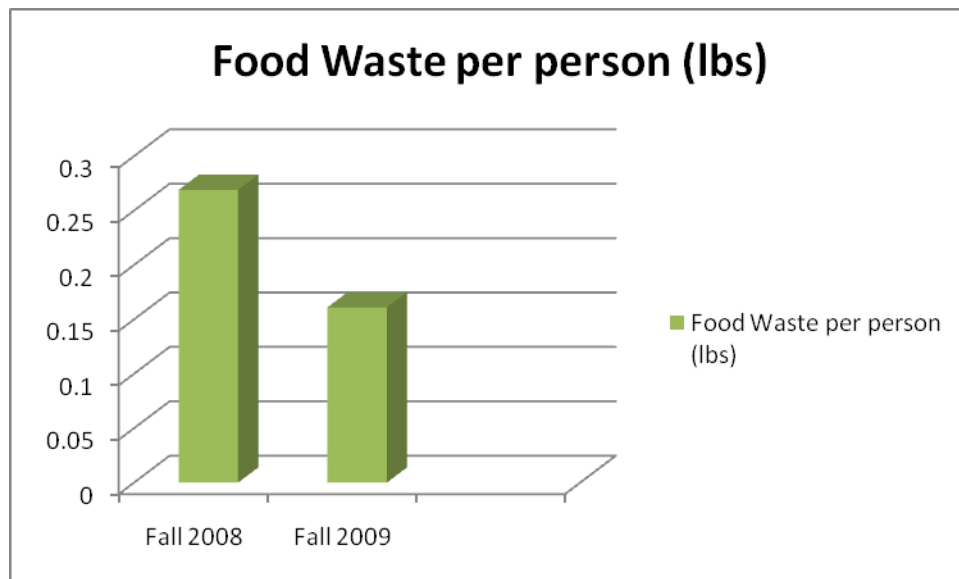


Fall 2009

Trayless Initiative Proves Successful

In support of the campus roadmap to sustainability Anderson Commons became a trayless dining facility during the summer of 2009. Trayless dining facilities are proven to conserve water, reduce food waste, save electricity and reduce chemical usage.

Each year Dining Services gauges food waste by conducting waste studies; one in the fall and one in the spring. During these studies, any food that would normally be disposed of is collected into large bins and weighed. A waste study was conducted when trays were in use in September 2008 and in September 2009 after trays were eliminated from Anderson. The study in 2009 saw a 40 percent decrease in food waste from the year before totaling 108 pounds of food saved for every 1,000 customers.



There are many variables when conducting food waste studies such as the menu items being served that day. To get a more accurate reading of the food waste reduction, Dining Services took the average of the four plate waste studies that took place since Anderson Commons opened in fall 2007. Overall, Anderson Commons as a trayless dining facility has reduced food waste by 24 percent or 51 pounds of food for every 1,000 customers.

Anderson Commons sees on average 2,900 customers each day. The nearly 150 pounds of food saved each day could feed nearly 120 people.



More studies are being done to determine the effects the trayless initiative has had on chemical usage. However, more time is needed to gather accurate information.

“Unfortunately, we may never know how much water or electricity trayless saves because our utility usage is not metered; rather we are allocated utility charges based on space. We do know that other schools that have gone trayless have significantly reduced their water and electricity usage,” said Janet Paul Rice, Associate Director of Dining Services.

Industry average for water savings is a half gallon of water per tray. At Concordia, that would save nearly 200,000 gallons of water each year.

“Concordia’s move to trayless came at the perfect time. We are continuing to see the price of food, laundry and utilities increase. Reducing the food waste in Anderson Commons has been a great way to counterbalance some of these operating cost increases,” said Deb Lee, Director of Dining Services.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, the average weekly cost of groceries for a family of four has increased 17% since 2005.

Lee says that operating costs overall have increased an average of 3 – 6% each year. Operating costs include laundry expenses, utilities, water, paper products and more. In the past year alone, the cost of software licensing has increased 5%, bringing the total cost for the year to \$64,000 dollars.

“There are certain expenses that are necessary to operate our dining establishments effectively. Most of these increasing costs are out of our control. That is why it is so important for us to do everything we can to reduce our waste and regulate our spending,” said Lee. “Not only is trayless a good move environmentally speaking, but it is a good move financially as well.”

Lee hopes that the money saved by going trayless will be able to help minimize increases in meal plan pricing over the next few years.