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Green Queens  
Champlain College  
13 October 2019

### Day 13: Greenest

The article was heartbreaking to read, and it makes me wonder if the statistics hold true at Champlain College. A big cause of students skipping meals is because of high, inflated school costs. Champlain is a small private school that costs about \$56,000 per year before scholarships. I'm sure there are many students that struggle to have adequate money to buy groceries.

#### **How many students are food insecure?**

This is a tricky question for Champlain College. A good percentage of students live on campus which means that they are required to get the meal plan as well. This means they always have some food resources because we have unlimited swipes at the main dining hall. For those that live off of campus, if they shop correctly, the price they would pay for food would be far less than the price we pay for the campus dining services. However, our food services have not done well at providing enough food with enough nutrition for students with any eating restrictions like being vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, and/or lactose intolerant. Sodexo, our dining hall provider, claims to be making changes to accommodate the people who need different options, but as a vegetarian myself, it was often difficult to find healthy foods to fill me up.

It is often a struggle for many students to find adequate meals in the dining hall, which leads them to looking at outside food. Students already pay over \$2,500 for the dining plan per semester, so it is painstaking when they have to go out for groceries and restaurants on top of that. College is already so expensive, so adding in issues with food makes it so much worse. Students often do not enjoy their dining hall food, but there should be enough choices so that a vegetarian like myself can live off of more than carbs and dairy.

This year, I am living in Champlain's student apartments where the dining hall is not required, and I am so incredibly grateful that I will never have to eat there again. These student apartments are incredibly nice and very modern, with a great kitchen. They are, however, quite expensive, which could cause some issues with grocery money for some students. My roommate works an off-campus job, and sometimes she struggles to be able to pay us back for her share of the groceries. School is stressful and time consuming enough, students shouldn't have to worry about feeding themselves too.

#### **Where does our leftover food go?**

Our dining hall has the goal of a zero waste experience, and they plan to accomplish that by 2020, but this doesn't seem realistic at this point. Currently, we have compostable take out containers, compostable cutlery, and a large composting initiative. Rather than having a trash can by the dish return area, we only have a compost bin. Nearly everything in the main dining hall can be placed into the compost bin or is able to be washed and reused. We also have trayless dining to reduce the amount of water needed to wash dishes. While we do a good

job with composting, we still have problems with products and packaging around the dining options having to go into the trash. Furthermore, students tend to think about actual food leftovers as “fine” because they can just compost them, when we should reduce before we compost.

**Do we have a food pantry on campus?**

We do not have a large, official food pantry that the dining hall is involved with, but we have a small, donation-based food pantry in our Swap Shop. The Swap Shop is a student founded campus space where students, faculty, and people from the public can donate items as well as take any items for free. Within that space, we have a few bins where non perishables can be placed for anyone to take for free as well. Not too many people seem to know about it, but we are trying to increase our outreach.

**Are we part of the Food Recovery Network?**

No. However, University of Vermont is, and it would be interesting to contact them through my campus job to see how they became successful with their chapter and try implementing it with my school.

**Are there student organizations working to address food insecurity problem on campus?**

Yes, there are students working on addressing these issues. Firstly, the Center for Service & Sustainability has a Waste Reduction Coordinator work-study position; this student employee heads the efforts around campus to mitigate the waste around campus and educate students in staff with the proper throwaway rules. Additionally, we have a large group of Eco-Reps in the Center as well who monitor their respective residential halls; they also work as a “Green Team” at campus events where they stand by the refuse bins and help people throw items away correctly.

A new role that started this year was the development of a new role within our Student Government Association (SGA) that will act as the official liaison between the students and our dining hall. This was brought on by our alumni Gabe Ingman as a way of bettering the campus food services in a professional and efficient way. Hopefully this position will help alleviate some of the issues students have with the dining hall.

I want to get a Food Recovery Network chapter at my school. I think the best way to approach this would be going to the Center for Service & Sustainability where I am a student employee and discussing the potential chapter to our Waste Reduction Coordinator, Emily Gatz. We have weekly meetings every Thursday, so I will discuss it with her and my supervisor this Thursday!

Chapter application: <https://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org/new-chapter-application>