

Weigh Your Waste: Volunteer Instructions

General Overview: This is a food waste awareness campaign. During the lunch period, we will have students sort their waste into 5 bins: edible food waste, non-edible food waste (bones, shells, etc.), compostable non-edibles (napkins, to-go cups and lids, etc.), liquid waste, and trash. The point of this event is to make people realize how much food they may be wasting. We are **not** there to shame anyone. **Please be mindful of the fact that food-related anxiety and eating disorders are very real challenges for some people.** We aren't here to tell anyone what they should or shouldn't be eating. We simply want to raise awareness about general food waste.

There are 4 different volunteer positions.

Sorters - These people stand behind the table and help students sort their food into the correct bins. **Edible food** includes anything the student could have eaten (leftovers). **Non-edible food** is anything the student couldn't have eaten like bones, banana peels, apple core, etc.

Compostable non-edibles are things like napkins, coffee stirrers, to-go cups and lids, and anything paper. **Liquid waste** is any beverages or ice. Finally, **trash** is anything else, like jelly pots or plastic sachets. Your job is to make sure students are quickly and accurately sorting their food. Sorters can help students hold their plates or cups to facilitate sorting, especially during rush hour, but the goal is for students to do this themselves.

Enforcers - These people are responsible for making sure no students try to put full plates on the conveyor belt and that students put their empty plates on the belt after they sort their waste. This job is especially tough during the rush hours, but just clearly tell people that they may not pass without a clean plate. If people come up with full plates it is your job to direct them to the line in front of the table/bins. It is also important for the enforcers to discuss with interested (or confused) students what we are doing, what Weigh Your Waste is, why we are doing this, etc.

Surveyors – These are the people responsible for getting students to fill out our surveys. We will have a QR code for students to take surveys on their own phones, which will help us get a clearer understanding of why students are wasting food and what we can do to minimize this.

Traffic Directors – These people will make sure the operation runs smoothly and that the line to the table does not get in the way of other students or Dining staff. They will also be responsible for walking around the dining room as students finish their meals to let them know about the campaign and direct them to our table.

Sign of for a time slot and position [HERE!](#)

Typical Answers to student questions:

1. *What are you doing?* This is a Food Waste Awareness event. Please sort your food into edible food waste, non-edible food waste, compostable non-edibles, liquid, and trash so that we can record how many pounds of food we waste during lunch today. We aren't here to shame any student. The idea behind the campaign is to show how much food we all collectively waste after just 2 hours and encourage students to be more mindful of how much food they take and throw out.
2. *How long are you doing this?* This is part of Earth Week, so this initial project will only happen this week. However, in the future, we will be doing this more often to see if our numbers improve and test out different methods to help reduce food waste.
3. *How can I get involved?* Join our sustainability Slack channels or email the sustainable dining manager Graham at graham.browning@jhu.edu.

If students are interested, here are some facts about food waste that you can share!

- \$218 billion worth of edible food is thrown away each year, either from not being eaten or from us letting it go bad.
- 72 billion pounds of food is lost each year, and that's not even including waste at home (from every point in the food production cycle)
- 21% of landfill volume is food waste. Over 90% of wasted food in the US ends up in the landfills, which produces methane gas (23x more powerful as a greenhouse gas as CO₂).
- 21% of fresh water used to produce food is going to food that is discarded
- 40% of all food in the US goes to waste, costs the economy one trillion dollars each year.
- Humans have destroyed 10% of the Earth's wilderness in the last 20 years for reasons mainly related to food production, of which we throw away a huge percentage.
- The average American family spends \$1500 a year on wasted food
- The "best by" or "sell by" dates on products are not actually made to date when the food is no longer edible. The dates are mostly used as a way for stores to manage how they turn over their product supply. Use your OWN common sense and senses to judge when to throw food out to reduce your food waste
- In the US, 70% of grain is fed to livestock instead of people. Our food waste could be going to feed livestock instead of filling up landfills.