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Cowboy Food Sharing: Supply the Soup Kitchen and Reduce Waste

Samantha Brant

Abstract

In the US 40% of our food is thrown away, and yet over 50 million Americans struggle to be sure there will be enough food to put on the table. Across the nation, some corporations, restaurants and universities have taken a lead in developing food recovery programs, that take high-quality food that would otherwise be wasted and donate it to organizations that share it with people who are facing food insecurity. In 2013 a group of students at the University of Wyoming (UW) recognized the issues of food insecurity in the Laramie community and proposed to help UW enact their own food recovery program. Cowboy Food Sharing was born that year and in the fall of 2015, UW's Residence Life & Dining Services began sharing good, safe food that would otherwise be thrown away with the Laramie Soup Kitchen. The following will share the story of this project, including the process of drafting and implementing a new food sharing policy and how many people and partners were involved, and will discuss future directions for this work. The work done by The University of Wyoming's Cowboy Food Sharing program has resulted in over seven months of donations, which have helped the Soup Kitchen supply 600 more people in 2015 than they did in 2014.

Introduction

Currently the United States is suffering from a major economic and moral contradiction. Over 40% of food that is produced is wasted at some point in the production, distribution, or the preparation stages of its lifetime. This is unacceptable and a waste of food if it never reaches the consumers mouth. Meanwhile, hunger and food insecurity are affecting households all over America. Often times hunger and food insecurity are used interchangeably, however in order to understand the prevalence of these issue this document is going to separate them. Hunger is defined as not having enough to eat to meet energy requirements and 1 in 6 Americans are faced with

hunger. On the other hand, food insecurity is a prolonged, involuntary lack of food that can result in the physiological condition of hunger. In 2013 16% of Americans lived in food insecure households (Food Recovery Network). This raises the question: Can that wasted food be recovered and repurposed in order to feed those who are hungry? The following document will describe the prevalence of food waste, food insecurity, and hunger in the US and the world, as well as explain how students at the University of Wyoming solved these issues within the Laramie, Wyoming community.

Food Waste Epidemic

At a 40% waste rate, the United States wastes more food than any other country in the world. Of that food, 40% is fresh fish, 23% eggs, 20% milk, and a vast majority is fresh produce. In a study done by the Food and Agriculture Organization in 2011, they found that more fruits and vegetables are wasted than consumed, and half our country's seafood gets thrown in the garbage (Gunders, 2012).

Food production, through farming, accounts for 80% of the United States freshwater supply, 30% of the world's agricultural land and 50% of the United States agricultural land. Our annual food waste results in wasting 45 trillion gallons of freshwater and 1.4 billion hectares of land. The rotting food in the landfills emits 25% of the atmosphere's methane, making it the third largest emitter of greenhouse gases. If this rotting food were removed from the landfills, it would be equivalent to removing one fifth of all cars off the road. (Gunders, 2012) Food production is responsible for 10% of the entire United States energy budget, when this food is wasted; energy is wasted through production, distribution, and preparation. (Gunders, 2012) According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN, food wastes costs \$750 billion globally every year. In the United States we are throwing away the equivalent of \$165 million, meaning the average American wastes anywhere from \$28-\$43 of food each month. (Food Recovery Network)

The loss of good food occurs at all steps in the supply chain: production, storage, processing, distribution, and at the consumer level. While it is evident something needs to be done, it has been nearly 15 years since there was a comprehensive report on food loss in the US. In an attempt to gather the existing research, Gunders' paper attempts to define where the majority of food loss occurs. They found that half of the wasted fruits

and vegetables are lost during farming and the other half is the result of consumer loss. Consumer loss can be from retail, food service, or households. This is defined as food that has been distributed and is in possession of the consumer. This is also where the majority of grain, seafood, meat, and milk waste occurs as well. Some causes of household waste include the lack of awareness, undervaluing food, misread labels, bulk purchases, poor meal planning, and preparing too much food. (Gunders, 2012)

There was a time when we wasted far less, and while food waste is still a global issue, there are places currently conserving their food much more efficiently than us. The United Kingdom and the European Union have implemented policy that aims to lower food waste 50% by 2020. In the first 5 years of its initiation food waste was down 18% in the United Kingdom. Americans currently waste 10 times more than someone in Southeast Asia. We are currently wasting 20% more food today than in 2000, 50% more than in 1990, and three times as much as Americans in 1960. (Ferdman, 2014) A study conducted in 1987 found that people who lived through the Great Depression or World War II wasted half as much as those who did not. (Gunders, 2012) This goes to show that household waste is not unavoidable and Americans are using up valuable resources that are ultimately being thrown out.

Gunders stated that reducing food waste is one of the top three ways that the US can improve its resource sustainability, which is being able to maintain our agricultural and economical resources indefinitely. (2012) The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) director, General José Graziano da Silva stated, "We simply cannot allow one-third of all the food we produce to go to waste or be lost because of inappropriate practices, when 870 million people go hungry every day." (Food Recovery Network) It is unmistakable there needs to be a change, and food demand will only continue to increase. By 2050 it is projected worldwide consumption will increase by 40 percent. In order to meet this the FAO estimates we will need 170 million more acres of farmland, however, if we can accomplish even a 50% decrease in food waste, the United Kingdom's Office for Science estimates we effectively increase food production by 25%, which would then reduce the need for added farmland. (Gunders, 2012)

Investing in food waste reduction strategies not only increases the efficiency of U.S. food systems but it can alleviate hunger and provide significant cost savings. The United States Census Bureau stated that one in six Americans do not have enough food to meet their energy requirements, and over 50 million Americans struggle to put food on the table. (Hunger Notes, 2015) While so many are struggling to fulfill their essential needs, 40% of the country's food is thrown out daily; this could feed over 25 million Americans.

Food Insecurity and Hunger

The most immediate problem with food waste is the amount of people suffering from hunger in the world. The worldwide energy demand is 4,600 kilocalories per person per day, however on average there are only 2,800 kilocalories available for consumption to meet that demand. (Gunders, 2012) This results in 870 million people suffering from chronic hunger, that's one in nine people in the world. Hunger even affects 14% of households in the United States. (Ferdman, 2014)

The issue of food insecurity and poverty has not gone unnoticed by the U.S. government. Several government programs have been introduced addressing food insecurity and attempting to help those stricken by poverty. Most of these programs run through the Food and Nutrition Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the largest of these being the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP, formally known as Food Stamps, serves over 40 million low income Americans every month by providing funding to pay for food at a variety of retailers. Another government program that addresses food insecurity is Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which provided food and nutrition education for pregnant women and their children. (Hunger Notes, 2015)

Government programs like SNAP and WIC have provided help to those suffering from food insecurity at the national level, however action needs to be taken at the state and local levels as well. With resources already limited and a continuing need to make our agriculture more sustainable, increasing food production is not the answer to curbing world hunger; instead it's the preservation of that food.

Is Food Recovery a Solution?

Food recovery is the collection and distribution of edible food before it goes to waste and currently only about 10% of edible food is currently being recovered in the United States. (Gunders, 2012) Food recovery can range from gleaning, to food rescue to food collection. Gleaning is the collection of crops from farms, farmers markets, or any food based institution and distribution to those who are stricken by poverty and hunger. Food rescue is the collection of perishable or prepared foods from retail sources or the service industry. Food collection, or sometimes known as food drives, involve collecting processed foods with a prolonged shelf life. The idea of food recovery is not new. The first non-profits to collect and repurpose otherwise wasted foods were originally introduced over 30 years ago. (Philips, Hoenigman, Higbee, & Reed, 2013)

The study done by Philips and colleagues looked at whether food recovery was a time-sensitive and sustainable solution to food waste and food demand. The researchers built an empirical model for the food waste process and aimed to develop an optimized framework in order to develop low-cost solutions to food recovery and redistribution. The study was done in north central Colorado using a variety of suppliers and non-profits in Boulder and Broomfield counties. The study found that while there was still a slight shortage in meeting the food demand, using food rescue allowed for a significant increase in food availability for the needy. (Philips, Hoenigman, Higbee, & Reed, 2013)

The study by Philips et al (2013), also found that in small, dense communities their sustainability model allowed for utilization of more suppliers in a dense area, which allows a significant reduction in cost. Laramie and the University of Wyoming reside in an area less than 18 square miles with a population barely over 30,000, making this town a perfect candidate for food recovery based on Philips' standards. Students at the University noticed the amount of food being wasted at their school and struck out to implement their own food recovery program. This program would be a solution to eliminating waste as well as providing for the needy in their own community.

Execution

Cowboy Food Sharing is a University program that was started in the fall of 2013. What started as a class project for a Community and Public Health course soon turned

into a long-term endeavor to permanently change the way the University of Wyoming handled their food waste. This project involved a great extent of work and incredible amounts of determination. Cowboy Food Sharing aims to change campus policy to allow the repurposing and donation of food that would be normally wasted. In order to execute this elaborate plan the students mapped out specific steps in order to execute the life-changing project. These steps consisted of in depth planning, forming contacts, researching food waste on campus, determining need in Laramie community, drafting new policy, meeting legal regulations, holding mock donations, and lastly implement a self-sufficient food recovery program.

In order to accomplish a policy change at the University of Wyoming we had to constantly revisit our goals and revise the steps to accomplishment. A number of contacts were made, several drafts of a new policy were written, and constant pressure to move on with the project had to be applied to the executives involved in the project. When successful however, the University made huge strides in food sustainability not only for the state of Wyoming but also for universities across the nation. The program not only wanted to change the way Laramie handled food recovery, but also wanted to start to domino effect across the state and the entire nation.

Community and Public Health

The project began in the fall semester of 2013. Christine Porter was teaching Community and Public Health and assigned the class a course assignment that was to find a project that would positively affect the community's health. There were a variety of different options for the project like community education, volunteer work, or sharing goods with the community. Our group started as a group of eight. Originally the group had the idea of "Sam's Bags", a way to collect and distribute goods for the needy in our own and surrounding communities. This project was unable to make it past the proposal stage however, due to how ambitious and tedious it was going to be. Christine Porter, our course instructor, acknowledged our passion to help feed those who suffer from food insecurity and directed us down an alternative route. This route involved working with another faculty member Virginia Vincenti, a professor in the Family and Consumer Science Department. Vincenti had previously been pushing the University's Residential and Dining Service to take the unused food and distribute it to organizations within the

community that could repurpose and successfully utilize it. We were drawn to the long-lasting effects of backing this implementation and decided this was a project that could really improve our campus and our community.

Our original goals were simple, decrease waste on campus by adjusting Campus Food Policy, promote student support and student lead programs, as well as help those in a lower socio-economical status (SES). Undertaking these goals would consist of linking up with Dr. Vincenti to finish the project she started and find out how we could use a student voice to make her food recovery endeavors complete. Student lead and promoted programs were often successful and highly supported by the community and campus executives, using this power we had was supposed to push the project to become finalized.

While these goals continued throughout the course of the project, as we attained more information from Virginia about the progress of the project, additional goals had to be added. Originally we were under the impression that we would be the student voices behind the project to help finalize everything, however we were informed that there was no current policy in place and no attempts to draft a policy had been made. From here our new, and most significant goal was born, draft a University policy and rally campus support to ensure the future preservation of the policy change.

We now finally understood the true magnitude of the project and were able to break it down into manageable assignments to be divided amongst the group. One task was contacting other Food Directors and creating a food recovery and sustainability network. We reached out to directors at other universities who had implemented similar policies and we were able to gain awareness of the concepts to be included as well as the essentials for a successful policy. We talked to Oklahoma State Dining Services, Iowa State, and the University of Arkansas. These contacts provided information about what to include in our policy that helped develop their own policies, as well as provided endless amounts of research about food recovery.

Nancy Keller from Iowa State University may have been one of the biggest contacts during this phase. She provided us with the who, what, when, where, and how that needed to be included in our policy as well as an example of the what needs to be

included in the release and waiver for insurance and legal issues. Nancy defined the “who” portion of our policy as the contacts for everyone involved. It would include names and phone numbers of the members involved from Dining Services, the Laramie Soup Kitchen, and Risk Management. The “what” section would include exactly what food organizations were allowed to repurpose. For examples this could include pre-packaged foods, entrees kept at appropriate temperatures, and food from catering events that had not been put on the serving line. The next section, “when”, needed to include to logistics of when exactly the food would be picked up and who would be picking it up. It was also to include the repercussions of food not being picked up and what forms must be filled out for the donation to occur. “Where” was another section full of logistics and minor details. This is where we would include information needed about parking and the different locations on campus. Lastly, “how” included the specifics about who would be in charge of packaging the food, what the food would be packaged in and who would provide that packaging, as well as volunteers involved at any point in the process.

Based on the information Nancy provided the Cowboy Food Sharing Project defined a new set of steps to draft our own policy. The first step was contacting the executives at UW Residents Life and Risk Management. In order to continue, we would need to decide on a fitting non-profit organization with adequate need and the resources to execute our extensive plan. After that we would need to define the logistics of transporting the food between the school and the soup kitchen, as well as plan the best communication method, and plan a schedule that worked with both parties of the project.

One vital contact to the success of our group was Nicole Civita from the University of Arkansas. Nicole provided in depth information about the legal guide to food recovery and helped us define what food we would include in our policy. This information was also vital when working with the Legal and Risk Management Department for the UW. After working with the department, we found that their only issue would be to make sure the food remained safe and that the organizations to be receiving must have the proper insurance required by the University. All of these concerns we were able to address in our proposal.

Next, we needed to define the proper transportation, communication, scheduling, and many other logistics that were often overlooked. In order to make this happen other organizations within the community needed to be contacted as well. Our first step was deciding which non-profit organization had the biggest need for the unused food as well as the resources to collect and properly repurpose the food. The two major organizations in question were the Laramie Soup Kitchen and Interfaith-Good Samaritan. Wyoming required that the organization have adequate insurance, transportation, and containers, therefore our group chose the Laramie Soup Kitchen as the recipient in our policy.

Contacting our own director of Residents' Life and Dining Services was next on our list. This was considered to be the most fundamental individual in passing our policy. Eric Webb was the Director of Dining Services but has since taken over as the executive Director of Residents' Life and Dining Services. Before meeting with Eric we wanted to have a drafted policy including all of the logistics we had worked out over the previous four months. Based on the information we'd received from our contacts we'd made as well as the information from employees on our campus we were able to draft the first draft of the policy (see Appendix A).

Unfortunately, this marked the end of our Community and Public Health course and we were not successful in finishing the project. Over the course of the four months we realized that this was an extended process that involved many hands to accomplish. While the project proved to be more daunting than expected, we had many victories during the four months, one of which was getting our first local newspaper publication. Nicholas Menarino interviewed our group about the details of the project (see Appendix B). This was the first major community backing we got, people started to get excited about the project and wanted to know how they could help.

Birth of Cowboy Food

While the first semester did not go as planned, our group did not give up. In the spring of 2014 we rejoined to finish the project. We started by revisiting the first draft of the University of Wyoming's policy we had begun the previous semester (Appendix A). By April of 2014 our group was confident we had included all of the necessary logistics and had the background information to meet with Eric again. Eric had many ideas for

the future and execution of our project and led us to our next goal. In order for the food donations to occur there had to be a location for the food to be stored while it awaited pick-up, unfortunately the storage on campus was slim so a new refrigerator was going to need to be purchased.

Quickly the team put all of their resources into fundraising money for the new fridge. In less than a month the team reached their goal of raising \$2000. The money was raised through You Caring, an online donation service, where over 50 people supported the cause. The link to our donation page was shared on numerous Facebook pages and even made it on several Twitter accounts. This was a huge success for us but we were still far from our long term goal – recovering food from the university for the soup kitchen.

In May of 2014 our next encounter with the legal department occurred. We had met our fundraising goal and thought we were on the fast track to buying the fridge and starting donations. The Universities Legal and Risk Management Department were not ready to go through with donations just yet. We encountered several speed bumps that unfortunately brought us into the summer of 2014 stumped on where to move next. Miscommunication between the parties involved resulted in some internal conflict that slowed the project down greatly. In order for the project to continue Dining Services was to review our policy, make necessary changes, and then forward that policy to the legal department. From there legal would make sure there was no liability or risk to the university and ensure all insurance logistics were in place. The group and myself decided that the issues at hand needed to be solved between Dining Services and Legal, and for the next couple months of the summer we would step back.

Consumer Issue's Conference

While that summer brought us little to no progress in implementing the policy, Virginia Vincenti gave me the opportunity to speak on a panel at the upcoming Consumer Issues Conference. The Consumer Issues Conference (CIC) is designed to focus on public policy issues that affect consumers. The goal of the conference is to inspire people to be proactive in changing both the legal and market environments. In 2014 the conference focused on the topic of food, including perceptions, practices, and policies. The conference featured speakers on local food issues, legal food policies and

global food marketing. Speaking at CIC gave us the opportunity to receive not only local, but nationwide, support for Cowboy Food. It also served as a networking opportunity to talk to some of the most successful professionals in the food recovery and sustainability field, which would lead to a more effective final policy.

Early in the school year as I attempted to figure out what strides Residents Life and Legal had made over the summer. A meeting was scheduled to discuss the newest draft of the policy, and quickly this meeting grew as supporters from all over the community wanted to join. The meeting included myself, Patrick Call the executive director of Residents Life and Dining Services at the time, Eric Webb, Christine Porter, Virginia Vincenti, Dee Pridgen one of the CIC coordinators, Emily Madden the Director of the soup kitchen at the time, as well as Paul Hiemer the Director of United Way, Tom Martin the Executive Director of Interfaith-Good Samaritan, and Mark Zieres the Director of UW catering. Our goal was to show the University the community support we had for this project and push them to work with legal to keep moving forward.

The meeting went better than planned. We quickly realized that Dining Services wasn't as opposed to the policy as we had inferred and with a few more edits to the policy and push from the community, we could soon be a national leader in food donations. The next focus was all about the conference. We believed seeing the community support and listening to the current nation leaders in food sustainability would give Mr. Call the push to move forward

Most of that semester involved planning the logistics of the conference with Virginia Vincenti and the other conference coordinator Dee Pridgen. Virginia and Dee invited me to the conference panel meetings where I was exposed to budgeting the conference, planning the schedule, along with many other logistics of the conference. I was also extremely busy planning my own panel's presentation. I was on a panel with Emily Madden, Patrick Call, and Gayle Woodson, the founder of Feeding Laramie Valley. Feeding Laramie Valley is a local Laramie organization that aims to increase sustainable food equality in Albany County. I was introduced to Emily Madden one year prior to the event, when we originally started planning the policy, since we had had very little opportunity to work together but this semester allowed us to take huge strides in

working together to make food recovery at the University of Wyoming possible. Patrick Call had only recently become involved in the project at the time.

The conference was held October 8th through the 10th, with my panel being Thursday October 9th in the second session. Not only was the conference successful, but our goal of pushing Mr. Call's support was also a success. During the conference Nicole Civita and Nancy Keller, two of our original contacts, were feature speakers, as well as my advisor Christine Porter. A copy of the transcription of our panel's discussion on food waste and food recovery can be seen in Appendix C.

Finishing Touches?

Less than a month after the conference another meeting with PC and the food donation group was called. At this meeting we made the final revisions to the policy, make plans to draft a memorandum of understanding (MoU), sort out the specific logistics of food storage, and finally launch phase I, the trail phase of our project. While this was all very exciting, it was also completely out of my hand for the next several months. Residents Life sent the policy to the legal department so the MoU could be put in place. While so much of the project to this point was student lead, I was now forced to sit back while the University and the soup kitchen hacked at the details.

Again I was left finishing another semester without an implemented policy. The following semester I touched base with Residents Life, while originally the outcome seemed promising and phase I seemed to be in reach. We also learned that only Mr. Call was stepping down from executive director and that Eric Webb would be taking over. This meant that Eric would be playing doing double duty and one of the most vital individuals in Dining Services would become too swamped to focus on the food donation project. The end of the Spring 2015 semester approached with no word from Eric Webb or Residents Life, and in May email exchanges communicated with us that there seemed to be an insurance issue on the Soup Kitchen's end. On top of that, as we feared, Eric was swamped and was unsure where the project had gone and the details of the policy landed in his assistant's, Renee Ballard, hands.

Renee informed me that Legal had asked for a few more revisions to the MoU but it was still moving forward and they were excited to begin donations. By this time I

learned that revisions take time, especially when working between three busy completely separate departments. Unfortunately, as the revisions were in process, Emily Madden stepped down from the executive director position at the soup kitchen. Our project was put on pause once again while the soup kitchen looked to replace Emily Madden.

In the end of October 2015 an article came out about the new Executive Director of the Laramie Soup Kitchen, this was good news in itself because that meant the project could get moving, however the news got even better as reading the article and the Cowboy Food Sharing project was not only mentioned, but implied it was a done deal. Once again I found myself digging for answers. This time the answers were better than I could have ever imagined. An email to Renee led me to Amy Bey, who worked in Residents Life and sat on the Food Sustainability Committee. Amy informed me that donations had begun only weeks before and that everything was running smoothly. She had heard about the program several times and started digging around to see what had happened to it, turns out the policy was ready to go and a simple lack of communication stopped it from being implemented. The logistics were already defined in the MoU and final policy (see Appendix D), so once the Soup Kitchen and participating campus dining centers were alerted donation began and have been running according to plan.

Results

While planning, drafting, and revising the policy consumed our lives for three years, the attention to detail and commitment to the small elements allowed for the logistics of the policy to run smoothly. The collection and pick up has gone off without a hitch in the seven months of donation. The soup kitchen picks up the food after being notified by a dining services supervisor. The food that is being donated is stored in the walk in refrigerator at CJ Convenient Store. This is a vital contribution to the 100 pounds of food that is donated to the soup kitchen daily and cuts down the university's waste greatly.

Logistics

The food donations can occur in one of two places at the University, either through residential dining, Washakie Dining Center, or campus dining, such as the Book

& Bean, Rolling Mill, and CJ's convenience store. These two are separated in the policy because the logistics of day-to-day donation operations are different for the two locations. Washakie Dining Center donates fresh produce, perishable items, or any miscellaneous food items that were over-ordered or in excess at the end of the semester. These residential dining donations will only occur and are strictly limited to the end of the fall and spring semesters.

Campus dining differs in that they will donate any prepackaged and sealed perishable food that would otherwise be considered no longer for sale. These types of donations can occur throughout the calendar year. At the beginning of each day, Tuesday through Friday, Cara Cassabaum Morgan, the retail manager for Dining Services, checks for any items that have passed the sell-by date and follows the eligibility guidelines for donation. All eligible items are placed in the CJ's convenience store walk in cooler in the designated location for pick up. Cara contacts the Laramie Soup Kitchen daily by 9 am if there are any items that need to be picked up, if items are present those must be picked up by the soup kitchen by 11 am. If containers are needed to store the food, the soup kitchen is responsible for providing those and returning them sanitized for future donations.

Tony Mendoza, the head chef for Laramie Soup Kitchen, is in charge of all pickups for the soup kitchen. Each morning Tony makes his rounds around the community to pick up various donations. These include Safeway, Ridley's, various restaurants, and now the University of Wyoming. While no official parking pass was given to the Soup Kitchen, Transit and Parking are aware of the donation policy and allow Tony to momentarily park outside of the student Union to pick up the food.

Donations for Residential Dining are very similar to campus dining, however like stated before, they only occur at the end of the semester when Washakie is closed. Managers of UW Dining Services will decide what food or food items meet the donation regulations. Those items will be packaged in the provided containers for transportation and stored according to the HACCP safety plan. The Laramie Soup Kitchen will be contacted and must come pick up the items from Washakie within the same day. Pick up from Washakie follows the same guidelines as the year round pickups from the

Union; the soup kitchen is permitted to momentarily park outside of Washakie while the pick up is in progress and can do so without penalty from transit and parking services.

Impact

Unfortunately, neither the Laramie Soup Kitchen nor Dining Services keeps track of the exact amount of food that has been donated. This does not mean neither can say how big of an impact this policy has made for both parties.

In 2015 the soup kitchen was able to serve more meals than they ever have before, they served nearly 15,500 meals, 600 more than the prior year. On average the soup kitchen feeds 60 people per day, which was 5 more people than in 2014. One lunch the soup kitchen served 87 guests, the most they had in one meal in 2015. All of these are made possible from the 34,700 pounds of donated food they received throughout the year. This does not include the additional 20,000 pounds of food that was donated from a truck accident in late November. On average the soup kitchen receives 136 pounds of donated food daily. The support from the community allows for an extreme reduction in food cost, currently only 2% of their expenses is used to buy food. Their pantry is constantly stocked with breads, their freezer is full of over 700 pounds of cheese, and they can now provide a daily salad bar for their guests.

The Soup Kitchen had a 53% reduction in the budgeted food cost, this allowed the funding for many upgrades at the soup kitchen. They were able to completely empty the pantry to repair walls, strip and refinish the floors and completely reorganize. Lights were replaced to allow for LED lighting and the fridge was separated from the rest of the pantry, which made for smoother food preparation and also made the food available to people after hours.

University of Wyoming had their part in providing these opportunities for the soup kitchen. Last November donations officially began as a result of the Cowboy Food Sharing Project. Campus dining provided them with salads to sandwiches, wraps to burritos, and even the occasional sushi roll. These prepackaged items are perfect for the sack lunches that the kitchen provides on Fridays but have also been given at the daily lunches. At the end of the fall semester, Laramie was struck with a snowstorm that delayed the food truck for getting to Laramie until the day before Washakie was closing

for winter break. The vast amount of produce that could not have been used in a mere day was able to provide an ample amount of food to the soup kitchen. Thanks to the Residence Dining clause in the policy, an end of the semester donation thanks to the Cowboy Food Sharing project. This resulted in over 1,000 pounds of fresh produce and other food items from residents and campus dining, including lettuce, squash, eggs, milk, chicken nuggets, and so many more nutritious, fresh, items.

The implementation of this policy before the finals weeks snow storm saved the University for wasting hundreds of pounds of fresh, perfectly edible, food. One of the most positive impacts this policy has many on the University is the ability to provide the kitchen with items that have been taking up space in their storage. The University's disposal policy requires a long line of steps and the work of several departments; because of this complicated process many unneeded and unused items end up taking up space in the school's storage. With the food recovery policy, dining services found an efficient way for to repurpose unneeded items while also providing essential products for those in need. Some of these additional donated items included plastic ware such as cups and plates, as well as several pounds of dried beans.

Conclusion

In the article written about Cowboy Food Sharing in November 2013 stated in the first line, "Dr. Christine Porter's community and Public Health class at the University of Wyoming ends Thursday, but a group of eight students' semester-long project won't be finished for some time... Years, maybe." (Demarino, 2013) We had no idea at the time how true this statement was. Exactly two years after the publication of that article the first collection and donations occurred at the University of Wyoming, making them one of the few universities to date to take such a stride. The project is still young and with time everyone involved believes it has the ability to grow and be the forefront to food recovery programs everywhere.

Future

Three years of persistence finally led to the University of Wyoming to become one of few Universities in our nation to begin a food recovery project, however the

project doesn't end here. After finding out we'd succeed in implementing the policy Christine and myself quickly began talking about options to take this to the next level.

Early in the project there was a lot of hope to have UW catering involved in the donations, however with the already evident legal restrictions, the current policy saved catering and focused on on-campus dining services including campus cafes and Washakie Dining Center. Catering was more complicated due to the strict temperature rules as well as laws about donating food that has been exposed on a serving line. Now that the dining center policy has been enacted it is hoped that enacting a catering policy will come easier, ensuring that the logistics of the increased food safety are worked out. In my last interview with Amy Bey she stated that she does not see a reason why the project couldn't move to catering as long as the food safety logistics are sorted out.

The most important future plan is for this project to start a domino effect. The University of Wyoming is now standing at the fore-front of food recovery, setting an example for food sustainability not only in our community, our state, but also worldwide. The communities endless support shows that projects like these will remain and are sustainable, and the endless number of corporations across the country introducing food recovery programs show that there's a bright future for food sustainability.

Appendix A

University Dining Food Policy Proposal

Introduction:

This is a policy proposal in which University Dining at the University of Wyoming is agreeing to donate leftover food to local community organizations. The following form recognizes that the Bill Emerson Food Donation Act is applicable in this circumstance, University Dining is donating the food in good faith and thus this organization is protected from civil and criminal liability should the product cause later harm to recipients of the food. It should also be recognized that the Laramie Soup Kitchen will be required to have their own liability insurance, something that will cover any harm caused to recipients of this food.

Policy Outline:

- **Who:**
 - **Section 1: Organizations Involved**
 - University Dining is donating left over food to the Laramie Soup Kitchen, for distribution to those that are in need in the Laramie community.
 - Laura Peterson (Risk Management Director) has agreed that the University of Wyoming is protected by the Bill Emerson Food Donation Act ensuring that this transfer of food is not a liability for the University of Wyoming.
 - Eric Webb (Dining Services Director) has agreed that this policy may be enacted and the leftover food can be picked up by the Laramie Soup Kitchen.
 - Emily Madden (Executive Director at the Laramie Soup Kitchen) has agreed that there will be a means of transportation and containers from the Laramie Soup Kitchen which will be used in the food exchange. The logistics of this policy are outlined below.
 - Student organizations may be involved in the future if they are needed, but once the policy is enacted it will be sustained between University Dining and the Laramie Soup Kitchen.
 - In the event that the Laramie Soup Kitchen has excess food that they cannot use, they may donate food to other organizations.
- **How:**
 - **Section 1: Time/Place of transfer**
 - At the end of every meal service/catering event remaining food will be packaged for transportation, in containers from the group receiving the food that day (as of now, just the Laramie Soup Kitchen). At 9 o clock on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, the Laramie Soup Kitchen will pick up the food with their own means of transportation at exactly 9 a.m. The location of the pickup site is the

University Catering loading dock between Crane hall and Hill hall. Any cooked food will have its temperature taken before transit and upon arrival to final destination to ensure safety. The Bill Emerson Food Donation Act protects University Dining from civil and criminal liability, should the product cause any harm to its recipients.

- **Section 2: Containers/Organization**
 - Required containers will be provided by the Laramie Soup Kitchen. The Laramie Soup Kitchen will pick up containers full of donated food, and leave empty containers in their designated refrigerator for future food donations. All transportation of food will be the responsibility of the Laramie Soup Kitchen. The University Dining will be responsible for deciding what foods can and cannot be used for the Laramie Soup Kitchen.
- **Section 3: Efficiency**
 - In the event of a no-show on the part of the Laramie Soup Kitchen the food will be discarded, and if a no-show happens three times the Laramie Soup Kitchen will be removed from University Dining food donations program. This is enacted in order to ensure that no time is wasted storing and packaging the food if it is not going to be transported.
- **What**
 - **Section 1: Food transfer**
 - The Laramie Soup Kitchen will be able to take the designated left over food from University Dining. Food donations include sandwiches, salads, fruit, baked goods, etc. These food donations could contain prepared food that was unable to be served to patrons by University Dining. All goods to be used must be fresh, unused, and safe for consumption, no scraps or food removed from serving trays can be used.
 - **Section 2: Food that will be donated**
 - Foods that will be donated will meet University Dining Hazards Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) safety plan. Food that is usable and can be transferred must be approved by University Dining.
 - **Section 3: Special Circumstances**
 - Special donations may be made after semester, before break, or after special holiday meals. If University Dining has extra food that cannot be used on campus, special delivery times and donations can be made under the same set of rules.

- These types of donations will be separate from weekly pick-ups and will have to be set up between the University and the Laramie Soup Kitchen.
- **Where**
 - **Section 1: Place of Transfer**
 - The transfer of food will primarily take place at the University Catering loading dock which is located between Crane hall and Hill hall. If there are special circumstances (catering event), the food may be picked up in a different place, designated by Dining Services Director, Eric Webb, or a University employee designated with the authority to make this decision. These circumstances will be established and both parties will know about them no less than 8 hours prior to pick up.
 - **Section 2: Parking**
 - Parking for the Laramie Soup Kitchen will be in front of the University Catering loading dock. At this specific location a parking pass is not required.
 - Transpark will be contacted about the transfer that will take place, in order to help ensure that the Laramie Soup Kitchen volunteers or employees will not be ticketed while picking up the food.
 - In the event that a Transpark parking ticket is issued to the Laramie Soup Kitchen, University Dining is not responsible for compensation and cannot override Transpark parking tickets.
 - **Section 3: Additional Places**
 - If there is a catering event the food could be picked up directly after the event is over, upon prior agreement between University Dining and the Laramie Soup Kitchen.

A signature on this document establishes that the University of Wyoming is in agreement with the applicable organization that the above policy will be respected and followed by both entities. In the case of any amendments to the policy, all organizations should be contacted and should be in full agreement.

Appendix B

Students bring classroom exercise to campus

By NICHOLAS DEMARINO / news@laramieboomerang.com

Special to the Laramie Boomerang | Posted: Saturday, November 30, 2013 12:00 am

Dr. Christine Porter's community and public health class at the University of Wyoming ends Thursday, but a group of eight students' semester-long project won't be finished for some time. Years, maybe.

"This isn't something you can just do within a semester," said Matt Frakes, a pre-med senior from Evanston. "There are a lot of logistics we have to figure out yet."

If all goes according to plan, these students will influence UW policy and help connect Laramie's needy with food otherwise bound for the dumpster.

"The community needs this and the university is committed to building relationships with the community," said Kelvin Childress, a pre-med junior from Kimball, Neb., who's part of the class group. "It makes a lot of sense, and we've all been impressed by how willing the university has been to meet with us and work with us."

As of mid-November, the unofficial student group is ready to pitch a rough draft of some policy changes to the university powers that be. But that's by no means the final step in turning this academic ideation into ontic change.

"Their project has a much longer arc than the others," Porter said. "I'm surprised, impressed, and grateful (that they're doing it)."

Classroom conceptions

Breast cancer awareness campaigns. Free massages to reduce stress. These are a few of the projects students have launched in recent years as part of the University of Wyoming's community and public health class.

Pragmatic projects weren't on the syllabus when Porter first taught the class four years ago, but, in the intervening years, they were added.

"A former student of mine introduced the idea when she taught the class the last couple of years," Porter said. "I loved the idea ... so I continued it this year."

Porter asked students to splinter into small groups to focus on different issues instead of combining to work on a singular topic.

“I guess the main thing was that we wanted to do something that actually mattered,” said Lex Leonhardt, a pre-med senior from Riverton who’s part of the small group working on campus and community food issues.

One of their early ideas was to do something about homelessness, but, after hitting some proverbial brick walls, they settled on a related topic: hunger. The group spent much of the fall semester researching the problem and looking to outside institutions for insight and inspiration.

“Two of the most functional programs we found were at Oklahoma State and Iowa State,” Childress said. “If the UW gets in on this, we’ll be one of the leaders.”

Hard numbers on campus food waste have been hard to come by.

“Still, Eric Webb — he’s the director of dining services — has worked with us a lot and been very supportive,” Childress said. “To my understanding, catering is really where we waste the most food.”

It’s fairly intuitive: You plan a meal for 150 people at a conference, 40 show up, and you’re left with enough extra food for 110 people.

Extant policies

Hungry people need food. The university has extra food. Hungry people could eat the university’s extra food, right? Not necessarily.

“There are liability issues, policy issues, and even some political issues,” said Dr. Virginia Vincenti, a University of Wyoming professor who’s tried to arrange for extra food at her annual Consumer Issues Conference to be donated to local charities.

As dining policy stands now, handling and storing procedures appear to prohibit, or at least inhibit, certain kinds of food items from making their way to other venues. A whole fruit? That’s probably fine. A sliced piece of fruit? That’s probably not fine.

Vinenti, who met with Porter’s students to discuss campus food waste, said she’s encouraged by the group.

“Something like this could be a great boost for the nonprofits in our community who are struggling to serve an increasing need,” she said, “And it won’t cost the university for the food, though it might in labor, depending on how much of a role the students take in this.”

Emily Madden, executive director of the Laramie Soup Kitchen, said an ongoing relationship with university dining services makes sense.

“We have the space and we have the ability to take these donations and process these foods,” Madden said. “Our kitchen is already inspected by Public Health (Department) officials, and the ‘Good Samaritan Act’ protects donors from liability.”

The federal “Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act” of 1996 protects food donors who “act in good faith” from some forms of litigation, although its protections are arguably limited and open to interpretation.

Emergent needs

Madden said there’s a growing need for food donations in Laramie.

Citing recent meal figures, she said the kitchen served 13,483 meals in 2010, 15,398 meals in 2011, 19,959 meals in 2012, and, as of Oct. 31, served 17,887 meals in 2013.

“What’s really shocking to me is that, since we recently started tracking new clients, we’ve seen an average of 65 first-time clients seeking services each month,” Madden said.

She wasn’t shocked, however, when the group of University of Wyoming students approached her for input earlier this year.

“You’d be surprised to see how many of our volunteers are students,” Madden said.

“These students are becoming more aware of local communities and seeing places where they can make connections — and that’s really impressive.”

Porter said something similar about her students.

“They’ve been so generous with their time on this,” she said. “I hope that, moving forward, the institution continues to work with them and that we take this small risk that could be for such a great benefit.”

The students, themselves, were likewise hopeful.

“We’ve contacted several organizations,” Frakes said, “And there’s definitely an interest and a need for this.”

“We want to continue working on this and hope that we can get something started,” Leonhardt added. “This is about more than a grade.”

Appendix C

Cowboy Food Share Timeline

	2013		2014		2015			2016
	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer	Fall	Spring
Community and Public Health Course								
Start of food recovery								
First meeting with Eric Webb								
First draft of policy								
Fundraising								
Legal takes over policy								
Consumer Issue Conference								
Campus Executives and community meeting								
Drafting the MoU								
Support from Food, Health, and Justice								
Implementing policy/begin sharing								
Honors Project Presentation								

Appendix D

UW Dining Services Food Donation Policy

I) PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the University of Wyoming to assist those in need within the Laramie Community of donating left over food to the Laramie Soup Kitchen for distribution from specified UW campus locations.

II) UW CAMPUS LOCATIONS

This policy applies to donation of food from the following UW Campus locations:

- a. UW Dining Services
 - i. Residential Dining: Washakie Dining Center
 - ii. Campus Dining: Book & Bean; Rolling Mill and CJ's convenience store

III) TYPE OF FOOD

This policy applies to the donation of the following types of food:

- a. Residential Dining: Washakie Dining Center
 - i. Fresh produce, perishable items or miscellaneous food items that were mistakenly over-ordered
 - ii. Donation of food shall be limited to the end of the Fall/Spring Semester
 - iii. UW Dining Services will be solely responsible for deciding what foods will or will not be donated.
- b. Campus Dining
 - i. Prepackaged/sealed perishable food or food items that would be otherwise be considered no longer for sale.
 - ii. Donation of this type of food may occur throughout the calendar year
 - iii. UW Dining Services will be solely responsible for deciding what foods can and cannot be donated.

IV) PROCEDURES FOR FOOD DONATION:

- a. Residential Dining: Washakie Dining Center
 - i. At the end of each semester when the Washakie Dining Center closes, they may have items for donation. The leftover food will be packaged for transportation, in containers the Laramie Soup Kitchen has provided and properly stored according to the HACCP safety plan.
 - ii. The Laramie Soup Kitchen will be contacted by University Dining staff to arrange pick-up from the Washakie Dining Center the same day as they are contacted.
- b. Campus Dining.

damage, personal injury or loss or death, in any way connected with University's donation of food.

- iii.** The Laramie Soup Kitchen shall execute an MOU with UW to formalize the procedures for food donation set forth in this policy, which shall specifically include the provisions set forth in i. and ii above.

References

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