

Lea Kyle, Matthew Taboni and Andy Whitehead, posting on @ubgreenteam on instagram from the University at Buffalo. Our Project Green Challenge username is bwhitehe.

President Tripathi,

As students, leaders, researchers, and valued members of our community, our common focus is on the success of the University at Buffalo. Success in the academic realm relies heavily not only on rigorous study and focus but on the wellness, both physical and mental, of all those involved.

Throughout the course of operation at UB, 100,000lbs of food are wasted annually, while simultaneously, 20% of our campus population still faces food insecurity and college students are disproportionately affected. This disconnect between the staggering amount of food insecure students and how much food is wasted on our campus, is not what a SUNY flagship institution should comprise of. Myself, UB's Food Recovery Network, and other student organizations are tirelessly working to address this disconnect, but the university needs to take more tangible steps on an administrative and operational level to address this concern.

The excessive amounts of food waste are problematic for our environment as we continually move the needle away from a properly functioning climate. Food waste is the single largest input by weight into US landfills and incinerators. These large amounts of food waste sitting in landfills also produces large amounts of methane gas, which is the leading cause of the deterioration of our ozone layer.

We understand there are many decisions that go into running a university and the financial strains that occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we also believe that there are infrastructures and mechanisms currently in place that the university can leverage to address this problem today, as they seek other funding sources to make sustainable and impactful solutions and change.

UB students are not alone in this. Other SUNY campuses like ESF and SUNY New Paltz have contributed money to reduce their carbon footprint and support the well-being of students and faculty.

While we cannot ask you to change university policy to address this universally, we do believe that it is possible for more to be done to begin addressing this problem. In particular, we strongly ask you to consider adopting the following:

- **Develop a plan for campus-wide composting to expand beyond the academic spine to the Residence Halls to capture all food waste at the University**

- **Support student-led food recovery efforts by increasing university funding and administrative support**
- **Offer hot meals in Blue Table, UB's food pantry, to offer students a more nutritious and accessible meal**
- **Hire a Sustainability Coordinator for Campus Dining and Shops to have one person be focused on reducing our environmental impact and food waste**
- **Develop a Student Support office to expand support services for university students beyond academics and mental health**

It is very easy to write this issue off as frivolous or unnecessary. In contrast, we assert that the well-being of students at the intersection of the environmental impact is inexorably tied to their primary labor as students in their academic work. **To only provide reactive solutions in the form of student programming and performative acts of sustainability would be a disservice and not forthcoming of a flagship institution.**

Finally, we appreciate your commitment to the student experience and academic excellence that UB stands for. Thank you for all that you do.

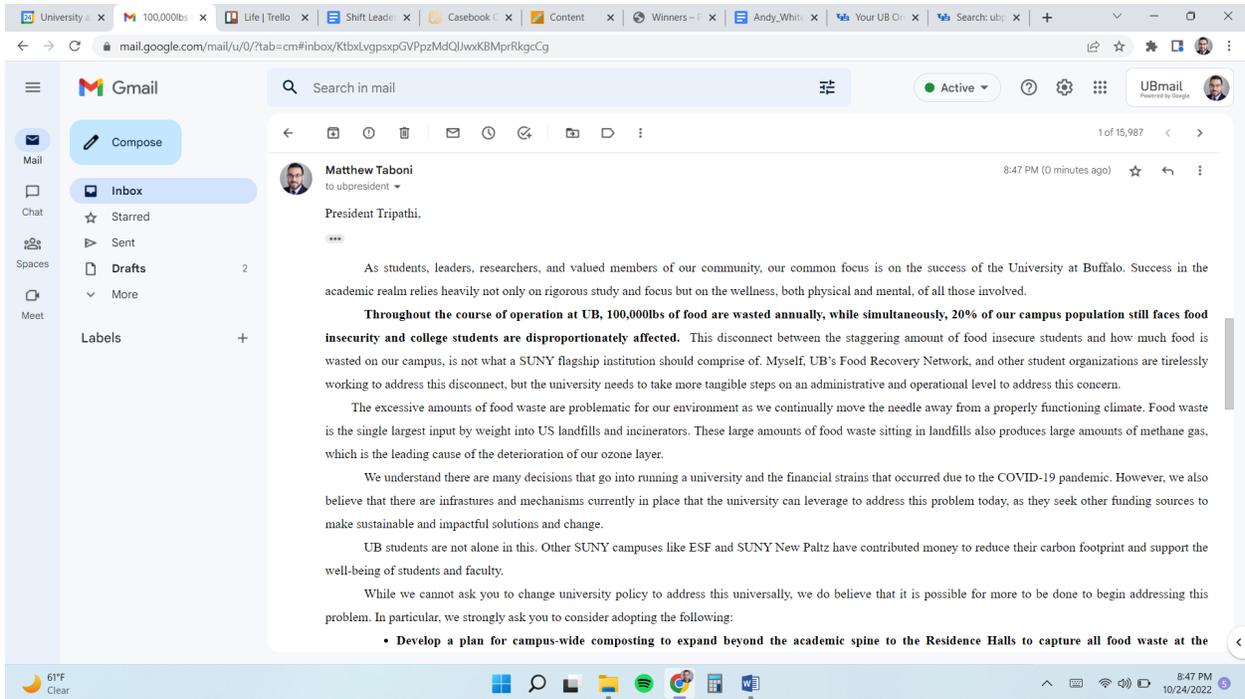
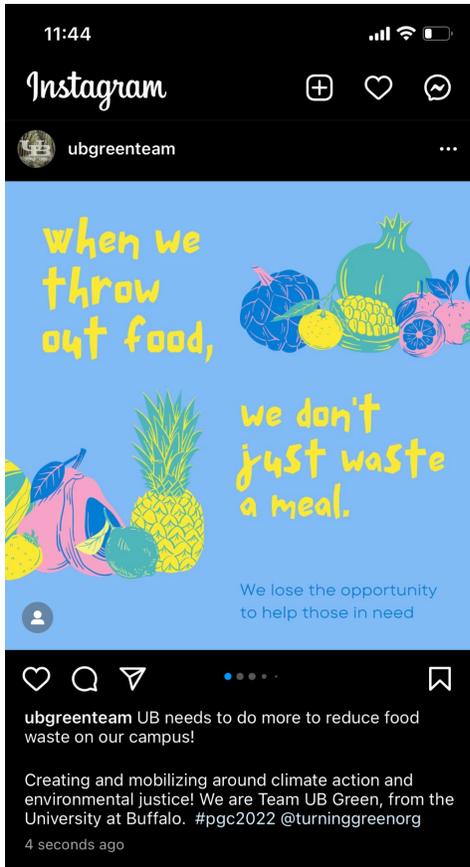
Gratefully,

Matthew Taboni (he/him)

JD/MBA, 2025

President, UB Food Recovery Network

Member, UB Green Team (Project Green Challenge)



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