



STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Semesterly Report

Thank you for your commitment to green initiatives at the University of Illinois. One of the ongoing requirements listed in the terms of the funding agreement for your project is the submission of semesterly reports with key information about your project. In addition to this form, please provide additional financial documentation and/or progress photos if available.

Please be as accurate as possible in describing the project (including possible setbacks or challenges in meeting the initial goals of the project). Not fully meeting your project's goals will not disqualify you from making future funding requests as long as your reports are as complete and accurate as possible. If you have any questions, please contact the Student Sustainability Committee, at sustainability-committee@illinois.edu.

Project Name: Project 4 Less

Date of Report Submission: 5/14/2021

Project Purpose:

The key objective for our food recovery operation is to reduce food waste and bolster food redistribution efforts in the campus and surrounding community. In parallel with these goals we intend to spread awareness about local resources for food insecure individuals and work with local community organizers to ensure that pre-consumer food waste is redistributed to the individuals most at need.

Detailed Accounting of Expenditures to Date:

No expenditures to date.

Project Progress to Date:

Due to the COVID pandemic, the typical food packaging operations were ceased for the majority of the Fall semester. However, packaging sessions commenced much more regularly in the Spring semester, and we have since been able to expand our partnerships. We have packaged meals at LAR Dining Hall one night per week almost every week of the semester, summing to around 60 boxes of food per week (with each box providing 2-3 meals). These meals are then distributed evenly to Wesley Food Pantry, a long-time partner of ours, as well as UniPlace, a new partnership we have established this semester. We are also currently developing a partnership with Natural Path Nutrition and their partner pop-up pantries in the Champaign-Urbana area. In the last few weeks of the semester, we are also confirming a new partnership with the Salvation Army, whose pantry will serve as a back-up location to distribute food in case a routine partner is unable to accept our donations at a last-minute notice. We are incredibly excited to be developing more connections with the community, and hope to scale up our packaging to supply more food to these partnerships as dining hall capacity increases.

We also established a partnership with MSFTSA, a new RSO on campus. Alongside them, we are going to register to become an official Food Recovery Network Chapter. We have conducted extensive research on the Food Recovery Network, the benefits they can offer our organization, and what other university

chapters think about their experience. We plan to make our chapter official in July. Lastly, we have continued to develop our social media education and awareness campaigns surrounding food waste and food insecurity.

Student Involvement and Outreach to Date:

This semester, we have been involving four student volunteers per week for our packaging sessions. We have also expanded our student board to now include seven students who are all highly involved in our mission. Our social media manager has been spearheading our marketing and awareness campaigns discussed in the next section. The posts are focused on sharing information about food waste and food insecurity, decreasing the stigma surrounding food insecurity, and connecting individuals with local food resources. We have had our student members thoroughly research the Food Recovery Network, potential community pantries that we can connect to, lead meetings with those pantries, find new and more efficient boxes to package our meals, and more. We are also leading outreach efforts to new student organizations such as MSFTSA in order to become a more cohesive university community that can tackle these major challenges together.

Marketing and Promotion Efforts to Date:

This semester, Project 4 Less worked to further our social media presence on Instagram and Facebook. Using these platforms, we developed multiple posts to raise awareness on food insecurity and food waste. Within a few months, we have raised our following to 148 Instagram followers and made 13 informational posts. We are also using this platform to support our partner organizations and their community events.

Additional Comments:

We are very excited to continue developing our organization next semester once the Dining halls have less restricted Covid-limitations and in turn, larger capacity for expanded meal packaging and food waste mitigation! Once this happens and expansion is more feasible, we will be spending our grant funds on new cold-carts for transportation purposes.