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DEAN VANESSA BEASLEY
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MANAGING FOOD WASTE AND MISUSAGE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Students used to be very dedicated to advocating for their colleges to reduce their carbon footprint, but now the importance of sustainability has dropped, casting it into the shadows. Individuals talk about ‘the need to go green’, but the future of the concept is daunting. Who should be in charge? How should individuals be involved? To what extent should environmental sustainability be addressed? These are some of the questions that drive it from remaining a main value on campus.

When administration attempts to take on sustainability, the idea that someone else is responsible creates the illusion that it is all under control. The truth is far from that. Sustainability needs to not only be advocated but implemented. College campuses need to connect programs to collaborate projects and share information to create active green programs (Carlson). The long term goal would reduce cost and risks in energy prices, keep programs relevant for the future, and attract an influx of students and business that desire participating in making the world greener. ‘Green’ became a word that was ubiquitous of every product used in mainstream advocacy, but it needs to be understood and enhanced.

There are many programs on Vanderbilt’s campus that focus on food, globally and locally. Grassroots: finds sustainable solutions to Nashville’s food deficiency and establish solidarity between Vanderbilt and impoverished neighbors. Nutrition of Kids: explains the importance of nutrition and choosing healthy options to improve self-diets. Safe and Secure: Student Advocates for Food Equality and Security: alleviates issues of food insecurity and hunger in Nashville.

SPEAR (Students Promoting Environmental Awareness and Responsibility): increases environmental awareness and promote more sustainable habits and infrastructure within Vanderbilt and Nashville. Vanderbilt Food Justice: improves access to healthy food in Nashville neighborhoods and gardens, and to fight for the rights of workers in the food industry. Eat the World, Save the Earth: provides information how their kitchen principles affect the environment, community, and the well-being of their guests. However, none of them focus on The Commons, the First Year students, the ones who are continuing the pattern of the upperclassmen (Anchor Link).

The purpose of The Greening the Commons Seminar is to initiate a collaborative effort to document current initiatives, analyze historical efforts, and propose future outreach efforts of sustainability on Vanderbilt University’s Commons. A major issue that faces students on Commons is the amount of food and materials wasted every meal period. 86% of Vanderbilt’s First Year students that were surveyed during a seminar activity agreed that the university should act to minimize or repurpose its food waste. The issue that arises is the way that should be achieved.

The focus of this project is the food itself. This catastrophe is the result of students choosing more food than they are able to consume in a serving. Some justify it due to the fact that it would be worse to waste the money spent on the meal plan. Yet, the food that is not eaten is trashed and stored food also goes to waste, instead of being eaten ‘later’. Purchasing Reusable To-Go Cafeteria Containers would decrease the amount of containers used haphazardly, and increase the amount of food students save from waste.

The EcoClamshell is a reusable to-go cafeteria container made out of a dishwasher-safe plastic material that allows students to take leftovers to their dorms. The prototype was created by G.E.T. Enterprises, a producer of fine quality melamine and plastic food service products in 2008. The prototype EcoClamshell was heat resistant, stackable, and durable. It had a hinged-lid and was made

of BPA-free plastic. All of these qualities make it great for truly taking food to go and keeping it, instead of wasting the paper containers that end up in the trash can (EREF).

Eckerd College in Florida and Duke University in North Carolina have already switched to using these EcoClamshells. Students sign up for a container in the cafeteria during any meal and are charged five dollars, covering the student's four years at Eckerd. Upon returning to the cafeteria, the student checks the container back in and places it on the dishwasher conveyor, where it is sanitized and put out for reuse.

Some other ways to reduce the amount of material waste in campus dining include providing biodegradable and recyclable materials whenever possible. This could include the use of corn-based biodegradable cups, utensils, plates, and to-go containers, as well as minimal packaging. California Tech, for example, has replaced all of their to-go containers, utensils, and bags with sustainable alternatives (biodegradable materials made of corn). The school could ban disposable water bottles, Styrofoam, and plastic bags from campus.

Smith College in Massachusetts has removed bottled water from certain dining hall locations and distributes polycarbonate bottles to students for water refills to reduce bottled water usage. Brandeis University, also in Massachusetts recently announced that they will stop selling bottled water on campus (MA Office of EA).

Some questions that arose concerning this new solution are the value lost providing to-go plates in Commons for the Freshman Experience. The purpose of dining in is to converse with others and establish a community; to make friends with individuals that we do not necessarily have class with. And by putting containers for the first year students, many would rather take the food and be on their way. The amount of energy needed to clean the containers is also a question, but with the constant conveyor belts that take away regular dining trays the entire meal period, would it not be efficient to just add more dishes, maximizing their usage. The importance of this issue is the driving forces for initiatives to critique, analyze, and improve current methods, in order to make them better for the future.

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ANTHONY SWENSON

“SAVING PRECIOUS WATER”

Americans often tends to take their seemingly infinite supply of water for granted. As a result, showers in America average around eight minutes in length. The criticality of safe, sufficient water has been shown in recent events, bringing conservation to the forefront of national attention. Due to a historic drought in the state producing more agriculture than any other state, Jerry Brown, the governor of California, asked residents to cut back on water usage by 25% to conserve the water supply. In Flint, Michigan, water with unsafe levels of lead demonstrated the importance of ensuring that all people have access to clean water, a basic human right. Outside the US, however, it is estimated that upwards of one billion people do not have access to clean water. These events in particular spurred my thinking that we as Vanderbilt students should decrease our water usage. The most apparent way in which students can decrease water waste is to reduce amount of time spent in the shower, therefore reducing the number of gallons of water wasted each shower.

I selected to choose water waste as my problem because it appeared to be one of the easiest problems that students can help minimize. While fossil fuels, pollution, and other environmental problems are all harmful to the environment, decreasing water waste seemed to have the highest potential for students to help influence. It is important to act now so that no other states have to face water crises that places like California have faced. The Washington Post reported that America uses roughly 1.2 trillion gallons of water every year just through showering, which translates to roughly 17 percent of total water use in American homes. This number seems astronomically large, and I believe that America has the potential to decrease this figure. One website, WWF Panda, discusses how humans' use of water has impacted the world, stating, “In fact we're so bad at managing our freshwater resources that in the process we have created deserts, poisoned millions of hectares of land with salt and killed entire lakes – in some cases we are even making them disappear” (WWF Panda). The Aral Sea, for instance, does not exist any longer because all of its water was used. Water waste needs to be ended before the earth is harmed to a further extent.

To begin my project, I began collecting data from other Vanderbilt students to find out how often students showered and the length of time students typically spend in the shower. I surveyed twenty-seven males and twenty-seven females to see if there was a discrepancy between the two genders when it came to showering habits. Males, somewhat surprisingly, spent roughly half the time in the shower as females, but tended to shower slightly more often. Males averaged slightly less than ten minutes spent in the shower, which translated to roughly twenty gallons of water used, assuming that the shower dispenses 2.1 gallons of water every minute. Females, on the other hand, averaged just under twenty minutes in the shower, using almost forty-two gallons of water every shower. These figures were surprising to me and showed me that we as Vanderbilt students need to decrease the water wasted in our showers since the national average for shower time is about eight minutes.

As a solution, I intend to place a timer in each shower to inform students how long they are spending and how much water they are using. I believe that only when a person can see how many gallons of water he or she is using in the shower will he or she be compelled to use less water. But in addition to a timer being placed in the shower, I also propose to implement more

efficient shower heads. Green shower heads are said to release around 1.5 gallons per minute, as opposed to the typical 2.1 gallons per minute. This type of shower head would decrease water waste for Vanderbilt, while using less energy and being more cost efficient. The campus could also further promote the idea of using less water. For instance, posters could be hung on walls that show what eighteen gallons of water, the average number of gallons used by Americans in the shower, could be used for instead. These implementations could help reduce water used on campus, while being more economic in terms of costs.

Several other solutions could include cutting off the water in a shower after a set time. For example, after six minutes of the shower running, the shower would stop running to reduce the number of gallons of water. Therefore, only about thirteen gallons of water would be used by this shower. Additionally, Vanderbilt could start a system using shower tokens to cut back on the number of

showers taken per week. These solutions would most likely be unpopular among the student body and among the parents who are paying for Vanderbilt. While this solution could help the environment, it would not be practical in the near future because it would most likely upset the student population if it the students were not in control of the amount of time they could spend in the shower.

There are several ongoing campaigns in America to address this problem, including Colgate's attempt to save water by asking people to turn off their faucets while brushing their teeth. Jim Harbaugh, the former San Francisco 49ers head coach and the current football coach at the University of Michigan, has teamed up with Colgate to help the campaign gain support. Using the slogan #EveryDropCounts, Colgate released this advertisement during the Super Bowl this past February, with hopes of influencing the millions of viewers. More steps in this direction will aid in America hopefully addressing the overwhelming figure of 1.2 billion gallons of water used per year.

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RACHEL FLORES

FOOD WASTE BY STUDENTS IN COMMONS DINING CENTER

America's relationship with food is ambiguous, with both obesity and eating disorders plaguing many Americans. However, one issue that most do not take into account is the amount of food Americans, and the rest of the world, waste on a daily basis. Worldwide, between 30% and 40% of food is wasted in different stages of the production and consumption processes (Moomaw, Griffin, Kurczak, & Lomax, 2012), and this is true across all socioeconomic backgrounds throughout the world.

The Problem

When thinking about environmental issues, most do not automatically think of food waste as an urgent and significant problem. This is because they do not realize the true impact that the act of wasting food has on the environment. For example, when a portion of food is not eaten, the energy and water that were put into producing and shipping that food were used for nothing, as the food ends up in a landfill rather than providing fuel for a human (Moomaw, Griffin, Kurczak, & Lomax, 2012). Furthermore, greenhouse gases are released unnecessarily during production and shipping, and even more are emitted by wasted food in landfills. Large swaths of the rainforest are also cut down unnecessarily when food is wasted, as land is cleared for agriculture. These are all issues that are not immediately visible, especially to the consumer, and for this reason, many people, including Vanderbilt students, do not think twice when they throw away their uneaten food.

University dining centers contribute significantly to the vast amounts of food waste in the United States. In 1998, about 540,000 million tons of food were wasted by college campuses each year, according to Creighton in *Greening the Ivory Tower* (as cited in Whitehair, Shanklin, & Brannon, 2013). As an increased amount of students are attending college and food waste is increasingly becoming the norm, this number has likely risen drastically. Despite their large contributions to the food waste issue, many dining facilities feel hesitant to make changes to improve their sustainability.

On March 23, 2016, I observed the tray drop-off in the Commons Dining Center from 12:00pm to 1:00pm. I took notes of the amount of food that was wasted by every individual that finished their food, counting to the nearest half of a side. By the end of the hour, 268 people had dropped off their trays, and on average they wasted 0.6 sides per person. This does not seem like a significant number, but this sums to 162.5 wasted sides in one hour, or 32.5 five-side meals. Nearly one third of these subjects wasted at least one side, and over half wasted at least half a side. It is clear that at Vanderbilt, wasting food has become the norm.

After eating meals with friends, I often notice that my friends leave large amounts of food uneaten on their plates, sometimes even entire sides. It does not seem like anyone is even conscious of the amount of food that they waste. Because of these observations, I have been interested in finding out how much uneaten food we waste in Commons. This problem is of special interest to me because growing up, it was always expected that we eat all of the food on our plates. Once I moved to college, I was able to see firsthand that other people have different mindsets when dealing with food, and that some are healthier and more sustainable than others. I chose the issue of food waste because I believe that it should not be a problem in the first place. Theoretically it is an easy problem to fix, as the simple solution is for one to take only the amount of food that they can eat. Unlike some other sustainability efforts, this should be of no inconvenience to the consumer, because they are not making any true sacrifices. However, food waste on the consumer level remains a problem because people are not willing to reflect on their actions and realize that they are harming the environment.

Possible Solutions

In the effort to reduce food waste, Vanderbilt is falling behind other institutions. Other schools, such as Western Michigan University, have already implemented ideas to increase sustainability (Merrow, Penzien, & Dubats, 2012). The structure of dining at Vanderbilt is unsustainable, and we will not be able to move forward until we start to make changes as other universities have done. In order to make these changes, we need to start on a small scale and implement solutions that will change the process in Vanderbilt dining.

Short-term

A major problem that contributes to the food waste issue on campus is the lack of awareness. Most students who waste food simply place their tray and uneaten food on the tray drop-off and never see it again. As a result, they do not think about the food that they are wasting. A solution to this may be discouraging them from taking that extra food in the first place. Commons dining can do this by implementing signs that encourage people to avoid food waste by taking less food. These signs would need interesting and catchy slogans, making them more memorable. According to a study done at a Midwestern university, a 15% decrease in mean food waste resulted from placing signs like these in a dining center (Whitehair, Shanklin, & Brannon, 2013). Based on their study, the more concise, catchy phrases were more effective than signs that detailed the importance of reducing food waste.

Long-term

Although increasing awareness is crucial to reducing food waste, a more drastic change is necessary in Commons dining before we can see more meaningful results. The current meal plan allows a student to take one entrée and three sides, or five sides, during a meal time. Although it is not required to take all of the sides, many students feel pressured to do so, even if they probably will not eat all of the food. They fear that they are wasting their own money if they do not take advantage of the full meal plan.

Another issue is the physical structure of Commons dining center, which is supposed to favor the meal plan: students receive their food on individual plates from dining workers, rather than taking the food on their own in a buffet style setting. Students are unable to control their portion sizes when the food is served for them, and this results in increased amounts of waste.

The efforts to reduce food waste would be more effective if Vanderbilt changed the structure of its meal plan and dining center. The university could follow the example of other schools by implementing a buffet structure that allows students to get as much or little food as they want, without limiting them to a certain amount of sides.

Changing the structure of Commons dining and meal plan would facilitate other actions that could increase sustainability. One solution that has been successful at other universities is eliminating the use of trays. At Western Michigan University, the elimination of trays resulted in a 30% decrease in the amount of food wasted (Merrow, Penzien, & Dubats, 2012). Trays are large and allow students to grab more food than they need. Without them, students have to take only what they can carry in their hands. The structure of the dining hall would have to be different for this to be plausible, as students are served their food rather than serving themselves in the current setup. A new plate is required for each location from which a student gets her food, and this is not feasible without trays because a student cannot carry more than two plates. Therefore, students should be able to serve themselves so that they can use the same plate at every location. This would also allow students more freedom with portion sizes, reducing waste caused by extensive portion sizes. Since students would be able to serve themselves, the one entrée and three sides policy would need to be eliminated, as there would be no way of knowing the size of an entrée or side.

Conclusion

These solutions have had great amounts of success at other universities. However, although it is important to look at other universities, it is also crucial to realize that food waste is not just a problem in institutions. It is a worldwide issue, and universities like Vanderbilt are only contributing to it. The population of the world is going to continue increasing, and if humans do not make changes in the way they produce and consume food, the world will not be able to sustain everyone.

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JUSTIN LEE

LOCAL FOOD INITIATIVE

The specific sustainability issue that I have selected is the knowledge of food sustainability in the dining halls on Vanderbilt's campus, especially on Commons. Newfound knowledge on food sustainability should encourage students to push for the purchase of more local foods by Vanderbilt. A problem with food in Vanderbilt is that we as the student body do not know where our food comes from even though most of our food is industrially produced which is not environmentally sustainable or healthy. As a result, the students in Vanderbilt generally have no connection or knowledge towards how and where the food was produced. In order to push for sustainable food choices, more knowledge and experience about local foods should be acquired through the creation of farmer's markets and community gardens. Students should strive to learn more about food on Vanderbilt and food sustainability, but Vanderbilt should take a more proactive stance to environmental sustainability also provide such information to students. I believe that the knowledge of such subjects should be promoted for primarily by centers of higher learning such as universities like Vanderbilt and its students.

Universities should concern themselves with environmental issues in order to educate the general public because there is a general sense of apathy among the people in our world. In most cases, this apathy is defined by the lack of knowledge that people have about environmental issues. Environmental sustainability is especially a problem among universities around the world because the students at these universities build up the next generation. In order for our world to become more sustainable, the next generation must be knowledgeable and passionate about such environmental issues. Food sustainability is also a problem to universities because of the malign effects that industrially produced food has on the environment when locally produced food provides many benefits. If universities enacted the purchase of more local produce, then the local economy is strengthened, resources such as fossil fuels are conserved, carbon dioxide emissions are lowered, and local farmers often use more organic procedures. Local produce is also fresher because of the relative distance that it travels which also benefits peoples' health. Thomashow also discusses the importance of eating well at universities in his essay, "The Nine Elements of a Sustainable Campus". He points to evidence that suggests poor food choices contributes to obesity and diabetes (49). Thomashow hypothesizes that eating well may improve student's and employee's health and performance which may in turn lead to benefits such as reduced costs of health care. Further studies must be performed to determine the effects of diet on factors such as psychological health. Learning to eat well and being conscious of what food one consumes is an important life skill that can be utilized until adulthood. It is optimal to obtain such knowledge during college especially because college serves as the starting point to adulthood for people. If students are exposed to the idea of sustainable food at this age, it would encourage students to push for more sustainable choices which is healthier to our environment.

Food sustainability is a good problem to start with because food is such an integral part to everyone's lives and is important to everyone. This problem was selected over others because of the underlying concern that students do not know the origin of their food. Local foods have many more benefits than industrially produced food as mentioned before in this report, and the university is simply not buying enough locally. Only 15% of Vanderbilt's food is organic or locally sourced while by comparison, 47% of Stanford's food is organic or locally sourced. If a large institution such as Stanford is able to buy that much locally, then Vanderbilt should be able to increase its purchase of locally sourced food by a respectable amount. It is important to act now on this problem because the process will be a decently time and resource consuming for the university. Vanderbilt should slowly start implementing a course geared towards a more sustainable university. Environmental

sustainability is a costly process, so the whole process must be taken one step at a time. Vanderbilt and the students should act as soon as possible in order to push Vanderbilt to be a sustainable campus as soon as possible.

A proposed solution to teaching students about the importance of local food and food sustainability is through the implementation of community gardens and farmer's markets. The end goal is to have students push for more sustainable food choices on Vanderbilt through the knowledge and experiences acquired. Farmers' markets are food markets at which local farmers provide fresh fruits, vegetables, and other local goods. These markets offer relaxed atmospheres where people can learn about local food systems and how eating sustainably can positively influence their health. Seasonality can be an issue for buying locally with most local produce being available during the late spring and summer months. Stanford is still able to buy 47% of its food locally sourced or organically. USC also hosts farmers' markets on most Wednesdays of the year and provides an organic vegetable delivery service. These universities serve as a good model to what Vanderbilt could accomplish in terms of food sustainability. In terms of community gardens, they help educate students about the importance and nutrition of growing their own food. The experience of working in a community garden also gives students an appreciation of food and how it is produced. This experience can be compared with information offered in a possible class or seminar about industrially produced food. The discrepancy would allow students to realize that local and organic foods are better for their health and the environment. Through community gardens, fresh produce could be supplied to the students in the dining halls or donated to various organizations. Vanderbilt is also close to many areas known as "food deserts", and as a premier institution, Vanderbilt could actively support its surrounding communities. The community gardens also work to bring different members of the community together to learn and cultivate together. Farmers' markets and community gardens are two methods that can provide vital teaching experiences to all students on the topic of food sustainability. Environmental sustainability was very popular and hip during the early 2000s, but I believe that universities should incite the interest and drive towards environmental sustainability again. My proposal is to provide information and other sources of possible information to have students focus on sustaining our planet for as long as it can.

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MADLINE MELOY

FOOD WASTE

Every year a staggering 33 million tons¹ of food is wasted in America, around 40% of all the food¹ produced. This is an incredibly sad statistic in light of the fact that 1 in 6 Americans³ go hungry, and it is also indicative of a huge environmental problem. In the first place, a large amount of resources are consumed in order to produce food. About 300 million barrels of oil per year¹, 4% of all oil used in the US, goes into producing just the wasted portion of food. Around 25% of water¹ usage in the United States is also used to produce this wasted food. The use of these resources takes a huge toll on the environment, especially the oil, whose use directly contributes to an increase in greenhouse gases and climate change. However, the largest negative impact from food waste comes from food that has been thrown out and left in landfills to rot. Once packed into a landfill, food decomposes anaerobically, and as a result produces methane. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is actually 21 times as potent as carbon dioxide⁴ when it comes to breaking down the ozone layer. Food is the second largest contributor to landfills, which are the third largest source of methane⁴ in the United States. It is actually a larger contributor to greenhouse gas pollution than the transportation sector, an area that more people traditionally think of as contributing to climate change. Food waste is an even larger problem and deserves just as much attention to address the issue.

A significant portion of consumer food waste comes from the waste generated on college campuses. College dining programs face the challenge of consistently feeding a large number of people with diverse diets. The necessity of having enough food for everyone and enough variety to please at least most people often means some food will be wasted. Additionally, students eating in dining halls tend to be busy, unable to donate much attention to their food and also often unable to save their leftovers. College students living on campus throw away 142 pounds of food on average², while those living off campus throw away just 38 pounds². The campus dining system more than triples the amount of food students waste. Overall, campuses waste 22 million pounds of food a year.

I chose to address food waste because it is clearly an incredibly important environmental issue that often doesn't get the attention it deserves. While many people understand that when they turn on their car and release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere it is harmful to the environment, most do not understand the connection between throwing out food and producing harmful methane gas. If anything, food waste is thought of as problematic because it is a waste of money and because of the abundance of hungry people in the world (and rightfully so). However, it deserves just as much attention as a key environmental issue.

I also believed that this issue would be something college students could immediately relate to. Students can easily see the large amount of food thrown out during every meal time. Most probably ignore this problem, but if it were brought to their attention and they were educated on the topic, it would be an issue they would be confronted with several times a day. It is also an issue that the students have a lot of control over. While the administration can take steps on their own to reduce food waste and encourage students to do the same, individual students have control over how much food they waste in a way that they do not for many other issues on campus. I believed food waste would be an important issue to address both because of its significant impact on the environment and its potential to be a student-focused issue.

Like nearly any environmental issue, it is important to act quickly to stop food waste. There is a limited amount of greenhouse gases that can be poured into the atmosphere before Earth's environment becomes irreparably damaged, with devastating consequences to life. Some irreversible effects of climate change have already occurred. For this reason it is incredibly urgent to combat climate change on all fronts, including the issue of food waste. Reducing food waste would also have

other benefits, including the ability to feed the millions of people who go hungry in the United States and to save money. It is estimated that \$165 billion worth of food is wasted each year, and in 2008 alone about \$1.3 billion¹ was spent just to dispose of food waste in landfills. On a smaller scale, a family of four loses about \$590 each¹ year on average due to food waste.

Solutions to address this issue would fall into two categories: reducing overproduction of food in dining halls and reducing food waste on the part of the students. Dining programs could cut down on food waste by planning out menus with food that can be kept and reused in subsequent meals or by donating left-over food. They could buy food that is locally produced to cut down on transportation, saving gas. The administration could also encourage students to reduce food waste through education and incentives. Specifically at Vanderbilt, the administration could offer small refunds for students who skip meals or who don't take all possible sides. With the current freshman meal plan, students are encouraged to get their swipes and sides within a certain amount of time or lose out on a portion of the money they have already paid for their meal plan. In a student survey, 93% of students said that having refunds in place would cause them to take less food. The *Share-A-Side* program could also be kept running year-round. This gives students an alternative to getting more food with an extra side, and 62% of students said they believed this program reduced their food waste. Finally, in order to know if any of these measures are working, food waste must be tracked. Currently, there is no thorough tracking system of the amount of food waste generated by the Commons Dining Center. Not only is this information key to knowing whether food waste reduction programs are working, but sharing these numbers with students could also keep the issue of food waste on their mind and encourage them to help reduce it. I think that if food waste were brought to the attention of students and they were given slight incentives to reduce it, it could be very helpful in reducing the amount of food wasted in the Commons dining hall.

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ALEX O'SHAUGHNESSEY

FRESHMAN OUTDOOR ORIENTATION PROGRAM

The issue that my project aims to solve is student disinterest in environmental projects on campus. I have witnessed this firsthand in my transition from high school to Vanderbilt. Students at my high school (the Lovett School in Atlanta, GA) were very involved with sustainability issues. This high level of involvement was primarily due to the strong role that the administration played in instrumenting various projects, but also the students seemed to be more passionate about environmental issues. Many of my friends in high school, myself included, enjoyed hunting, fishing, and hiking on the weekends. However, in America as a whole, less and less people are spending time outdoors. An NPR article writes, "since the late 1980s, the percentage of Americans taking part in such activities (camping, fishing, hunting, hiking) has declined at slightly more than 1 percent a year." This trend is not good. Biologist Oliver Pergams suggests, "environmentalists should be concerned by this broad change. He says that it's true, in part, that people who don't visit natural places might not fight so hard to protect them." There is a strong correlation between people spending time in the environment and people's level of interest about sustainability. A study at Cornell University, for example, found that "All other factors being equal, bird watchers are about five times as likely, and hunters about four times as likely, as non-recreationists to engage in wildlife and habitat conservation." I think that a similar concept is possible at a university. If more and more students get outside to learn about and play in nature, they will in turn try harder to protect what they love.

As a class we conducted a survey where we asked 50 random freshmen their thoughts on a series of questions involving environmentalism and sustainability on campus. After analyzing the results we found some surprising and somewhat negative results. For example, the average rating out of 10 for the question "How passionate are you about green issues on commons?" was a 4.9. The rating for the question "What is the likelihood that you would get involved with an environmental project on campus?" was a 5.5. However, on the other hand, 94% of students said that they would support Vanderbilt making a greener future central to its mission statement. The specific statistic that my project would aim to improve is the low score on the question about passion. If students become more passionate about the environment, they will also want become more involved in sustainability issues. My idea is to start a summer orientation program called The Freshman Outdoor Orientation Program. This program would be intended for incoming students and would aim to both create lasting friendships and expose incoming students to the outdoors, possibly enabling them to find a passion they didn't know they had. In theory, the students will take this newfound love for the environment and use it to start and participate in sustainability initiatives when they get to campus. The Commons will be a greener place as a result.

This idea is not revolutionary in the slightest. In fact, Vanderbilt is one of the few top schools who do not have a similar program in place. Here are a few examples: Yale (Freshman Outdoor Orientation Trips), Tufts (Tufts Wilderness Orientation), Harvard (Harvard First-Year Outdoor Program), Cornell (Outdoor Odyssey), Stanford (Stanford Pre-Orientation Trips), Princeton (Frosh Trip), University of Pennsylvania (PennQuest), and Duke (Project WILD). These programs primarily have friendship, bonding, and leadership as the primary goals of the experience. I was able to get in touch with the student leaders of the FOOT organization at Yale and they gave me some insight on the goals of the program. Some of the key goals of the program, according to Priscilla Kellert, are for "students to get in touch with themselves and the great outdoors in the wonderful wilderness of the Northeast". She went on to say "our main goal is to create bonds and friendships that will become a support group throughout the college years and beyond. And, in that, we have largely succeeded." These programs at different universities all across the country seem to be very

well received by their students. Vanderbilt's program, if created, would aim to be much like these successful programs but with one main difference. The distinction would be that sustainability and environmentalism would be a much larger component of the mission of Vanderbilt's program, alongside other goals of friendship and team building.

The program that I have in mind is a three-night trip that begins in the days right before freshman orientation. The length could be extended or contracted depending on the interest level. More research would need to be done to find the optimal length of the trip that would maximize both the participation level and the quality of the trip. From experience, I think that three nights and two full days in the woods would be enough time to really get to know both your surroundings and your fellow classmates. The groups of about 12 students would be led by 2 upperclassmen student leaders who could function like Vuceptors and mentor the incoming students on both life at Vanderbilt and leadership skills. My first idea for a place to host such a program is the Nantahala National Forest. There there are thousands of acres of beautiful woods, countless creeks, and miles of trails to explore. It is also only 4 hours and 30 minutes from campus, and only about 1 hour and 30 minutes from the Ocoee River. The students would move into their dorms on the first day and then drive to the park. My plan would be to hike about 2 miles on the first day, 4-7 miles on the second and third days, and about 1 mile on the last day. The groups would load up on buses that Friday morning raft the Ocoee River together and would arrive back on commons at about 8-9pm the night before morning in day. Other universities currently have multiple programs in different areas of the country, but I think a local trip (4-5 hours away) is the best way to begin our program. Once we have gained a certain level of interest we could expand outward.

If the Freshman Outdoor Orientation Program does not come to fruition there are other ways that we could increase level of interest in the environment and sustainability issues. For one, the Vanderbilt Recreation Center could implement trips just for freshmen in the fall. These trips would accomplish both of the goals of the orientation program- to make lasting friendships and get kids outdoors-but would conveniently take place during the first few weeks of the school year. A few weekend trips in the months of September and October just for freshmen would be fairly popular as freshmen are always looking for new activities to do with friends. One problem that Professor Melchor-Barz brought to my attention is that the Freshman Outdoor Orientation Program could be considered "elitist" because it may be an expense that many incoming students are unable to pay. Jacob Graham, the student leader of the Green Fund, told me about a new scholarship program called Experience Vanderbilt that could address this problem. According to Margaret Edwards, the spokesperson for this program, Experience Vanderbilt aims to provide mini scholarships up to \$500 to "cover any extracurricular activity at Vanderbilt that does not count for academic credit. So anything from Greek life to club sports to classes at the rec." This scholarship could be used to cover some outdoor trip fees, which in turn would break down the financial barriers that some students may face and raise the number of students willing to participate on the trips. The scholarship is still very new but in time it may encourage more students participate in the outdoor rec center, and my overall goal to get more students outdoors could be accomplished.

There has been an outdoor orientation program at Vanderbilt in the past. According to an archived Vanderbilt news article online, the program started in the summer of 1999 and was called Squirrel Camp. The camp was for about 200 rising freshmen and was intended to help kids "find their niche as quickly as possible." During the 3-day camp at the Percy Priest YMCA center, the students were divided into groups of 10 with 1 faculty member and 1 Vuceptor as their leaders. During the day there were team-building exercises and high ropes courses designed to allow the students to get to know each other. The program was a success but it was thought to be no longer necessary with the opening of Commons in 2008.

The current freshman orientation programs on campus are fairly successful at helping students adjust to life in college, but I do still think a summer outdoor orientation program in the woods could be beneficial. Students would have another opportunity before school starts to make a strong group of friends in a relaxed environment, as well as spend time in nature. I think we should pay attention to the dozens of elite schools that have a similar outdoor program. If it weren't successful, why would universities like Duke, Yale, Princeton, and Stanford continue their programs? The Commons is missing out on an opportunity to become both a greener and tighter knit community by not having a summer outdoor program in place.

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Emily Struttman

It's Whatever: Passivity and Apathy as Barriers to Environmental Sustainability on Campus

Across the United States, there is an ebb and flow of student interest in and involvement with environmental issues. Students graduate and leave their organizations behind to be picked up by other students years later. Although these organizations have great intentions, they often fall short of their goals and initiatives without a greater centralized coordination. Students spend their time creating all kinds of organizations that promote sustainability, but only to have a leadership position. As soon as the group is exhausted or graduates, interest will shift to something new (Barlette 2012).

This seems like an issue in and of itself, but it is only one of the resulting issues that arises from the common root of many sustainability issues on campus: lack of caring. Food is wasted in the Commons because students would rather get their full meal swipe and toss the extras than risk not being completely stuffed. Water is wasted because students would rather take long hot showers than think about conserving water to decrease their environmental impacts. Many recyclables are thrown away because students do not want to waste their time separating their waste into the recycling bins. We need to reawaken a passion for the natural environment if we want to make a lasting impact on our campus or in general.

Without cars, freshmen barely make it off campus. Even within the Vanderbubble, though, students are very sheltered. Students are blessed (and spoiled) by all of the campus resources. Plant operations, Campus Dining, Recycling, and many other departments and organizations take care of environmental issues that students are not even aware of. As soon as we step foot off of campus, though, we are surrounded by food deserts. Yet they still waste an obscene amount of food and water. Students do not see these social and environmental issue while on campus, so they do see no need to care or try to make a difference.

Undoubtedly, The Commons as a whole is pretty passive when it comes to ecology and sustainability initiatives. Passivity is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as the state of someone who allows things to happen or who accepts what other people do or decide without trying to change anything. This blind acceptance is characteristic of many students on campus, but this is not entirely the fault of the students alone. The results of the Campus Climate survey indicate that we do care about these issues, but not enough to go out of our way to change behavior to resolve them.

There may be other issues at play here, though. As seen in the data from the Campus Climate survey, first year students feel the impact of environmental issues on daily life and are willing to participate in activities on campus, but also feel that students are not well informed of sustainable projects on campus. This idea of apathy (not caring or being made aware of the significance of the issues) also contributes to the students' lack of motivation. It becomes apparent that, if change is to be achieved, students must find a sense of internal motivation in addition to the inspiration and support of their universities.

The persistence of passivity and apathy with regards to ecological sustainability on campus deserves much of our attention since it is the root of many other environmental issues on college campuses around the United States. This issue is especially important to me because I am involved with many programs that promote appreciation of nature like Wilskills and Vanderbilt Students for Food Justice. I am also a nature/woodsmanship instructor at Camp Ondessonk in the Shawnee National Forest. Many people who are not involved with outdoor recreation, though, judge me for my involvement. This does not bother me because I find it insulting, it is just discouraging to see just how little most people care about the beauty of nature and conserving the resources we have left.

This is one of the main roots of students' apathy and passivity: if students do not have an appreciation for nature or understand the problems at hand, then they cannot be expected to take the necessary steps to fix these sustainability issues.

While this mindset is deeply engraved within the student body, it will not be too difficult to reawaken a passion for preserving nature. It is psychologically proven that people will only take steps to modify their behavior if they sense substantial aversive consequences of the behavior, think they will benefit from the behavior change, and think that they are capable of easily making these changes in behavior. So, the first step in changing the behavior of students is to educate them on the environmental issues at hand on campus and within a larger, global context. This can be done through a variety of means such as posters, flyers, emails, magazine and news articles, among others. Students, though, pay little heed to these forms of outreach if they are not already interested in the issues. A better way to educate students on environmental sustainability issues would be to incorporate it into the Visions program at the beginning of the first semester of Freshman year. That way, every student in the incoming class has at least a little bit of background knowledge on the subject. Similar to the discussions on diversity and inclusion, students could brainstorm in small groups to come up with solutions to issues on campus and even work on small projects together as a Visions group.

Once students are aware of sustainability issues on campus, the next step is to convince them that they will benefit from changing their behaviors. This can be done by infographics or incorporating more information into the Visions program. Another way to get students invested in the environment is to show them firsthand what there is to preserve. To do this, I propose a program like Duke University's WILD program in which freshman are invited to an outdoor recreation retreat prior to move-in and orientation (Hershman). This allows students to bond with each other over their appreciation for the great outdoors while becoming accustomed to the college environment. Unfortunately, these excursions may not be enough for many students, so an incentive program may be helpful in motivating students. Participating in these outdoor recreation events could earn students points towards the Commons House Cup.

The final step in inspiring behavior change in students is convincing students that they can overcome the barriers that keep them from making more sustainable decisions. This is incredibly easy when the university provides opportunities and support for students who want to pursue environmental interests. Vanderbilt already does this with the Green Fund, but a useful addition would be providing freshman transportation to off-campus sustainability projects. Connecting our campus to the surrounding areas will make students more aware of the social and environmental issues that they are not exposed to on campus.

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JAVAN LATSON

SUSTAINABLE DINING AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

The sustainability dining movement has become popular on many college campuses across this nation since socially aware, environmentally concerned students have voiced their preferences to eat locally grown, natural foods that are sustainably produced and harvested¹. Vanderbilt, as one of the universities that recognizes the need to be environmentally sensitive and economically responsible, has implemented a program that strives “to provide its students with meats, seafood, and produce that is grown or raised sustainably².” Sustainable food practices at Vanderbilt include the acquisition of locally grown meat and organic produce when available, implementation of recycling and other procedures to reduce waste, and donation of uneaten, unspoiled food to the Second Harvest Food Bank. These practices exemplify Vanderbilt’s dedication to the practice of sustainable dining with the preservation of precious resources and utilization of foods grown and produced locally and seafood harvested humanely from nearby waters³.

Sustainability, as defined by the participants of the Greening the Commons Seminar on its website, is “an attempt to minimize carbon footprint[s]” and an effort to “reduce actions that can cause harm⁴.” With this definition in mind, it is important to assess whether Vanderbilt’s sustainability efforts either minimize carbon footprints and/or reduce actions that can cause harm. To make this assessment, I contacted Vanderbilt’s Campus Dining Assistant Director William Claypool who informed me that only 2.94% of meat and produce is grown or raised within 100 miles of the campus. Nearly 96% of its food is obtained from sources more than 500 miles away. Mr. Claypool’s statement:

We strive to source as many items locally as we can though when you look at it statistically they don’t comprise a very large percentage of purchases. Local meat producers can only supply so much and our best estimate is about 2.5% of our meat purchases are non-corporate. I interpret that as originating from a family owned or sole proprietorship farm and this is comprised mostly of direct local purchases from farms within 300 miles of campus. This percentage fluctuates week to week with their supply and our menus but I feel confident that this is a good, conservative number. Our fish purchases do a little better and I estimate our purchases of regional, sustainably caught fish to be at about 10% due to a relationship that we’ve forged with a company called Sea2Table. We do business with their Gulf and East coast fisheries⁵.

Vanderbilt has made an effort to be sustainable by acquiring locally produced meat and produce for its Campus Dining sites. While its efforts are noteworthy, its current percentages are not significant. Other universities have done more. Currently, Duke University provides its students with meals created from a higher percentage of locally raised, antibiotic-and growth hormone-free meat and produce than Vanderbilt⁶. Duke implemented a strategic plan to incorporate a specific portion of its entire food purchases from local vendors within a particular time frame over a period of years. Duke’s Sustainable Procurement Target Plan states it will meet 80% of its sustainability targets by July 2016, 85% by July 2017, and 100% by July 2020. The Plan has priorities listed for each category of meat. For example chicken and turkey procurements must meet one of four priorities from this list: products must be antibiotic, hormone and growth promoter free, certified humanely raised, local (produced within 250 miles of campus or within the State of North Carolina), and/or

organic. These measures are specific and keep Duke on track for achieving its goals. Perhaps, Vanderbilt should implement a similar target plan⁷.

Like Duke, Vanderbilt has recognized that purchasing food grown locally is a major component of sustainable dining. When food is raised locally, it does not have to be transported long distances to reach its end user. Produce grown locally can be picked when it is ripe and not in an immature state. Ripe local produce comes to the consumer as fresh and ready for immediate consumption with little or no extra processing. Locally grown food products— whether meat, dairy, or produce benefits the local economy. Purchasing local products keeps community neighbors employed and in business. Having a close association between consumer and producer keeps businesses in operation and consumers readily supplied with food. When universities purchase their food supplies and products locally, the consumers benefit and so do the businesses creating the product. When a school purchases food from small community farmers the school directly benefits the producer of the product and decreases American dependence on agricultural goods produced on foreign soil. With local farmers in business, the local economy is supported.

Money circulated within the local community keeps the economy in that community strong. Other businesses that support local farms benefit when the farms make money. A great deal of the money earned by the farmers from selling their produce is spent in the surrounding area which in turn is reinvested in other local businesses. In fact, it's estimated that buying local goods keeps

approximately 65% of the earnings in the community compared with 40% from large chain stores⁸, which is a sizeable difference. Buying directly from local producers has many benefits because it

removes various middlemen allowing the farmers to get full retail price for their goods⁹. This gives the farmers the capital necessary to remain in business. Besides the monetary benefit that comes with utilizing goods from local producers, there is also a positive impact on the environment.

Transporting food from abroad or out of state requires fossil fuels. The transportation costs for acquiring food grown or raised outside the U.S. consumes approximately one-fifth of all petroleum

used in the United States is for this purpose¹⁰. Buying meat and produce locally, reduces the need for fossil fuel usage, which in turn reduces the carbon footprint of our school. This one provision of the Vanderbilt's sustainability initiative is laudable.

Biodiversity in the food offerings at Campus Dining is increased when using meat and produce created locally, Small farms grow different varieties of crops to provide the best flavor, a long harvest, and an array of colors. This is quite the opposite of most large commercial farms where crops are produced just to withstand the transportation and packaging process. The demand for these specific traits by retailers causes the farmers to limit their crops to just those possessing the genes that yield those traits. This in turn leads to a limited amount of genetic diversity in the plants that are grown. The concept of genetic diversity also applies to healthier herds of livestock. Well-managed farms also help to conserve land, water sources, and reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

When local enterprises and colleges do business with the local farmers the likelihood is greater that the land would remain in an agricultural enterprise instead of being converted to residential or other commercial enterprises that generate more carbon emissions and require greater amounts of energy. Also a greater amount of vegetation on a parcel of land removes carbon dioxide from the air through photosynthesis and releases oxygen creating clean air.

From both the economic and environmental viewpoint, buying food from local producers seems like the ideal thing to do. However, while those are both marvelous things, the food being purchased must taste good in addition to being environmentally friendly. Produce and meats purchased from afar often loses flavor and nutrients during the shipping processes. The reduction in transport time removes chances of contamination because the food doesn't have so many access points where contamination and spoilage can occur.

As the push for sustainability continues, so will the demand for more environmentally friendly dining. As a university located in an urban area, Vanderbilt should consider places to plant gardens

that can provide produce for campus dining. Perhaps on weekends, Vanderbilt could sponsor a farmers market much where students can use Commodore Cash or meal money to purchase goods from the local vendors. We can also try to develop more connections with local non-chain restaurants in order to give students the ability to these local businesses via the Taste of Nashville Program. These suggestions could help Vanderbilt reduce its carbon footprint and forge new alliances with local businesses. Vanderbilt would be keeping making Nashville a greener community.

¹ www.nacufs.org/resources-campus-dining-today

² William W. Claypool Assistant Director and Executive Chef of Campus Dining email 3/22/16

³ William W. Claypool Assistant Director and Executive Chef of Campus Dining Email 3/22/16

⁴ <http://gregorybarz.com/greeningthecommons/>

⁵ William W. Claypool Assistant Director and Executive Chef of Campus Dining

⁶ <https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/dining/sustainable-dining>

⁷ <https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/goals>

⁸ https://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/Sustainability_2012-09pr.pdf

⁹ <https://www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/factsheets/buylocal.html>

¹⁰ <http://livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/food/local.html#whyblg>

KARIN HAN

GREEN LIGHTING THE COMMONS

Something one notices when walking in and out of the different Houses on the Commons are screens near the entrance. These screens have been there since the first day of the year (and actually since 2013), but no one I've encountered has truly been sure of what they are. Whether it be a Faculty Head of House, the Residence Life staff, or other students, these mysterious "Green Light" screens are a part of the décor that no one seemed to question before this Commons Seminar.

These mysterious Green Light screens are actually a product of the Vanderbilt Green Fund, from a proposal submitted in the fall of 2012. The goal of this proposal was to "reduce electricity use in residence buildings by approximately 10%" (Green Fund Project App, Green Lights, 2013) around Vanderbilt campus, by making students aware of their energy consumption.

In the original proposal, it was stated that the idea behind the project was originally based off of a study from the University of Oxford, called "The Effectiveness of Feedback of Energy Consumption". The evidence provided in their proposal states this: "Most people have only a vague idea of how much energy they are using for different purposes and what sort of difference they could make by changing day-to-day behaviour or investing in efficiency measures. Hence the importance of feedback in making energy more visible and more amenable to understanding and control." Furthermore, evidence was cited from Oberlin College with a similar Campus Resource Monitoring System that after it was implemented into residential competitions, reduced up to 56% of energy use in the winning dorms. However, presently, many of the Green Light screens on Commons are defunct, showing blue screens or error messages. For the ones that seem to work, no one knows how to interpret the data presented.

Energy consumption is an issue that many students might not realize. Take this case from Pennsylvania State University's Professor Christopher Uhl's chapter in the book "Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies": Amy Balog as a junior at Penn state decided she wanted to understand how much energy she and her dorm mates were using. From going into rooms and counting the devices using energy, such as mini-fridges, radios, and lamps, she discovered an average room had 12 plugged in items. Using that average data, and a survey administered to these peers on how much use each plugin would get, she discovered that on average, 10 kilowatts of energy was being used every day.

The number "10 kilowatts" wouldn't mean anything to me or most of my peers, not just here at Vanderbilt, but at most universities across the country. A kilowatt isn't something I can visualize, but rather, a foreign concept associated with physics. However, Amy Balog discovered those 10 kilowatts a day was equivalent to something that I can visualize- 8 pounds of coal. Her dorm required almost 200 pounds of coal each day, which would release 3 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. And that was just one building on one college campus.

The Green Light screens deserve a second life, because us First-Year students have no idea how much energy we're using. We don't directly pay electricity bills, and it's far too easy to walk out of our rooms and leave the lights on, especially when there are no parents to tell us to shut them off. The first step to this is to fix the Green Lights. The irony of these broken Green screens- a thing that was intended to decrease energy consumption but is now broken, wasting electricity- has struck me many times throughout this seminar. Having working Green Lights is an essential part of their efficiency and purpose, especially because they're already something here that Vanderbilt has paid for.

The truly crucial part of the Green Lights is education. When I found out their original purpose I said that it would be a great idea to implement them into the Commons Cup energy reduction challenge. A complaint heard throughout the seminar when talking about the energy challenge was that we didn't have a concrete number when it came to how much energy we conserved. It turns out, tying in Green Lights to the Commons Cup was one of the original goals. By providing the in house screens residents would have theoretically been able to monitor the overall energy usage of each house, set specific goals of reduction, and have the screen show live whether or not they were meeting their goal. However, anecdotally, my Faculty Head of House, Professor Gregory Melchor-Barz, told me that that information was never given to the faculty heads. Instead, these screens showed up everywhere one day and then fell into disarray over the years.

After the screens are fixed, the entire education initiative needs revamping. First, the energy portion of Commons Cup should be a bigger part of CommonVU. In my experience as a first year, the Commons Cup was only discussed a handful of times during those first few days, and I have personally never felt like it is really important. I believe having a portion of time during CommonVU to explain not only the energy challenge aspect but also why it is important to reduce carbon footprints would be essential baseline education of the subject. This education could come during the house meetings, or the floor meetings, or even VUcept- it is mainly important that it comes from somewhere, right at the beginning.

However, it is equally important that the information of Green Lights and the energy challenge remains relevant throughout the year. College is exciting, and busy, and it's very easy to not think about things day to day such as energy consumption. Even if students don't check Green Lights regularly, the House Advisory Counsel could provide that information to their houses, whether it's a weekly update on the "Potty Press" newsletters, or a weekly email from the House President. It's the awareness of the energy consumption, in terms that students understand, that makes it possible for them to decrease the amount of energy that they are using. And that was the overall goal of Green Lights- education, leading to awareness, leading to a greener lifestyle in our residence halls. If it has not become clear through my writing- something that I am passionate about is fixing things that have relatively easy solutions. And Green Lights feels like something that would be easy to fix. The screens and equipment are already all in place; they just need a little repair. The Commons Cup energy initiatives are already a program- there's just very little awareness and understanding. When I first looked into choosing the Green Lights as a topic, I almost didn't. I couldn't see the potential in what looked like ten useless computer monitors. However, once I really looked into it, I saw the potential that was there when it was chosen as the winner of the 2012-13 Green Fund, and the potential that is still there.

If Green Lights is not revived, I do believe that other viable solutions exist to reduce energy consumption. The first step, in my opinion, would be to shut down the Green Lights, because if seeing as they don't function now, keeping them is just wasting electricity. I think tasking the House Advisory Counsels to find ways that work for each of their houses to reduce energy consumption, whether it be ideas such as posters near the elevator that suggest taking the stairs, or stickers on light switches as a reminder to turn off the lights when leaving, would also be viable. Overall, no matter how it is done, energy usage can be reduced on the Commons, and fixing the Green Lights for their original purpose is a worthwhile way of doing it.

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CAMERON LOVSKA

TRANSPARENCY IN VANDERBILT'S GREEN PROGRAMS

Vanderbilt Dining likes to promote themselves as “Green” and gives various examples as to how they are being green. Their website advertises, “Our Eat the World, Save the Earth program is designed to give you information about our kitchen principles and how they affect your environment, community and well being.” However, much of the information they brag about is either hard to find, incomplete, or just wrong. Vanderbilt Dining’s program says it is meant to inform the public on their principles but it cannot be true if the information they are providing is inaccurate. Numbers are hidden and programs are explained poorly, making it hard to see if Vanderbilt is making any sufficient “green” impact. Doing these programs means nothing if the students are not aware as to the impact these programs do.

In 2013, Vanderbilt was listed on *The Princeton Review*’s Green Honor Roll meaning they received the highest possible score of 99. Vanderbilt as well as 20 other schools achieved this feat in 2013. Currently, Vanderbilt has a 94 Green rating on Princeton Review. While we have such a high Green rating, many Vanderbilt students do not realize how good our programs are. In our campus climate survey, Vanderbilt students gave the school an environmentally friendly rating of a 6.2 out of 10. To add onto that, those surveyed gave a rating of 5.5 out of 10 in how much of a conscious and noticeable effort Vanderbilt is making to rectify sustainability issues. Vanderbilt obviously hasn’t been very good at advertising their new programs such as Commons Unplugged because it got a rating of 3.8 out of 10 on how effective people thought it was. Many people answered saying they had no idea what Commons Unplugged even is.

While I was searching for the current programs Vanderbilt Dining does in order to determine what they could improve, I found it was difficult to understand the current programs. This issue is important to me because my money goes into funding these programs and I should be able to see the impact of these programs. I believe it is necessary to let the students know why the school makes their choices on environmental issues and to see how these programs are successful. I am not alone in this thought because in *The Princeton Review*’s 2012 survey for its “College Hopes and Worries Survey”, they found that, “68 percent said having information about a college’s commitment to the environment would impact their decision to apply to or attend a school” (Entman, 2012). In our campus climate survey, we found that only 24% of students are well informed about what sustainable projects are on campus. This means that Vanderbilt could theoretically be losing out on qualified students who decide not to attend Vanderbilt because they believe another college does a better job in their environmental impact simply because the other school gives more information on their programs. This needs to change as soon as possible so Vanderbilt will continue to receive the highest caliber of students possible.

Similar colleges advertise their green programs much better. Georgia Tech’s dining (rated #1 in being green) explains in detail all of their environmental programs and goes in depth explaining them. Many of the programs they do, we do as well, but Vanderbilt Dining doesn’t release the numbers or explain why their programs are important. One example of the number problem is that both Georgia Tech and Vanderbilt say they use local/organic food when possible; however GT spends 41% of their budget on those foods while Vanderbilt only spends 15%. Not only does Georgia Tech explain how much they’re saving, but they also explain why their programs are necessary and useful. For instance, both Georgia Tech and Vanderbilt say they use energy star rated equipment. Vanderbilt didn’t say add anything, but Georgia Tech follow up saying, “ENERGY STAR is a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) voluntary program that helps businesses and individuals save money and protect our climate through superior energy efficiency” (Dining

Service Initiatives). It is important for Vanderbilt to be able to explain why they spend money on these Green programs because these programs mean nothing without any background.

Dining can also do much more with the students on campus. Many on-campus organizations have green programs that would be improved with collaboration from campus dining. Vanderbilt's website does advertise that they give their fryer oil to the Alternative Energy Club so it can be made into biofuel. This is a fantastic way for them to be involved in a simple way but unfortunately the Alternative Energy Club doesn't exist anymore so Dining cannot make that claim. Vanderbilt Dining also has the share-a-side program that allows students to donate their unused sides to Second Harvest. The problem though is that Dining never mentioned how much money was earned through that program. Many students aren't going to participate in a program if they don't see the results. Dining needs to find more ways to become involved again with the Vanderbilt community and to let them know the impact of their donations.

An easy way to fix it would have someone just go more in depth in Dining's programs listed on their website. Adding details and keeping the data more up to date would help improve their transparency to the public. The website could add their top programs to their main page with a link to the full list of programs that Vanderbilt currently does.

Other ways to promote and explain their green programs could be in ways posted in the Commons Center or on the TV in the Commons Center. The TV does say what some of the programs are but doesn't go in depth or provide resources to what they do or what they mean. The TV's at the entrances of each of the Commons dorms could also be used to explain some of the green programs that affect the dorms specifically, allowing students to be more aware of how green their houses are. In conclusion, Vanderbilt Dining needs to be more detailed and transparent in their green programs and initiatives. Part of a successful program is being able to accurately show the results and make the data easily accessible. Because green programs are an important issue for prospective students, we need to be able to properly publicize how good our efforts are. These students will become more active in making the school even more environmentally friendly and through outreach of Campus Dining, they can work together to make the school even more Green.

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