteers or interns, as an Environmental Studies seminar, as a senior thesis, or as a summer research project. Each one of these possibilities involves different people, and inherently different levels of professionalism, consequently the total cost of the audit will greatly depend upon the method in which it is completed. The required resources and estimated costs for each potential method are described below.

Project coordinated by a Director of Sustainability

The Director of Sustainability will oversee and coordinate the audit in conjunction with student volunteers or interns. This approach requires the creation of an Office of Sustainability and the hiring of a Director of Sustainability. Although this is by far the most expensive method of conducting the food audit, it will result in the most professional and comprehensive report. A Director of Sustainability would also be in a uniquely advantageous position capable of applying the information in the audit towards the goal of campus sustainability. The major expense will be the director's salary, which is typically around \$60,000 plus benefits.

After the establishment of the office, the Director would collaborate with a team of student volunteers or interns to collect and compile research into a cohesive report. This process will require approximately 2 hrs/week of the director's time and approximately 3 hrs/week of work by a team of 2-3 students for a semester. The students would require a workplace in the Office of Sustainability, such as a communal desk or table shared with other students and projects. The involved students would either donate their time at no cost, or in exchange for academic credit in a formal sustainability internship.

Environmental Studies Seminar

The proposed audit could be conducted as part of a seminar or "capstone experience" offered by the Environmental Studies Department. A seminar-style class on sustainable campus dining could incorporate an audit of William & Mary's Food Services as a class project. It would require 3 hrs/week of the professor's time in class along with lesson preparation and grading. The students in the seminar would also contribute 3 class hours a week along with 3-4 hours of outside work every week.

Senior Thesis

The audit could be conducted as an individual student's senior thesis. This approach would require approximately 3 hrs/week of the student's time over a period of two semesters, or 28 weeks, and no more than 1 hrs/week of an advising professor over the same time period. No office or workspace would be required, and any incurred expenses could potentially be funded through scholarships and resources already established for the purpose of supporting independent student research.

Summer Research Project

The audit could be completed as a research project by a student over the summer. At a minimum summer internships typically include a \$3000-\$4000 stipend, housing, and potentially additional living expenses. Therefore, in order for the food audit to be a competitive summer research project capable of attracting the most qualified students it would require a \$3000 stipend and housing for the student (valued at approximately \$1680). In return, the student would be expected to spend 35 hrs/week for 10 weeks working on the food audit. This method of conducting the audit would also require an advising professor (or the Director of Sustainability) to spend 3-4 hrs/week consulting with the student. Despite a potentially higher cost, this approach advantageously allows one individual to devote a significant amount of uninterrupted time to the audit.

Certain expenses will be associated with the production of the audit, no matter how it is conducted or who is involved. General office supplies and photocopying will be allocated \$50. A significant portion of the project will involve contacting the suppliers of dining service's food and networking with other colleges. This research could involve extensive long-distance calls, so another \$50 will be allocated for phone fees, provided that the individual or individuals conducting the audit has an on-campus office equipped with a telephone.

The suggested methods for conducting the audit obviously require various human resources which necessitate a range of monetary inputs. The audit could be completed at a very low cost as a senior thesis, or at a much greater cost under the direction of a Director of Sustainability. The creation of the proposed audit is a vital step for sustainability at the College; most importantly the audit can, and should, be conducted even if only minimal financial resources are available. If more resources are allocated to the project, however, a more comprehensive, accurate and professional report could be created. Therefore, the audit should be completed regardless of the extent of the financial support, but a lower cost option should not be employed without considering the impact on the quality of the final product.

V. Implementation Plan and Timeline

The College of William and Mary Food Services Audit should take no more than two semesters to complete, depending on which method is used. The following implementation plan is based on the use of a single-semester Environmental Studies seminar, but it can be easily modified to fit the alternate plans.

Week 1

- The seminar meets for the first time; professor and no more than 5 students
- A general overview of the goals of the course are detailed, and each student is given an area of focus; (1) the production methods and origins of the food that comes through our campus, (2) the packaging and storage of food, (3) its methods of waste disposal, (4) finances, or (5) the collective carbon footprint of Food Services

Week 2

- Students will make action plans for the course, using the detailed list of requirements for each area of interest, as outlined in the Objectives and Outcomes section of this proposal
 - The student who is focusing on the production methods and origins of our food, for example, will need to determine what resources he or she will require to evaluate the production methods of all the food items that come through our campus, among other things
 - This will include creating a list of contacts, such as Philip Dibenedetto, the Food Service Director for the College
 - The student focusing on Food Services' collective carbon footprint will need to work with the other students, creating a database of all the information they find on miles traveled, methods of packaging used, volume of waste disposed of by Food Services, etc. During this time, this student should also look at existing literature on calculating a carbon footprint

Weeks 3 – 6

- Students will conduct their research, with any necessary assistance or guidance provided by the professor
 - The bi-weekly seminar meetings will serve to keep the seminar informed about everyone's progress; these required updates will ensure that everyone is keeping up with their workload as well as encourage students to share resources, information, and contacts

Week 7

- At this point, most, if not all of the students' research should be complete, and the seminar will begin to review its findings
- This time will be crucial for the student focusing on calculating Food Services' carbon footprint
 - If necessary, he or she can expect the help of the other students in performing some of the calculations

Weeks 8 – 9

- Any additional research will be completed in this time, along with the calculation of Food Services' carbon footprint
- Students will complete a rough draft detailing their findings, explaining their significance in terms of how far we have to go to accomplish food sustainability on campus, and our impact on the environment, both locally and globally
- These will be compiled into a final report

Weeks 10 – 11

- The entire report should be reviewed by every member of the seminar, including the professor
 - Any necessary changes will be made, with the goal of producing the most professional, informative, and comprehensive audit possible, a reference for the College as it makes future decisions about how it purchases, uses and disposes of its food

Week 12

- The final, official report will be presented to the Student Assembly and the administration for review
 - At this point, the audit should be considered a resource for the College, and it should be made available to the public, by posting it on *greeningwm.com* and it should also be made available to members of SEAC or any other interested party that could use the information to make recommendations on College policy

VI. Evaluation Plan

In order to evaluate the success of the Food Audit, an independent committee will review whether the proposal's five objectives — (1) production methods and origins of the food that comes through our campus, (2) packaging and storage of food, (3) methods of waste disposal, (4), finances and (5) the collective carbon footprint of Food Services — have been met. The small committee of at least 5 individuals will include members of the administration, staff, faculty, food service representatives, and the student body, in addition to any other concerned parties to review the proposal for factual content. Those involved in the food services are aware of present practices, and their review would ensure legitimacy. They would be required to meet only once to review the Food Audit if it is found to be accurate, and would be selected through a voluntary process of interest, while still ensuring that equal representation occurs. If any discrepancy does occur, the committee will contact the writers of the Food Audit, at which time further investigation will occur on the item questioned. After the item is verified for accuracy, the committee would reconvene to review if the Food Audit is accurate post further investigation. This process would continue until the committee is fully satisfied with the accuracy of the Food Audit.

The report will also be made easily accessible to the public (the administration, faculty, staff, and students) through publication on *greeningwm.com*, ensuring that anyone can review its accuracy and provide a forum for discussion. There will be a point of contact (via e-mail) as well, where anyone would be able to contact the writers and investigators of the report regarding any discrepancies that they may find regarding the Audit.

VII. Resources

College Resources

- <http://greeningwm.com/>
- <http://www.wm.edu/so/seac/>
- <http://www.campusdish.com/en-US/CSMA/WilliamMary>

Institutional Resources

- <http://www.aramark.com/Home.aspx?PostingID=21&ChannelID=2>
- <http://www.endowmentinstitute.org/index.html>
- <http://www.sysco.com/>

VIII. Authors

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