

The Change I Want to See in the World

My problem

When thinking of a project to undertake on my campus or in my community, it's a little hard to do, considering that many people in the Lawrence area are already very environmentally conscious, and many have started programs that are a model for other communities nationally. Many times you think of something to do and you find out that not only is someone already doing it, but they've assembled a team and are already hard at work. Keeping this in mind, I tried to think about something that I was already aware of that other people may have overlooked.

This led me to remember my times in the scholarship halls on campus. One of my favorite things about them were that they all composted their food and other scraps that could go there, like paper products and even hair from our hairbrushes. This isn't my problem. My problem is that this is the only place I know of on campus that I could dispose of compost. Many places on campus have compostable forks, spoons, and even cups, but no composter. When they are thrown away, as we know, they decompose anaerobically, which produces methane, a stronger greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. This seems like a step in the right direction, it really actually does something harmful. They do have recycling bins on campus, so if they were recyclable instead, they would actually be doing something better.

Rather, I want to start a campus-wide composting program. If they are going the extra mile to provide compostable single-use items, they should also have a place to dispose of them properly. We only have recycling and trash available in all of the public areas of campus, not composting. However, other campuses are implementing composting services successfully, and I want to bring this to my university.

Today, I took my sister on a mini tour of Johnson County Community College (I took some classes here during high school and for a couple summers), where I saw that they have composting bins, right next to recycling bins. After doing some research, it looks like they've been composting on campus since 2011, and uses In-vessel composting, which "is an industrial form of composting biodegradable waste that occurs in enclosed reactors." They take in 400 pounds of food waste daily through just the dining services [1]. The website even shows current composting data [2].

All this information is available by simply searching "compost" on the JCCC website. When you go to the KU website and search the same thing, it only shows workshops and compost sales done by the city of Lawrence, but this compost by the city is only from yard waste, not food or other sources. This means that for the whole city of Lawrence, there is no public service for disposing of compostable materials that aren't from your yard, like food scraps.

My solution

My goal is to save KU from wasting their compostable material that is generated on campus daily, and since JCCC is smaller than KU, it is extremely likely that the KU produces way more than 400 pounds of compostables, and since this has saved JCCC \$5,000 worth of grounds waste and generated \$20,000 worth of natural fertilizers, KU could theoretically gain even more of those monetary benefits while doing a great thing for the environment.

Whether this is by implementing a composting program similar to that of JCCC's which produces all those benefits for the campus, or even just finding an organization or company that will dispose of the compost for us, like what we had when I lived in the scholarship halls. Either way, I really just want a place where I can ethically dispose of a banana peel on campus without littering. Honestly, I am a little surprised this isn't already an initiative that is going on already.

My future

Assuming that a compost program can be implemented on campus in the next year, I can see myself thoroughly enjoying a salad on campus that I bought from the food court, and being able to toss the waste, so my remains, the packaging, napkins, and a fork, into a compost bin, and seeing many of my classmates doing the same thing. Knowing that the waste that is produced on campus will be dramatically reduced by allowing people to put their food scraps and biodegradable packaging back into the earth would make me incredibly happy, and give me so much hope for the future of sustainability.



My poster ^

[1] <http://www.jccc.edu/sustainability/campus-initiatives/composting.html>

[2] <https://sites.google.com/site/jcccsustainability/composting-dashboard>