

## **UCF's Food Recovery Network**

Project Proposal by:

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## **A. Background**

The original Food Recovery Network began at the University of Maryland College Park in 2011 by a group of students who noticed that enormous amounts of good food was abandoned and disposed every night by the on campus cafeteria. These students began the project to prevent food waste, and help those who would otherwise go hungry. This project grew to become a nation-wide effort to end food waste and feed the hungry, and is now the largest student lead movement fighting food waste and hunger in America. It has become a well working system of company partners, attorneys, and 230 chapters that have donated 2.6 million meals<sup>1</sup>. Many universities across the country have begun their own chapters of The Food Recovery Network. As of right now, the University of Central Florida does not have such a program, and in fact, has no system in place to sustainably prevent food waste. According to our university's AASHE STARS rating, we have scored 3.5 out of 8 total points for Waste Minimization and Diversion<sup>2</sup>. This poor rating is due to our lack of donating waste that comes out of our facilities, along with some other unfortunate factors. Currently, as per UCF's Climate Action Plan, the university does not have any goals pertaining to food waste mitigation on any of its campuses. UCF is actively pursuing sustainability in many ways to work towards our zero waste goal, but none of these efforts include reverting food waste. In order to reach zero waste status, a food waste reversion system must be implemented.

## **B. Objective**

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<sup>1</sup> Food Recovery Network. Retrieved from: <https://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org>

<sup>2</sup> University of Central Florida OP-19: Waste Minimization and Diversion. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://stars.aashe.org/institutions/university-of-central-florida-fl/report/2017-03-02/OP/waste/OP-19/>

Our project aims to pilot and establish a UCF Chapter of the Food Recovery Network. The Food Recovery Network is a national nonprofit organization that works to divert waste of prepared foods on college campuses by donating them to community partners for distribution to the local needy and hungry. Specifically, we aim to partner with on-campus vendors in Knights Plaza and other on-campus UCF Dining Services vendors to establish a weekly food drop off schedule. We will then facilitate the transfer of donated prepared foods to the local Hope Helps. Pursuing this project aligns with UCF's waste initiative to divert 75% of our waste in the next 5 years<sup>3</sup>. The Food Recovery Network will raise UCF's rating in the Waste Diversion category in our AASHE STARS rating, and bring us closer to UCF's zero waste goal.

### **C. Research Questions**

1. How much waste could potentially be diverted once the Food Recovery Network has been implemented at the University of Central Florida?
  - a. Per semester?
  - b. Per academic year?
2. How many people could potentially benefit from the food that is recovered in our endeavors?
3. What are the benefits to the University for implementing The Food Recovery Network?
  - a. How will much can food waste diversion raise our AASHE STARS score?

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<sup>3</sup> Sustainability Initiatives: About Us. Retrieved from: <http://sustainable.ucf.edu/initiatives>

4. What are the environmental and human benefits of implementing the Food Recovery Network at the University of Central Florida?
5. What are some ways to include our fellow students in becoming active participants in our implementation of the Food Recovery Network?
  - a. Is there a way to incentivize participation?

#### **D. Significance**

As previously demonstrated, food waste is a major component of the United States' struggle to sustainably develop and reduce its carbon footprint and ecological impact. Environmentally, economically, and socially, food waste results from and perpetuates issues of inequality, institutional degradation, and irresponsible resource use and allocation.

As an entity, UCF can rise to combat these issues by addressing its own significant food waste while advancing the lives of those in the UCF and Central Florida community who lack access to quality nutrition. UCF's Sustainability Initiatives cannot necessarily stop the production of food waste on campus; however, we can divert the food waste and recover it to nourish community members, empowering those who are in need, and reducing the waste of resources and energy. This aligns with UCF's climate action plan by reducing our ecological foot print and coming closer to our zero waste goal. More significantly, this endeavor will feed hundreds of hungry people, give them hope, and inspire those around us to give to our community in any way we can.

#### **E. Methodology**

October 24<sup>th</sup> 2018: Make a relationship with the national Food Recovery Network. The national chapter of the Food Recovery Network has been in contact with our team, providing guidance on the proper steps to take in becoming a smooth and safe running

charity. This includes a safety training, as well as preparing us on the appropriate way to speak to vendors and donation sites. There is a shared document with all FRN chapters that includes a handbook filled with guidelines on how to do this process professionally and efficiently. Once we carry out at least 3 deliveries of donated food, we are able to become an official national chapter.

January 28<sup>th</sup> 2019: Confirm with Hope Helps Orlando that they will be our donation site. After contacting several local shelters and places that feed the hungry, we built a great relationship with Orlando's Hope Helps. This organization feeds hundreds of local homeless people in Orlando. They also have a housing center where several homeless people find temporary housing. This housing site is where we will initially donate the collected food until we are able to get into a system of collecting more food and therefore feeding more people.

March 5<sup>th</sup> 2019: RSO application submission.

In order to ensure the longevity of the Food Recovery Network (FRN), we have been become an official UCF Registered Student Organization, now students can continue to provide food for the hungry and reduce food waste for years following this pilot project, working towards UCF's zero waste goal. This will also ensure that future chapters will have the means to continue diverting food, because UCF provides RSO's with funding and resources.

March 16<sup>th</sup> 2019 – Indefinitely: Collect Volunteers.

In order to be a well-functioning charity, we will need a lot of volunteers to aid in the collection and delivery processes. We have made a relationship with another on campus RSO called IDEAS for Us, they will partner with us by providing volunteers as well as

provide free advertising on their large social media platforms. This will make sure UCF FRN has volunteers to continue the waste diversion even if the clubs own participation dies out.

October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019- Completion: Find an on or off campus donor.

We are continuing to search for a willing donor, and we are expanding our options. Finding a donor has been a matter of contacting every on campus food vendor, and expanding our options to also contacting off campus vendors such as Lucky's, Panera, and Foxtail. We will also work towards making a connection with Knights Pantry in order to potentially donate to them from off campus vendors to help our fellow students. These different approaches will all be explored and perused to ensure that we can find a way to feed the hungry.

## **F. Literature**

By implementing a Food Recovery Network chapter similar to the one that began at the University of Maryland, we can add to two million meals that they have diverted from landfills<sup>4</sup>. Not only would this further support UCF's goal towards zero waste by 2050, it would also greatly assist the community of Orange County and UCF. Based on Feeding America's "Map the Meal Gap" project, Orange County has a 15% food insecurity rate, which is a little under two hundred thousand people<sup>5</sup>. This map shows the intensity at which food insecurity occurs in every single county in the country, because there is not one county without it. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture<sup>6</sup>, 11.8% of households

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<sup>4</sup> About - Food Recovery Network (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org/aboutus/>

<sup>5</sup> Feeding America (2018). *Food Insecurity in Orange County*. Retrieved from <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2016/overall/florida/county/orange>

<sup>6</sup> United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2018, September 05). *Statistics and Key Graphs*. Retrieved from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics/>

in 2017 were food insecure, which is defined as being “uncertain of having enough food to meet the needs of all their members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food.”

Although there is a need for food locally and nationwide, in 2015, it was recorded by the Environmental Protection Agency<sup>7</sup> that food was the most prominent type of waste than any other single material in our municipal solid waste, being 22% of trash in landfills and weighing roughly 30 million tons. Especially as the populations of both our campus and UCF grow, and hence more food is produced and in turn wasted, it is important to note the goals established to combat these issues. UCF is striving to divert at least 75% of waste from landfills by 2020, and in 2015, the country announced its goal to reduce the food loss and waste by 50% by 2030. These are high set goals, but when they are reached, we will be an example to other schools to not only preach speak on what they believe, but peruse it into action. Reaching these goals will also make UCF a more desirable school because people want to give their money to institutions they know are carrying out philanthropy. With UCF’s large numbers, we can make one of the biggest impacts across the country, and we have the resources to do so.

An example of how food recovery programs reap benefits for the University, charity, and donor is seen through a similar project that was done at the University of Colorado<sup>8</sup>. They implemented their own version of a food recovery work plan and wrote a

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<sup>7</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency Office of Land and Emergency Management (2018, July). *Advancing Sustainable Material Management*. Retrieved from [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-07/documents/2015\\_smm\\_msw\\_factsheet\\_07242018\\_fnl\\_508\\_002.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-07/documents/2015_smm_msw_factsheet_07242018_fnl_508_002.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Davis, Celine (2014). *Food Recovery through Donations as a Response to Food Waste: A Case Study of Two Grocery Stores Participating in a Food Recovery Program in Boulder*. University of Colorado. Retrieved from; <https://scholar.colorado.edu>.

thesis explaining the profits that came from it. One benefit that arose from food waste diversion was seen in the food banks; they depend entirely on donations, as well as the hungry people who depend on these banks to survive, so the contributions helped immensely. The thesis also explained that the volunteers that helped donate the food also benefited by making good connections, and boosting their resume while doing philanthropic work. The parties that gained the most welfares were the University and the donor. People often prefer to give their money to an institution they can trust to do good things with their income. The thesis explained there was an influx to the restaurants that advertised their donations, which was encouraged. The paper shows that when a vendor donates food they save and make more money by not wasting purchased food, while simultaneously making more money from the promotion they get from donating food. The system of food donation has been proved to be beneficiary to all participating parties, and should therefore be carried out at UCF.

#### **L. Work Plan**

We will continue to reach out to numerous food vendors on and off campus until we find a donor willing to work with us. During this process, we will research proper containers to safely transport the donated food and budget them into our fund. Finding a large vehicle to borrow is a helpful asset, but is not necessary to begin donations, so we will continuously look for an opportunity to rent one.

The national chapter of the Food Recovery Network has paperwork and trainings that the leaders of this project need to complete with the donation site, the vendor, and FRN. This has been completed by all willing officers, and will be provided when a donor has been established.

Once we have all of these steps completed we will begin collecting and donating food on a weekly routine. UCF FRN is an official RSO so weekly meetings will also be held to keep up with volunteers and schedule deliveries. During meetings, officers will include training volunteers and reaching out to more people as part of the agenda. During every recovery, the food donated will be weighed each time and report it back to our vendor so they are able to advertise the philanthropy they are involved in. Reaching out to local UCF new networks (such as Knightly News) and telling them of the charity the vendors are doing to give back to the community is an important aspect of keeping good relations with our partnered vendor, and giving them an incentive to continue to donate. This will also provide advertisement for the FRN at UCF so more people will be willing to volunteer and donate. These steps will allow the UCF chapter of the Food Recovery Network to expand and therefore reduce more waste, feed more hungry people, as well as live on so many generations of students can be involved in helping their community.