

# *A Greener Affair: A Sustainability Plan for Special Event Management*

Within Macalester College, 2014



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ENVI-202: Sustainability and the Campus

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MACALESTER COLLEGE



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## **Executive Summary**

This report outlines a sustainability assessment for events planning at Macalester College. The analysis details current efforts by the Special Events department in coordination with Facilities and Bon Appetit amongst other departments on campus before proposing a range of recommendations to ameliorate the sustainability of event management in the future.

Our research attempts to identify various opportunities for campus coordination so as to improve general education on sustainability and its many manifestations within special events. Further, we reference Liten Paper, the Student Sustainability Network, MacCARES, the Lose the Landfill initiative and what has been done thus far to mitigate energy waste and conserve resources. In order to make necessary changes to the department, we look at good examples of sustainable event management at other schools: Amherst College, Carleton College, Harvard University, St. Olaf College and Yale University. We modelled our own plan after these institutions' sustainable event planning methods and green event checklists, because these schools share Macalester's values in regards to sustainability.

We ultimately found that although Macalester is at the forefront of sustainable event planning, having taken large strides through the "Zero Waste by 2020" campaign among others, special events, in particular faculty meetings, must be restructured to include education and devotion to sustainable event management by every faculty member and student worker involved.

## **Acknowledgements**

*We give special thanks to Suzanne Hansen, Andi Wulff, Kate Youngdahl, Kyle Wright, Christie Manning, Samantha Burlager, Gabrielle Queenan, David Bressoud, Kathryn Hehre and Pamela Larson for their time and effort in the success of this project.*

## Introduction

From faculty meetings to graduation, all special events at Macalester College are treated with a degree of distinction. However, these events entail two key components of a college special event: an accommodation of human needs (nourishment) with an integrated branding of Macalester's reputation (prestige). Further, these key components allow for a great deal of waste. In this paper, we will examine, discuss and create an action plan for Macalester College's Special Events Department to increase efficiency and reduce waste without raising costs. After discussing concerns and potential solutions with Kate Youngdahl and Andi Wulff (Senior Manager of Special Events and Coordinator of Special Events, respectively) and researching current college special events sustainability efforts, we have surmised the department's most pressing sustainability issues in addition to creating a plan for mitigating these issues for future events, including recommendations to the department and partnering orgs, signage recommendations, and potential sustainable education opportunities.

As an institution that prides itself on sustainability and zero-waste, Macalester has taken noteworthy strides in mitigating waste and increasing energy efficiency. However, it still has a way to go in order to fully educate its students and staff on implementing these strides. Since trash is taxed approximately 70%, Macalester is losing significant funds by not taking a stronger stance on correct waste sorting around campus. Even though composting bags are more expensive, there are still cost benefits to be expected from ensuring that all compostables are correctly disposed of. Youngdahl and Wulff are the only full-time staff members within Macalester's Special Events department, yet manage and oversee both small in-office events to big on campus events. After speaking with both women in addition to Christie Manning,

Gabrielle Queenan, Samantha Burlager, and Kyle Wright, we have developed recommendations for future event planning and signage, and ways to improve what Youngdahl and Wulff identify as their most pressing problem: educating staff and students on sustainable practices.

From invitations to food to transportation, We found that there are many ways to reduce energy and costs without compromising the quality of goods and services. We decided to create a sustainability plan to address our thoughts and suggest how the special events department can function with greater energy efficiency and lesser waste.

In this sustainability plan we will discuss three main categories involving green event management:

- 1) Macalester's current event planning efforts-this includes four major special events and their relationship to both Bon Appetit, The Food Recovery Network and the Sustainability Staff Network;
- 2) industry best practices, to see what other campuses and organizations are doing right in order to implement their best practices into our proposal;
- 3) recommendations for event planning such as a green events checklist, signage suggestions, and recommendations to various networks and organizations that are involved (or could be) in future event planning at Macalester.

### **Current Events Planning at Macalester College**

In evaluating the sustainability of events on campus, our biggest source of support and information was Macalester's Special Events Office. For this reason, we chose to dedicate a case study section to the specific efforts of the two department coordinators; Andi Wulff and Kate

Youngdahl have worked to incorporate sustainability into events that cater to the largest proportion of Macalester's community including faculty, staff, students and guests. The annual events to note include

- a) monthly faculty meetings;
- b) commencement
- c) convocation and
- d) reunion.

Micro-level initiatives in the department include reusing tablecloths, centerpieces and other decorative items wherever possible. The department tries to use compostable centerpieces, and have attempted one-off sustainability promoting initiatives. For example, for convocation 2014 a campus wide lunch was served in reusable lunch bags that were free for students to take home. However, the student body's reaction was mixed - though many students have been seen using this to transport meals, many reusable lunch bags were found in the trash following the Convocation event. In the future, we would recommend anticipating differences in the reaction of the population to such sustainability initiatives. For half of Macalester's student body - the underclassmen - mandatory Cafe Mac meal plans override the need for owning a lunch bag. For these people, an intentional drop-off site for unwanted lunch bags could divert the lunch bags from trashcans and provide extras for interested upperclassmen.

### *Bon Appetit*

By virtue of our college's close connection with Bon Appetit, our baseline for sustainability in special events is necessarily high. Bon Appetit's founder Fedele Bauccio, coined the term "Farm to Fork" in 1999 to describe the direct relationships they were forging with local

growers. Their sourcing at Macalester uses the highest percentage of local food as possible, given the weather constraints. In addition, Bon App has worked with the school to create “Zero Waste” menus for certain special events to aid Macalester’s Zero Waste goal for 2020. Bon Appetit now provides compostable dishware for all on-campus special events with no extra charge. The Special Events department is consistently working to make this commitment to sustainability a priority with other caterers that they work with.

### *Food Recovery Network*

Amanda Wareham, a senior student at Macalester, started a chapter of Food Recovery Network on campus during the 2014 fall semester. The Food Recovery Network is a non-profit-organization whose purpose is to unite college and university students to corporately fight against the problems of food waste and hunger through 'recovering' perishable food that would be otherwise wasted from college/university campus and 'donating' it to people in need. Wareham launched the Macalester charter of this organization to connect Bon Appetit, the only on campus supplier at Macalester, with Loaves and Fishes, a local non-profit meal program in Minnesota, in order to redistribute unused food from Cafe Mac to people living in shelters around the Twin Cities. Wareham says, the longer term goal of this Macalester charter is to redistribute the unused food to residences that Loaves and Fishes serves. This redistribution system works under the cooperation of Bon Appetit; they freeze the unused food from Cafe Mac so that Wareham and the charter can deliver the food to people in needs in the area. One of the concerns of Bon Appetit as the only on campus supplier at Macalester is its daily food waste. Although Bon Appetit is committed to food sustainability and minimize food waste, the problem of food waste is inseparable from any school food suppliers. This newly established

redistribution system of unused food enable Macalester to contribute on the social problem of hunger in the area as well as minimizing food waste from Cafe Mac. In the near future when this redistribution system is more recognized on campus, it is definitely possible and beneficial to connect the Office of Special Events with non-profit meal programs like Loaves and Fishes.

#### *Sustainability Student Workers Network & Sustainability Staff Network*

Macalester students are highly interested in environmental issues and sustainability. Macalester's recycling program - now largely staffed by work-study students - was initially started by a student organization decades ago. Similarly, students have been taking a central role in many sustainability projects on campus since. In 2006, the first student workers were hired by the bike-share program. Furthermore, the Sustainability Office with a full-time sustainability manager was launched in 2008. Since then, the number of sustainability students workers have been increasing year by year. Currently there are twenty sustainability student workers hired by Macalester, and they have been working collaboratively to foster campus sustainability. Since those students are working in variety of departments on campus, the Sustainability Office created the internal network system of the Student Workers Network. This network makes it possible for student workers in different departments on campus to share information and skill to make a bigger positive impact on the campus sustainability.

In response to the success of the Student Workers Network, the Sustainability Office has launched a new network for staff members in 2014. The Sustainability Staff Network aims to promote information-sharing and cooperation over staff members in different departments on campus. This network allows staff members who are passionate about sustainability to feel connected to staff members in other departments. The interdepartmental cooperation enables the



staff members to make a larger impact on campus sustainability. Those two networks for both staff members and students will spotlight the concept of sustainability in Macalester community in more comprehensive and cooperative manners. Those networks are being used as platform for individuals who are passionate about sustainability and bringing positive changes to Macalester community.

### Industry Best Practices

#### *Other Campuses*

Various higher educational institutions have implemented sustainability in their special events such as graduation ceremonies and reunions. Although Macalester College is known for its commitment to sustainability and its students are generally passionate about environmental issues, there are examples of efforts made in some other colleges that we can learn from in generating our own proposal.



Figure I: *Case Studies of Other Higher Educational Institutions*

Name of School	Sustainability Examples
Amherst College <sup>1</sup>	One of the events during the Amherst College's 2014 reunion was a movie screening of 2011 film <i>Shark Loves the Amazon</i> . This is documentary depicts the hard realities Amazonian life in finding a

<sup>1</sup> "2014 Reunion Schedule," Amherst College, accessed December 9th, 2014, <https://www.amherst.edu/alumni/events/reunion/schedule>.

	<p>balance between development and preserving Earth’s last great forest. This documentary screening was well received by the participants since an alumni and director Mark London, gave a talk regarding his experience making the film and the importance of sustainability globally.</p>
Carleton College <sup>2</sup>	<p>Carleton College emphasizes that their 2013 reunion was more than just an event for reconvening, but also an opportunity to pause and think about their water purchasing choices. Prior to the event, the office of special programs sent emails to alumni requesting to bring their own water bottles to the event. As the result, they successfully prohibited water bottles from anywhere on the campus during the event as a part of their commitment to sustainability.</p>
Harvard University <sup>3</sup>	<p>Harvard University pushed for efforts toward a more sustainable campus during their 363rd Commencement. As an example, they set up 109 recycle bins around the campus to reduce waste. Mainly locally produced foods were supplied such as 6000 locally sourced ice creams. Foods that cannot be sourced locally such as salmon were imported from sustainable food suppliers. Its students also took a part in making sustainability graduation ceremony through recycling their furniture, books, clothes and dorm furnishings. The overall recycled amount accumulated to 230 truckloads.</p>
St. Olaf College <sup>4</sup>	<p>In addition to their continuous commitment to sustainability, St. Olaf College started a program called ‘Reunion Giving’ as a part of their annual reunions. This program seeks donations from alumni participating in their reunion to be used for: financial aid, student activities and general campus enhancement. The campus enhancement here stands for improving campus facilities to make them more accountable for implementing sustainability at St. Olaf.</p>
Yale University <sup>5</sup>	<p>Yale College 2012 Reunions received platinum-level certification by the Yale Office of Sustainability for reducing their carbon footprint through promoting green transportation methods, using renewable products, ordering locally sourced food, disposing waste carefully among others. While participants were asked in advance to bring their water bottle from home, the university provided reusable water bottles</p>

<sup>2</sup> Courtney Dufford, “A Bottled Water-Free Reunion: We Did It!,” Carleton College, last modified July 11th, 2013, [http://apps.carleton.edu/sustainability/news/?story\\_id=1021663](http://apps.carleton.edu/sustainability/news/?story_id=1021663) .

<sup>3</sup> “A Sustainable 363rd Commencement,” Harvard University, last modified May 29th, 2014, <http://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2014/05/a-sustainable-363rd-commencement/> .

<sup>4</sup> “Reunion Giving,” St. Olaf College, accessed December 9th 2014, <http://wp.stolaf.edu/giving/reunion-giving/> .

<sup>5</sup> “Yale College reunions go green,” Yale University, last modified July 9th, 2012, <http://news.yale.edu/2012/07/09/yale-college-reunions-go-green> .

	for those who had forgotten.
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The following table presents what we found to be the most appropriate approach in implementing sustainability in special events, adapted from the Stanford University's Sustainability Office. Stanford is known for its commitment to sustainable living as well as its devotion to academic rigor. Although its campus and population are larger than that of Macalester, understanding their approaches is beneficial for creating a proper proposal for the Special Events Office at our school, due to our shared values.

*Sustainability Steps from the Sustainability Office at Stanford University<sup>6</sup>*

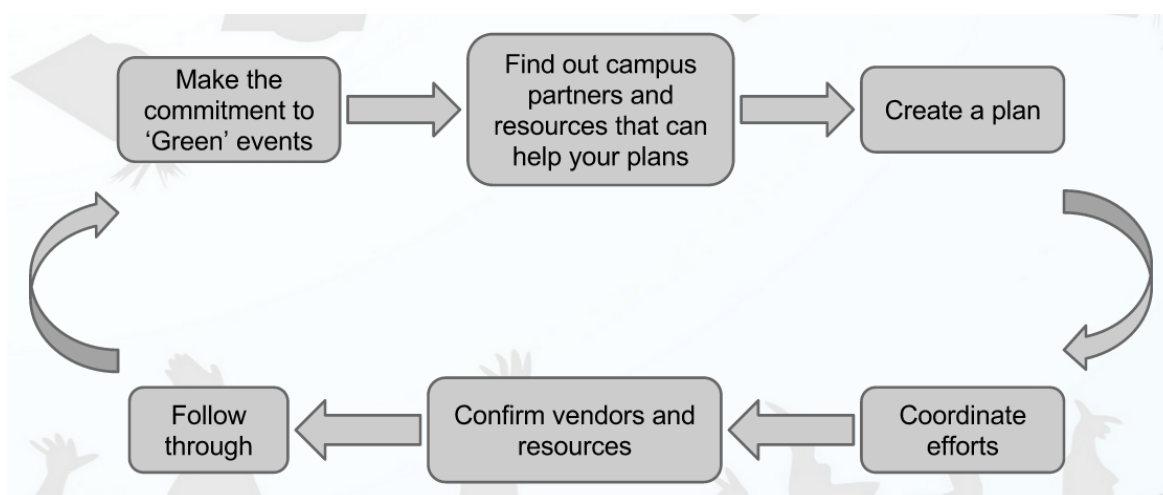


Figure II: *Six Steps to Sustainability*

Steps 1-6	Details
Make the commitment to 'Green' events	The process of planning special events takes time and effort. Remember to include sustainability as a factor in decision-making across departments and workers at every step in the process.
Find out campus partners and resources that can	There are various organizations on campus including student organizations that embody sustainable values, find out more about

<sup>6</sup> "Green Event Planning Policy," Stanford University, accessed December 9th, 2014, <http://web.stanford.edu/dept/Events/policies/green.html>.

help your plans	other organizations working on sustainability and reach out those organizations as early as possible in your process.
Create a plan	A timeline can be a milestone for the entire process, therefore it is crucial to create a timeline including basic information like the necessarily resources needed for a successful event. The timeline should also include eco-friendly methods of basic needs such as marketing and communications, event decoration, equipment and energy usage, food and beverages, waste and recycling, and transportation.
Coordinate efforts	It is often useful to nominate one group leader to oversee the efforts made by different groups and individuals in the process to coordinate more efficiently.
Confirm vendors and resources	After creating a green plan, select the best vendors and resource suppliers to fit your strategy.
Follow through	Even after the events are over, it is crucial to reflect on what went well and what could be improved for future events.

There are three main events the Macalester Special Events Department organizes annually; reunion, convocation and graduation. Although they share some similarities, especially regarding size, it is important appropriately assess the differences to come up with future strategies to improve sustainability of each event.

### **Mill City Farmers Market Case Study**

Although the Mill City Farmers Market in downtown Minneapolis is not an institution, part its mission is devoted to zero waste, and the staff and market board have created noteworthy strategies in mitigating the inevitable waste that occurs each Saturday. In 2009, Mill City Farmers Market partnered with Eureka Recycling to become the first Zero Waste Farmers Market in Minnesota<sup>7</sup>. The Market serves as a great example of effective signage, signage that

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<sup>7</sup> “Zero Waste,” Mill City Farmers Market, accessed December 9th, 2014, modified 2013  
<http://millcityfarmersmarket.org/about-the-market/zero-waste/> .

we could implement here at Macalester and make for less confusion over compost vs. recycling vs. trash at special events.

The Market has three bins for each sort, yet most distinct is the the “Trash” bin, a metal barrel significantly smaller than the other two. This is both less aesthetically pleasing and forces patrons to bend over and throw their trash into the bin. This also forces market-goers who may not understand how to sort waste sustainably to thoughtfully consider what they are sending to the landfill and what can be composted. In the image featured to the right, a worker at the market stands in front of the three bins to help aid the public through the process of proper sorting. Not featured in this picture is a change the market made last year, relabeling the small trash bin from “TRASH” to “LANDFILL- Are you sure this cannot be composted or recycled?” Additionally, the Mill City Farmers Market has transparent recycling bags, thus holding market-goers accountable for correctly recycling for fear of a physical manifestation of their apathy (ie. a plate of food in the recycling bin).



## Recommendations

### *Signage*

We created a mock up sign as an alternative to the current trash signs around campus. This sign could allow for more thought among faculty and students alike before aimlessly

throwing out compostable garbage in the trash rather than the adjacent compost bin. We **recommend** that both a version of our proposed design in addition to a smaller, less “convenient” metal bin be considered by both the Sustainability Department and the Special Events department in rethinking signage around campus and especially during outdoor events like Graduation, Convocation, and Reunion.

Figure IV



### *Green Events Checklist*

Arizona State University defines a green event as “an event that seeks to reduce negative environmental and social impacts and increase positive economic effects [through] recycling and waste management, energy efficiency, green purchasing and transportation practices, and the use of local and organic foods.”<sup>8</sup> After doing research on different institutions’ green events

<sup>8</sup> “Green Event Checklist,” Sustainability at Arizona State University, modified September 19th, 2010, accessed December 9th, 2014, <https://sustainability.asu.edu/docs/gios/green-event/Green-Event-Checklist.pdf>.

checklists, **we recommend** that the Macalester special events department considers our own green events checklist, modeled after both ASU’s green event program and data from Macalester’s Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability 2012 Progress Report<sup>9</sup>:

*Invitations*

- Send invitations by email to reduce paper waste
- If paper must be used-recycled paper

*Meetings*

- Training sessions before the event
- Leaders of the event should do research prior to training
- Post event meeting to reflect
- Meet with sustainability department before plan is finalized

*Purchasing*

- In bulk
- All compostable/reusable dishware (contact: Simon Hefty, see below)
- Vendors committed to local or fair trade goods

*Signage*

- “Landfill” in lieu of trash
- Smaller bin
- A worker present to aid in the process
- Transparent recycling to make cans and bottles more visible

*Travel*

- Public transit encouraged & subsidized for people who live nearby

*For more information on Liten Paper compostable dishware contact Simon Hefty at 612-607-5704, shefty@litin.com, [www.litin.com](http://www.litin.com).*

Training sessions and post-event meetings are steps we consider crucial in the process due to feedback from Youngdahl and Wulff of the Special Events department and their issue with a campus-wide lack of education on sustainable practices. If people are hired to either work

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<sup>9</sup> “Social, Economic and Environmental Sustainability at Macalester College” modified December 2010, accessed December 9th, 2014 <http://www.macalester.edu/sustainability/data-reports/SustainabilityatMacalesterDecember2012.pdf>

at an event or host, we believe it is imperative that they state the importance of sustainable waste disposal.

We recommend that such checklists be developed specifically for various student organisations around campus e.g. Macalester College Student Government (MCSG) and its subsidiary Program Board - a major events planner on campus as well as department coordinators for subject related events, student orgs and cultural orgs. All campus events need to be set to a higher standard of sustainable event evaluation, and an enforced green events checklist and sustainability policy could initiate such conversations. We believe that this checklist in addition to signage changes will increase the likelihood of sustainable disposal and remove the stigma of, for example, unsustainable faculty meetings discussed below.

#### *Faculty Meetings*

Despite being in charge of campus wide events like commencement and reunion, where attendance is often in the thousands, the Special Events department cited their faculty meetings as being their most problematic programming. These monthly conventions of around 150 faculty members on campus has a notorious incidence of poor waste management. Often times the immediate unavailability of compost and recycling bins, as well as an informational gap about what can be composted, recycled and must be thrown into the trash have led to multiple meetings where large quantities of leftover food have been thrown into the trash. When Special Events bore a fee from Facilities for the costs of these mistakes, the department coordinators decided it best that all faculty meetings be Zero Waste events from then onwards. For almost a year now, Youngdahl and Wulff have worked with Bon Appetit to craft a zero waste menu from the offset, covering trash bins and putting out larger compost bins to minimise the potential for confusion.



Even though this has solved the particular problem of waste management from faculty meetings, the issue bores the larger question of how faculty are contributing to campus waste sorting when these intentional decisions have not been made to correct any mistakes. Though many staff and faculty are aware and active on the issue - as demonstrated by the existence of the Sustainability Staff Network - the actions of a few can obviously taint the larger effort.

To mitigate this risk, **we recommend** that the faculty chair David Bressoud close this information gap by spending five minutes at the start of the next faculty meeting to discuss the issue. We propose that David Bressoud inform the faculty congregation of the issue of waste management at such events, bring to attention Macalester's sustainability and landfill free goals and indicate the zero waste nature of the event by pointing out the compost bins. We recommend that this be reiterated every three months for the first year to keep the issue at the forefront of faculty intentionality. At the very least, this will elucidate the subject for those who are currently unaware due to lack of exposure in their personal life. This information should always be introduced in a positive encouraging tone, not in an admonishing fashion which may alienate faculty and make them feel ostracised instead of indicate that correct waste management is a quickly trending social norm.

#### *Sustainability Student Workers Network & Sustainability Staff Network*

The Sustainability Student Worker network and Staff Network are another opportunity for Special Events to work towards continued improvements in sustainability. **We recommend** that the department use this great network for education and information on relevant sustainability initiatives. Either one of the staff members can choose to participate in the Sustainability Staff Network. Alternatively, a student worker from the department can be

authorised to spend some time in the Sustainability Student Workers Network learning about the various opportunities that are available on Macalester's Campus to further a department's sustainability initiatives. In this way, Special Events can be in constant contact with the Sustainability Department with a direct means of communication whereby to pose questions, suggestions, and ask for recommendations. If this is an unachievable goal, an alternative way to fulfill the same purpose is to assign a Sustainability Department employee to the Special Events department to conduct routine evaluations, act as a resource and continue to propose recommendations to further this proposal.

#### *Collaboration with MacCARES*

Our **biggest recommendation** for the Sustainability department would be to improve communication and coordination with organisations on campus with the same objectives and goals. A prime example of such a group is MacCARES - a student led initiative that targets campus sustainability. One of MacCARES' most recent program developments is called "Dirty Training" a short educational program whereby students can choose to become experts on waste sorting to spread awareness on campus. As a relatively new initiative developed this summer (2014), MacCARES has had some trouble finding outlets where they can showcase this program and fulfill its purpose.

They are currently in conversation to train all Resident Assistants (RAs) to be proficient in dirty training so they can conduct a short session in their floor-level community meetings. This way, first years are informed of Macalester's sustainability goals early on in their career, hopefully sensitising them to the work conducted on these issues on campus. If appropriate waste management is portrayed as a social norm on campus, the incoming student body are much more

likely to comply with these ideals and internalise them. If this succeeds to become a tradition for incoming first-years, we can anticipate a very different level of sustainability awareness on campus.

The Sustainability Department can find other ways to utilise the sizeable body of MacCARES participants to continue this outreach at various events. We strongly **recommend** that sustainability become a part of programming for orientation on campus. At big events, Dirty Trainers can be stationed beside various trash, recycling and composting portals to help people with their waste sorting, answer questions and concerns, as well as correct some faulty practices or beliefs on the subject that students may hold. We again **recommend** that all students be required to participate in a dirty training, and share this with their respective subsections of the student body so the practice is disseminated from authority figures with a leadership presence on campus.

#### *Special Events Department*

On a similar note, we recommend that the Special Events Department create a standardised method of evaluation by which to monitor the sustainability of their events, and the improvements made by their sustainability initiatives. Simple ways of doing this could be tracking the number of trash cans needed for various events, asking for feedback from Facilities on the accuracy of waste sorting, documenting the amount of waste generated and unused resources per event.

A very promising initiative the Sustainability department currently offers is the opportunity to borrow/rent/buy various resources stocked in the Special Events house. Currently, this opportunity is available only to those who know it exists. In the future, we **recommend** that

the Special Events Department develop a program by which they share the contents of their inventory across departments on campus with a strict policy on renting/borrowing. This could offer a small revenue stream for the logistical trouble involved, but improve campus wide sustainability. The initiative must be crafted with a firm policy for damaged returns as well, to ensure that there is no disincentive to Special Events for leading this program.

### *Bon Appetit*

We also **recommend** that Special Events collaborate with Bon Appetit's Food Recovery Service in order to ensure that leftovers from large campus wide events like commencement, convocation or even reunion not go wasted. While the office puts much effort in minimizing food waste from documenting the amount of food consumed yearly in each event, this redistribution system will ensure that no perishable food is wasted, while also contributing to a worthy cause. The new project led by Wareham is one example of how special events at Macalester can continue to work towards improved sustainability.

### *Lose the Landfill pledge*

Over the summer of 2014 Gabrielle Queenan, a student worker in the Facilities Department crafted an initiative called the 'Lose the Landfill' Zero Waste Office Pledge (depicted in Box 1). The pledge requests that departments make a commitment to sustainability issues in accordance with Macalester's zero waste goal for May 2020. This commitment involves mitigating the volume of waste generated by proper waste disposal, waste reduction. The various facets of the pledge include ensuring maximum use of purchases as well as their proper disposal. It recommends that sustainability be kept in mind at the offset when purchasing decisions are

made to minimise packaging materials and other waste. The final component is an agreement to raise awareness wherever and whenever possible about waste management and sustainability issues.

**We recommend** that the pledge include a component on efficient event management; this section could talk about zero waste events, resources for compostable dishware and contacts at Liten Paper, as well as Special Events contact information for more resources on sourcing, green event planning, and the opportunity to borrow/rent decorative materials for one-off events.

## LOSE THE LANDFILL

...MAKE MAC ZERO WASTE BY 2020

### Zero Waste Office Pledge

Our office supports Macalester College's goal of reaching zero waste by May 2020. The college follows the internationally accepted definition of zero waste: a 90% diversion of waste from landfills and incinerators (Zero Waste International Alliance). We are committed to managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume of waste generated through proper waste disposal, waste reduction, and waste education.

#### **When disposing of an item, we will:**

- ❖ Consider if the item is at the end of its useful life. If not, we will be sure the item is reused.
- ❖ Recycle and compost whenever possible
- ❖ If we are unsure of the proper disposal of a waste item, we will contact the Sustainability Office ([sustainability@macalester.edu](mailto:sustainability@macalester.edu) or 651-696-8138).

#### **Our office will work to make the following changes in our purchasing:**


- ❖ Avoid single use products and packaging
- ❖ Return to vendors any wasteful packaging, when possible
- ❖ Reduce packaging and buy in bulk units
- ❖ Purchase reused products, or products with a high recycled content
- ❖ Rent and share equipment, as appropriate

#### **We also pledge to:**

- ❖ Politely educate community members who are incorrectly disposing of waste material
- ❖ Purchase/make containers to collect compostable waste in our work spaces, as needed

Office/Department Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Library \_\_\_\_\_

Office Representative/Department Chair: \_\_\_\_\_ Terri Fishel, Library Director \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 11/21/2014 \_\_\_\_\_

Digitally signed by Terri A. Fishel  
DN: cn=Terri A. Fishel, o=Macalester  
College, ou=Library,  
email=terri.fishel@macalester.edu, c=US  
+16516968138

*Please sign and return to Suzanne Savanick Hansen at the Sustainability Office.*

### *Liten Paper*

The Special Events department mentioned that they often respond to requests for event organising assistance; other department coordinators often ask for support when planning events on a budget. These organisers commonly feel that they lack the budgetary flexibility to “green” their events, since requesting compostable dishware from caterers almost always involves an additional cost.

In reality, a company called Liten Paper based in Minneapolis supplies compostable dishware and utensils with more competitive pricing than the non-compostables used by most departments on campus. Liten Paper supplies in bulk at state contract pricing for Macalester College. Macalester’s contact (Simon Hilty, information below) at the company can be requested to save each department’s p-card information so orders are easy. Table 1 was compiled to demonstrate the cost savings from Liten Paper products as compared to the cheapest alternatives at Target Corp.

Product	Percentage Difference	Cents Difference				
4 oz. paper cup	37.50%	1.5				
8 oz. paper cup	-64.71%	-11				
10 oz. plastic cup	-37.50%	-3.5				
16 oz. plastic cup	-38%	-6				
6" paper plate	33.33%	1				
9" paper plate	64%	16				
fork	-20%	-1				
spoon	-20%	-1				
knife	-20%	-1				

Figure VI: (A negative number indicates a cheaper price for compostable items.)  
 SOURCE: Sabrina Upadhyay, Sustainability Office 2012

The biggest constraint in the acceptance of compostable dishware in Macalester’s event planning has been the lack of awareness in departments and student orgs about compostable dishware and it’s price benefits from sources like Liten Paper. Collaborative work will be needed

on the part of the Special Events Department, Sustainability Departments and similarly aligned student orgs on campus to spread the word about these price savings and the added environmental benefits of compostable products. One other foreseeable barrier could be the added obligation of making a dishware purchase separate from the catering request. Paired with the bulk quantities in which Liten Paper supplies its products, logistics are likely to impair the popularity of compostable dishware across campus. The Sustainability Staff Network detailed above has allowed departments to coordinate requests from Liten Paper to integrate one-off purchases into coordinated bulk orders.

### *Compostable Policy*

Perhaps the most far-sighted yet equally unrealistic recommendation we put forward, would be enforcing a compostable policy across campus. This would make it necessary that all events become zero waste across the board, including non-Macalester affiliated events that rent out areas of our campus (weddings/receptions etc. at the Chapel, Kagin Ballroom, Alumni house etc.) Though we recognise the large implications of such a policy, we think it crucial at some point between now and 2020 when we anticipate being a Zero Waste campus. The sooner we enforce such a strict standard, the more time we have to acclimate.

### **Conclusions**

A lot is being done both at Macalester and nationwide to address unsustainable practices within event planning, and how to make future events as zero waste as possible. In our paper, we outlined ways that Macalester has already made efforts to commit to zero waste events, and we

spoke about practical methods for implementing the institutions goals such as: signage improvements, dirty trainers present at special events, collaborating with MacCARES, Lose the Landfill Pledge, Liten Paper Products, and the Sustainability Staff Network, incorporating a standardized green events checklist to make sure everyone is on board with collective sustainable goals, and sharing inventory across departments and organizations on campus.

We hope that our recommendations are considered by the Sustainability and Special Events Departments in improving eco-friendly practices and attitudes for both faculty and students. These recommendations will not make these events any less “special,” rather, reducing waste and educating those involved while maintaining the quality of the event will make the event even more special among sustainability enthusiasts and the general public.



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