

# The Final Report of the MSA Dining Subcommittee

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January 23, 2018



MINNESOTA STUDENT ASSOCIATION

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## 1. Introduction

The Minnesota Student Association (MSA) advocates for students in all areas of the University. For many years, we have heard from students who are unsatisfied with their campus dining experience<sup>1</sup>. We believe in being responsive to student concerns, so during the 2016-2017 school year we decided that campus dining needed to be a top priority of our organization. MSA passed a comprehensive resolution<sup>2</sup> in March 2016 detailing concerns related to dining quality, student representation, transparency, and dietary restrictions. In conjunction with MSA's resolution, the Student Senate and University Senate passed a resolution<sup>3</sup> on business ethics in relation to Aramark, our current campus dining vendor. Once these resolutions were passed, campus leaders, in partnership with administration, began working to implement many of the suggestions students made. At the end of the 2016-2017 school year, MSA leadership came together to discuss the next step in our dining advocacy. Given that Aramark's contract expires in 2020, we determined that the best way forward would be to convene a campus-wide conversation about what the ideal dining scenario looked like on campus. This decision led to the formation of the MSA Dining Subcommittee, which consisted of students from many groups across campus. The following recommendations were generated by the members of the subcommittee, in consultation with administrative units and other MSA staff members.

The final recommendations are separated into the following categories:

- Dietary Restrictions
- Nutrition
- Student Experience
- Sustainability
- On-Campus Grocery Store
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Self-Operated Dining

Campus dining is a cornerstone of student experience. We are excited about these recommendations and their potential to influence the future of dining here at the University of Minnesota.

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Co-Directors, MSA Dining Subcommittee

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Student Association. "[University Dining Services Polling Report](#)." 21 Mar. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Student Association. "[Resolution on University Dining Services](#)." 21. Feb. 2017.

<sup>3</sup>[Student Senate Resolution on Aramark Educational Services](#)

## 2. MSA Dining Subcommittee Recommendations

### *Recommendation 2.1 - Dietary Restrictions*

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We recommend Kosher and halal options to be expanded with the following factors considered: preparation time for student and affordability

We recommend one dining facility dedicated to Kosher and halal options, accessible to all students. At minimum, having expanded options in a specific dining hall including one designated station kosher and one station halal. Frozen meals that meet specifically Kosher dietary guidelines, while a nice gesture, do not meet student expectations.

#### *Kosher*

The following recommendations are specific to Kosher dietary needs: training of staff members to accommodate a student request for a Kosher meal and expand the variety of meals, potentially including salad options with protein, adding more vegetables to sandwiches, and hot breakfast options.

By making high-quality Kosher options available and desirable to everyone, more Jewish students can practice Kosher and students who do not practice Kosher can still enjoy great food. If there is not a dining facility dedicated to Kosher and halal options, maintain a microwave on site dedicated to Kosher food preparation in each dining hall to avoid meat and dairy in the same microwave.

Kosher food preparation is defined as the following<sup>4</sup>:

1. The term "kosher" (also "kashrut" -- the system of Jewish dietary laws) means fit or appropriate for consumption, and applies to both food ingredients, its preparation, and service.
2. With respect to ingredients, kosher foods are divided into three categories: meat, dairy, and pareve ("neutral").
3. Kosher meat is flesh from permitted mammals that chew their cud and have split hooves, which have also been slaughtered in a ritually appropriate manner; kosher certification agencies such as the Orthodox Union and OK Kosher Certification certify kosher meat as having met the requirements of Jewish law.
4. Kosher dairy refers to all milk based products, including milk, butter, yogurt, and cheese, that are derived from a kosher animal, whose other ingredients are kosher, and are produced, processed, and packaged on kosher equipment.
5. Based on traditions derived from the Torah, Jewish law requires the separation of meat and dairy both in terms of consumption (i.e., meat and dairy may not be consumed in the same meal) and in food preparation.
6. The designation "pareve" pertains to all foods that are neither meat nor dairy.
7. The preparation and service of kosher food requires that the facility guards against the cross contamination of non-kosher food ingredients with kosher foods, and the cross

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ok.org/companies/what-is-kosher/meat-dairy-pareve-setting-boundaries/>

contamination of permitted meat ingredients with permitted dairy ingredients. Therefore, kosher facilities must be rendered ritually pure, which involves the sterilization of equipment using various heating methods such as the application of boiling water or hot flame. Once a facility has been rendered kosher by a certified expert, it is incumbent on the facility operator to maintain the kosher status of the food preparation areas and appliances. In establishments that serve both dairy and meat meals, equipment specially designated for these categories must be used. This usually involves the duplication of basic equipment such as refrigerators, ovens, stove tops, pots, pans, and cooking utensils.

8. Owing to the stringency of the separation of dairy and meat, kosher applies also to food service. Dairy meals must be served with utensils, on place settings, and with tableware specifically designated for that purpose. The same holds for meat meals.

### *Halal<sup>5</sup>*

The following recommendations are specific to halal dietary needs: training of staff members in avoiding cross contamination and other special procedures to accommodate a student request for halal food items and expand the variety of meals.

The required steps during the slaughter to make meat halal are defined as the following<sup>6</sup>:

1. The person should be a Muslim who is mentally sound and knowledgeable of the Islamic slaughtering procedures.
2. The animal to be slaughtered should be lawful according to Islamic law.
3. The animal to be slaughtered should be alive or deemed to be alive at the time of slaughtering.
4. The phrase “Bismillah” (In the Name of Allah) should be invoked immediately before the slaughter of each animal.
5. The slaughtering device should be sharp and should not be lifted off the animal during the slaughter act.
6. The slaughter act should sever the trachea, oesophagus and main arteries and veins of the neck region.

We would like increased access to high-quality vegan and vegetarian options in all residential dining facilities and campus restaurants. We expect there to be vegan and vegetarian options available to students at all times.

We recommend the implementation of allergy-friendly food stations in all dining halls that include only food free of certain major allergens with a dining employee serving the food in order to prevent cross-contamination. This would allow for students with food allergies to worry less about the possibility of cross-contamination in the food they eat.

We recommend an increased variety of gluten-free options, beyond microwave meals which take a long time to prepare and can emphasize a stigma of less or decreased quality. Providing an increased variety of gluten free options that are easily accessible and void of cross-contamination for students will increase student satisfaction and accessibility. We recommend that gluten-free

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ushalacertification.com/halal-overview.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/Y2770E/y2770e08.htm>



options are accessible for students without them having to ask for assistance from dining hall staff. We recommend that there be designated space for gluten-free shelf-stable products to be kept for general consumption, isolated from potentially contaminating food products. This would include mini-refrigerators or an equivalent appliance for condiments and other food items to avoid cross-contamination.

### *Recommendation 2.2 - Nutrition*

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We recommend access to higher quality fresh foods, such as fruits and vegetables, available in residential dining halls. Lack of ripeness, poor quality, and visually unappetizing options push students to choose more highly processed, visually appealing foods, rather than fresher food options.

We recommend more food options with lower sodium levels available in dining halls. Additionally, we would like increased signage for foods high in sodium. Many food options contain a very high amount of sodium. It is essentially impossible to eat the main dishes and remain below the maximum suggested daily intake of 2,300 milligrams of sodium.<sup>7</sup> For instance, a single crispy chicken sandwich with no condiments/toppings already contains 970 mg sodium.<sup>8</sup> Offering more low-sodium food options and notifying students about high-sodium foods can help students make healthier choices, ultimately leading to lifelong advantages.

We recommend increased unfried, unprocessed meat options. We caution against using meat options that are fried or mixed with unhealthy gravies that are high-calorie, high fat, or high-sodium.

We also strongly recommend that students have access to at least one on-campus nutritionist. This service is core to meeting health and wellness objectives, as well as meeting the needs of students with dietary restrictions in order for them to successfully navigate their campus food options.

We would like our food service provider to conduct a healthy eating seminar/short course for all incoming first-years or include information during Welcome Week events. This program could also be similar to the current online modules on drug/alcohol abuse and sexual harassment. Many students are uneducated as to how to eat a balanced diet and their daily nutritional needs and limits. Conducting a mandatory session that shows students how to choose balanced meals and use on-campus dining technology could increase awareness of healthy food options on campus.

### *Recommendation 2.3 - Student Experience*

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We would like continued use of a mobile app that allows student to access menus for each residence hall, as well as nutrition information for items being served.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm181577.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Yentzer, Brad. *Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program* report.

We would like an increase in hours of operation for dining halls. This would include late-night offerings in dining halls other than Centennial, and earlier hours for hot breakfast on weekends in dining halls beginning at 8:00 a.m. At least one more dining hall should be open for late night, preferably one that is far away from Centennial. Sanford, Bailey, or Middlebrook are possible options. Some students cannot visit them during their current hours of operation due to restrictive class schedules. Current hours are limiting to students who must leave early in the mornings on weekends for academic responsibilities (scheduled exams) or other reasons. Late night dining options would be great for students studying or who are away or busy during regular dinner hours. Extending dining hall hours would help students to fully utilize their meal plans and give them access to food when they need it, and not force them to buy food elsewhere or have to make less healthy food choices. We recommend late-night meals have more variety or selection of rotating foods. Some students use late-night hours to eat dinner if they are in class or at activities during normal dinner hours. Regardless of what campus a student resides on/near, students should have equal access to late night dining options.

Keeping student schedules in mind, we strongly recommend that a campus density study be conducted to analyze student class times and where the highest concentrations of students are on campus during the morning, afternoon, and evening. Once the density study is complete, the results of the study should influence hours of operation and offerings between the East Bank, West Bank, and St. Paul Campuses in retail and residential dining.

We would like dining hall staff to ensure that all foods are properly labeled. Items that are mislabeled can cause serious health concerns for students with dietary restrictions. This would help students easily identify foods that they can eat and could decrease adverse reactions associated with various allergens.

#### *Recommendation 2.4 - Sustainability*

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Given that we are focusing this report on the future of University Dining, it is natural that we include strong recommendations around the sustainability of our campus food system. We consider sustainability to be development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs<sup>9</sup>, while balancing the principles of social equity, environmental integrity, and economic prosperity. We kept the intersections of these considerations in mind as we focused this section of our recommendations on sustainable food purchasing and waste diversion in our University's dining services.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm>

## *Sustainable Food Purchasing*

### *Introduction*

The recommendations in this section outline a well-defined, structured set of food purchasing standards. The guidelines below will create a system of transparency and accountability in our University's food sourcing. Our recommendations on food purchasing derive inspiration from the Real Food Challenge's list of certifications and standards, and other definitions of sustainable campus dining.

The four core principles of the Real Food Challenge (RFC)<sup>10</sup> highlight various important issues related to sustainability within the food system. The RFC proposes four ways to define "real food." For food to meet their criteria, it has to meet at least one of the four principles:

1. Humane to Animals
2. Fair to Workers
3. Ecologically Sound
4. Local and Community Based

Each of these principles comes with their own set of guidelines<sup>11</sup> that a University food purchaser uses to track the percentage of their food budget that is "real food." Colleges and universities around the country who have signed the RFC commitment have adopted these food purchasing guidelines. This agreement states that the college or university will meet a goal of investing 20% of their food budget towards real food sources by the year 2020. More than 35 colleges and universities have already committed to this goal, including Northwestern University, the University of Massachusetts - Amherst, the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Vermont.<sup>12</sup> It is worth noting that in 2018 the Princeton Review ranked the University of Massachusetts - Amherst as having the best campus food in the United States.<sup>13</sup> Some colleges and universities have committed to sourcing a higher amount of food products adhering to those standards, upwards of 30-40% of their food budget.

Specific, often third-party, certifications define the humane, fair, and ecologically sound principles. The RFC does not use third-party certifications for its local and community based principle, but instead sets requirements based on ownership type, revenue size, and distance between the food source and the institution.

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<sup>10</sup> Real Food Challenge. "About Real Food Challenge." *Real Food Challenge*, [www.realfoodchallenge.org/about-real-food-challenge](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org/about-real-food-challenge).

<sup>11</sup> The Real Food Standards Council. "The Real Food Guide 2.0." *Real Food Challenge*.

<sup>12</sup> Real Food Challenge. "Participating Schools." *Real Food Challenge*, [www.realfoodchallenge.org/participating-schools#overlay-context=](http://www.realfoodchallenge.org/participating-schools#overlay-context=).

<sup>13</sup> The Princeton Review. "Best Campus Food." *The Princeton Review*, TPR Education IP Holdings, LLC, 2018, [www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings?rankings=best-campus-food](http://www.princetonreview.com/college-rankings?rankings=best-campus-food).



Although rigorous in their pursuit of campus food system sustainability, imperfections do exist in the RFC's standards. We have revised certain sections of the standards to make them more dynamic and fit the University of Minnesota's unique context. Given these revisions, we cannot officially call ourselves a "Real Food Signatory." We do believe, however, in the rigor of most RFC guidelines, and believe that the adoption of the majority of its standards and certifications will lead to a more sustainable campus food system.

When tracking food purchasing, the Fair, Ecologically Sound, and Humane principles will be collectively referred to as "Sustainable Food," while the "Local & Community Based" category will be counted separately, each with different food budget goals.

To continue and improve upon our University's role in sustainable campus food systems, we recommend that the University commit to 25% of its food budget adhering to the Sustainable Food standards and 15% adhering to the Local and Community Based standards by 2030. We understand large shifts in food purchasing take time, and that is why we set a target year of 2030 so that the University can successfully transition towards a more transparent, sustainable food system. The Sustainable Food and Local and Community Based commitments will promote the sustainability principles of social equity and environmental integrity, as well as uplift local economies.

### *Implementation*

To create a system focused on sustainable food purchasing that strives towards accountability and improvement, we make the following implementation recommendations:

- A yearly calculation of the percentage of food budget that is going towards food sources certified by the standards listed below.
- Employ a team of student workers to oversee the implementation of sustainable food policies in the dining budget, as well as a University Dining Services employee that works under the Dining Services' Sustainability Coordinator to determine sustainable food purchasing measures.
- Create a sustainable food purchasing committee composed of this student worker team, as well as representatives from the Office of Sustainability, the Minnesota Student Association, other student groups such as U Students Like Good Food, relevant academic departments and the dining services provider that meets regularly to ensure the continuity and achievement of food purchasing goals.
- Set marginal percentage increase goals every year so we can achieve 25% Sustainable Food and 15% Local and Community Based by 2030.
- If we surpass either and/or both measures before 2030, convene a meeting of the sustainable food purchasing committee to determine a new long-term goal to improve sustainable food purchasing.
- In the spirit of transparency, highlight on M-Dining's website the current percentages of the food budget that count towards the Sustainable Food and Local and Community Based guidelines according to the standards provided below.

### *The Sustainable Food Purchasing Standards*

In evaluating the certifications for each principle of real food challenge, the RFC guidelines distinguish between different levels of qualifications. For example, there are some certifications that meet higher environmental standards than other certifications. The highest level certifications are labeled *Green Light* foods while the lower level certifications are labeled *Yellow Light* foods. Regardless of this distinction, food purchases still count as the same percentage. The goal is to be constantly improving towards fulfilling *Green Light* certifications. We have kept the *Green Light* and *Yellow Light* distinctions in our recommendations as this terminology helps with the organization of the sustainable food purchasing standards.

Sustainable Food Standards (Fair, Ecologically Sound, Humane) - 25% of food budget by 2030

#### Fair

Green Light: product must be certified by one of the following approved certifications:

- International products: Ecocert Fair Trade Certified, Fairtrade America, Fair For Life Certified by Institute for Marketecology (IMO), Fair Trade Certified by Fair Trade USA, FairWild, or Hand in Hand
- Domestic products: Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) or Food Justice Certified by Agricultural Justice Project

\*\*Or product can be certified by a Worker Driven Social Responsibility Program (Fair Food Program by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers or Milk with Dignity by Migrant Justice) which makes it automatically qualify as Sustainable Food.

Yellow Light: product must meet one of the following criteria: Producer and at least half (50%) of the ingredients meet the *Green Light* criteria, or Fair Trade Certified Ingredient by Fair Trade USA (multi-ingredient products).

#### Ecologically Sound

Green Light: product must be certified by one of the following approved certifications (*All products*): ANSI/LEO-4000 the American National Standard for Sustainable Agriculture by Leonardo Academy, Biodynamic Certified by Demeter, FairWild, Food Alliance Certified, Rainforest Alliance Certified, Salmon Safe, USDA Organic Standard and approved certifiers, Bird Friendly by Smithsonian (coffee), or Produce grown in a farm or garden at the institution, in which the researcher can confirm the use of organic practices.

Yellow light: a product must meet one of the following criteria: Single Ingredients, Certified Sustainably Grown, Fair Trade USA Certified, LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming), Protected Harvest Certified, USDA Transitional Organic Standard, and at least half (50%) of the ingredients meet the Green Light criteria (Multi-Ingredient products). For Seafood (wild-caught only): Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Blue Eco Label paired with the MSC Chain of Custody Certification or Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Guide "Best Choices" (Regional Guide or Buyer's Guide).

#### Humane

Green Light: a product must be certified by one of the following approved certifications: American Humane Certified [free range] (egg-layers only), Animal Welfare Approved/Certified AWA by A Greener World, AWA Grassfed by A Greener World, Biodynamic Certified by Demeter, Certified Humane by Humane Farm Animal Care (all species except swine), Global Animal Partnership steps 4-5+, or Pennsylvania Certified Organic 100% Grassfed by USDA, Rainforest Alliance Certified

Yellow Light: a product must be certified by one of the following approved certifications: AGA Grassfed by American Grassfed Association (ruminants only), American Humane Certified [Cage Free and Enriched Colony] (egg-layers only), Certified Humane by Humane Farm Animal Care (swine only), Food Alliance Certified, or Global Animal Partnership Step 3

#### Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

We recognize that GMOs play an important role in the food system and are necessary to ensure adequate food production. We also recognize that there are agro-businesses that maintain a certain level of control over the food system due to certain regulations.

When purchasing food products that are or contain GMOs, we recommend considering the following characteristics of certain food GMO food sources: their possible ties to the consolidation of control in the food system and their possible effects on the welfare of local economies and food producers.

#### Local and Community Based - 15% of food budget by 2030

\* The food product must meet the requirements below *and* one of the Sustainable Food certifications to be counted as Local and Community Based.

##### Green light:

- Single-ingredient Products:
  - Ownership: Producer must be a privately owned enterprise (wild-caught seafood must be from owner-operated boats).
  - Size:
    - Produce: Individual farms must gross \$5 million/year or less
    - Meat, Poultry, Eggs, Dairy, Seafood, Grocery: Company must gross \$50 million/year or less.
  - Distance: All production, processing, and distribution facilities must be within a 250 mile radius of the institution. (The radius for Meat is extended to 500 miles).
  - Single-ingredient Products (Aggregated): 100% of the products must meet the criteria for Ownership, Size and Distance.

##### Yellow light:

- Multi-ingredient Products:
  - Ownership: Company must be a privately or cooperatively owned enterprise.
  - Size: Company must gross \$50 million/year or less.
  - Distance: All processing and distribution facilities must be within a 250 mile radius of the institution.

-AND-

- At least half (50%) of the ingredients must come from farms meeting ALL the following criteria:
  - Ownership: Company must be a privately or cooperatively owned enterprise
  - Size:
    - Produce: Individual farms must gross \$5 million/year or less
    - All other ingredients: Company must gross \$50 million/year or less.
  - Distance: All production facilities must be within a 250 mile radius of the institution. Single-ingredient Products (Aggregated): At least three-quarters (75%) of the product (by volume) must meet Green Light criteria for Ownership, Size and Distance.

We also recommend prioritizing the Local and Community Based food purchasing budget to go towards procurement from University of Minnesota alumni operated food sources. Not only will this recommendation strengthen the University of Minnesota community and its connections to agricultural development in the state, it will act as an attractive talking point for prospective students.

### *Disqualifications*

If the food maintains any of the below qualities, it is disqualified from counting towards the percentage of both Sustainable Food, as well as Local and Community Based food:

- Egregious Human Rights Violations: Producers have been found guilty of criminal charges of forced labor within the past 10 years.
- Labor violations: Producer is known to have been found guilty of or has been cited for case relating to a serious, repeat or willful Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), or Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) violation within the last 3 years. They will be disqualified unless the producer addressed these violations by: 1) making the workers whole 2) paying any fines 3) developing written policy preventing future violations. In the case of wage theft and/or worker fatality, a producer is disqualified for 3 years regardless of any of the steps they have taken to address the violation.
- CAFO Violation Statement: If the owners or operators of a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) have been criminally convicted under the Clean Water Act (CWA) due to knowingly or negligently discharging pollutants from a point source (such as lagoons, tanks, pipes, or other conveyances) into waters of the United States without a permit within the last 3 years, then this is considered an automatic disqualification.<sup>14</sup>
- Ultra-processed foods made with: Aspartame; Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA); Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT); Caramel coloring; Partially hydrogenated oil (trans-fats); Potassium bromate; Propyl gallate; Saccharin; Sodium nitrate added; Sodium nitrite added; Dyes: Red #40, Yellow #5, Yellow #6

### *Waste Minimization*

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/cr-cafo-06-13.pdf>

### *Be Proactive - Minimize Waste from the Source*

Reductions in food waste produce environmental and social positives, such as cutbacks in an institution's carbon footprint. Economic benefits also result from this thoughtful action. If University Dining Services can plan for reducing food waste from the source when procuring food products, they will need to purchase less food, and therefore spend less money. This planning could lower the prices of meals for students, and possibly increase business at dining halls on campus. The University also spends less on organic waste sent to commercial composters as opposed to landfills, \$25 versus \$72 a ton.<sup>15</sup> Preventing waste from occurring in the first place is critical to achieving improvements in food waste minimization. Systematic change is the best way to reduce waste at the source. Therefore, we make the following recommendations:

- Keep track of waste - amounts wasted and reasons for wasting.
- Purchase food based on what is learned from waste tracking.
- Make efforts to reduce plate waste before the food gets to students. Steer away from "buffet style," when possible, and focus on controlled and reasonable portioning.
- Plan cooking around the busy hours of operation.

### *Be Reactive - Act Responsibly When Waste Occurs*

There are seven residential dining halls and many more on-campus restaurants, but Food Recovery Network has only done regular recoveries at three locations: Carlson Dining Hall, Coffman Dining Hall, and the Essentials Dining Hall. Composted, edible food is still considered wasted food. Food waste is impossible to avoid and it is likely that other campus locations have wasted food. Therefore, we make the following recommendations:

- Institutionalize food recoveries at all dining halls, retail locations, and food courts.
- Create Dining Services positions that work under the Dining Services' Sustainability Coordinator to coordinate waste minimization and food recovery efforts. For example, actively coordinating with the University's Food Recovery Network chapter to do regular food recoveries.
- Compost effectively. University of Minnesota Dining Services currently collects both pre- and post-consumer waste and compostable packaging across campus from over 78% of their dining locations for organics composting.<sup>16</sup> Ideally, Dining Services should set ambitious goals towards collecting appropriate waste and packaging from 100% of their dining locations for organics composting, so that the University can continue moving towards zero-waste. Again, the University saves money when sending organic waste to commercial composters as opposed to landfills.
- Keep and reuse food for future meals if it is still viable, and risk of spoilage and/or bacterial growth is nonexistent, or if there is a kill step involved before serving.

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<sup>15</sup> University of Minnesota Facilities Management. "Organics Recycling." *University of Minnesota Facilities Management*, Regents of the University of Minnesota 7 Sept. 2017, [facm.umn.edu/recycling-guide/organics](http://facm.umn.edu/recycling-guide/organics).

<sup>16</sup> University of Minnesota Dining Services. "Waste Minimization." *University of Minnesota Dining Services*, Regents of the University of Minnesota, 26 July 2017, [www.dining.umn.edu/Sustainability/WasteMinimization.html](http://www.dining.umn.edu/Sustainability/WasteMinimization.html).

- When possible, donate scraps to farms that can utilize the food that would normally be thrown out. This can be done by finding pig or cattle farmers that are looking for feed and donate to those groups instead of throwing away food or composting it. Pigs will eat almost anything, and farmers are often happy to take food. This could possibly add a source of revenue with farms who might buy the scraps, at the very least saving the University some money from hauling away less trash and compost.
- Collaborative awareness efforts with the dining provider can help reduce consumer waste by working with students to raise awareness of post-consumer waste and make change on a behavioral level. Continue and expand Weigh the Waste events. The measurement and demonstration of how much post-consumer waste students create presents the food waste issue in an easily digestible medium. Implement posters by food, showing the amount of food not wasted due to back of house recovery and measurement systems, such as Lean Path. Statistics on the amount of food recovered and composted are important for the effectiveness of such posters. Similar to the recommendation found in the Nutrition section, have the Office of Sustainability and/or University Dining Services work with Orientation & First-Year Programs (OFYP) and Student Unions & Activities (SUA) to incorporate food waste awareness into Welcome Week and/or Orientation, to teach students about the importance of reducing waste and the best practices for doing so.

Reducing food waste via these recommendations helps keep food out of landfills, leading to a reduction of greenhouse gases. According to the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC), 23% of methane emissions come from food waste, and food is the single largest component of municipal waste.<sup>17</sup> Methane released from decomposing food waste in landfills is much more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas.<sup>18</sup> Reductions in food waste, and its byproduct methane, will minimize the environmental impact of our campus food system and lead to a more sustainable image for University dining.

Reducing just 15% of food waste in America could feed 25 millions Americans.<sup>17</sup> If effectively planned and implemented, reusing food within safety standards saves money and reduces the amount of food needed to be purchased. Donating food either to farms, or preferably to food shelves, homeless shelters, or any nonprofit organization that provides for those in need, finds a second, meaningful use for wasted food. The University of Minnesota must continue and improve upon its leadership in waste minimization.

### **3. On-Campus Grocery Store**

We recommend the creation of an on-campus grocery store. The construction of a grocery store will alleviate the lack of affordable and fresh grocery store options on and near campus and open up a new channel of potentially lucrative revenue. We recognize the constraints of available parking

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<sup>17</sup> Gunders, Dana. "Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40 Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill." *Natural Resources Defense Council*, [www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf](http://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/wasted-food-IP.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Gies, Erica. "Landfills have a huge greenhouse gas problem. Here's what we can do about it." *Ensisia*, 25 Oct. 2016, [ensia.com/features/methane-landfills/](http://ensia.com/features/methane-landfills/).



spaces and accessible real estate on-campus. For students who wish to prepare food in their residence halls, and for those who do not have a meal plan and their main source of food comes from geographically distant supermarkets, easy access to an affordable grocery store offering a diverse range of food products would be a huge benefit to students and faculty.

#### **4. Corporate Social Responsibility**

The University has approximately 38,000 suppliers it contracts with across the entire system. These contracts are for a wide array of goods and services, from scientific equipment to laundry and food services. Such being the case, suppliers have a substantive impact on the experiences of every single individual at the University of Minnesota, whether they're students, staff, faculty, or administration. The evaluation of these contracts has no set criteria, with the criteria for almost all contracts decided on an ad-hoc, case-by-case basis by the unit or department who will receive the goods or services.

At face value, this seems reasonable: the people using the good or the service best understand the needs and specifications that must be met. But, the lack of standardized criteria has led to instances when the University has partnered with companies that have substandard corporate ethics or, at worst, are directly engaged in the violation of human rights. Students have, historically, expressed concerns about companies that the University has contracted. Some particularly noteworthy cases include the University's dealings with companies involved in upholding South African apartheid in the 1970s and 1980s<sup>19</sup> and the University's current contracts with companies that flout human rights standards. Students' tuition and Minnesotan taxpayer money, then, has gone to companies that have engaged in unethical behavior.

All of these companies, despite their business ethics violations, were allowed to contract with the University, because of the lack of standard consideration of corporate ethical principles when evaluating contracts. One of the few standards of criteria that exists across the University system is thoroughly vetting financial risk and compliance (examining, for example, whether or not the company has a history of fraud). In the same way, the Student Representatives to the Board of Regents are developing a system-wide vendor code of conduct that would require the evaluation of corporate ethics and social responsibility across all contracts at the University, based on the assessment of compliance, respect for, and promotion of 8-10 broad corporate social responsibility standards that are applicable to a wide range of companies. These principles, much like the standardized criteria for financial risk, would form a portion of the overall criteria (roughly 10-15%) for evaluating the University's contracts. The presentation of a vendor code of conduct to the Board of Regents will additionally be accompanied by a set of policy recommendations, aimed at facilitating the implementation of a vendor code of conduct, such as:

- Implementing training for departments and users to develop the capacity to evaluate the corporate social responsibility of their suppliers
- Referring to a collection of scorecards, databases, and reports that can help measure and compare the corporate social responsibility of potential suppliers (such as the Fair Labor Association and the Sustainability Disclosure Database)

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<sup>19</sup> University of Minnesota Board of Regents. *University of Minnesota Board of Regents Meeting and Regents Committee Meeting Minutes*. 11-12 January 1979. <http://hdl.handle.net/11299/588>.

- Screening the University's pre-established preferred vendors (such as those found in U Market)

If the University prides itself as a public, land-grant institution, then it is inherently a steward of the public and the community and must be conscious of the impacts of its dealings with the businesses it partners with. To be clear, there are no truly universal ethical or moral understandings of what is acceptable in business practice, or even life and society - but it is imperative for the University of Minnesota to approach some agreed-upon internal understanding of what values it prioritizes in its interactions with businesses. The University must more meaningfully consider the impact its actions have on the community, from the local to the international level, and one of the ways it can do so is by requiring the consideration of corporate social responsibility when evaluating its business contracts.

We recommend that M-Dining, when selecting suppliers for the next academic school year, consider and prioritize corporate social responsibility when evaluating contracts. Particularly, we ask that the University pay close attention to the student advocacy that occurred in the Student Senate, pointing out ethical concerns with Aramark. The resolution can be viewed at [z.umn.edu/UDSResolution](https://z.umn.edu/UDSResolution). The response Aramark provided to the ethical concern can be viewed [here](#). We did not find this response to be adequate.

## **5. Self-operated Dining**

A self-operating campus food system does not contract any of its operations out to a third-party food service provider. By not outsourcing its food purchasing, operational equipment, and other aspects of dining services, an institution maintains full ownership and autonomy over its day-to-day operations. With independence from a contracted food provider, M-Dining can arguably provide a better experience for its most important stakeholder: the student.

When entering into its current contract with Aramark, the University made the conscious decision to maintain sole ownership of food service related equipment and facilities on campus. The University also employs most of the people that work in M-Dining. The University purposely maintained this autonomy should the institution ever decide to revert back to self-operated dining. Along with the ability to be the only entity responsible for activities within M-Dining, this would come with increased financial accountability as well as the ability for a more transparent operating climate.

According to a Public Data Request we filed with the University of Minnesota Data Center in September 2017, the University of Minnesota managed its own food service prior to 1998 when the first Aramark contract was signed. The University of Minnesota and Northwestern University are the only Big 10 universities that currently have contract-managed dining services, making the University of Minnesota the only public Big 10 institution to not be self-operated. As we shape the future of our University's dining, we must create a prospective outlook that is competitive with our peers in higher education.

We believe that the implementation of our other recommendations in this report will be more feasible and will be held with greater accountability under a self-operated campus dining system.

## **6. Conclusion**

The above recommendations represent a cross-section of areas students believe are important in campus dining. This report is by no means completely comprehensive. From the extensive outreach done to students and other stakeholders, the topic areas we focused on are where we gathered the most interest and ideas.

Students choose to attend the University of Minnesota for many reasons. A University's excellence is judged by the sum of its parts, and dining is central to the equation.

We expect that students will continue to have a voice and input in the decision making process. We strongly desire to be positive partners in the process moving forward.

## **7. Acknowledgements**

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