Progress Report: Food Waste – a Problem or a Solution?

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to report progress on MAN/GOR/DEA/RIC's proposed campus food waste reduction project. Members of the team are Skylar DeAngelis, Jillian Gordy, Rachel Mangrum, and Charles Richardson. We received an RFP from the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of Energy on July 13th, 2021. In response, our group is proposing to implement either a messaging alert system to notify students of surplus food at locations on campus, or the construction of a plant that utilizes campus waste in the production of biofuel. Through our research, we are analyzing the practical considerations of both options to determine which method of action best suits our circumstances.

Status summary

We received an RFP from the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of Energy on July 13th, 2021. We were approved to begin working on a plan to reduce food waste at the University of Florida. At that time, we had two methods of reducing food waste: converting it to biofuel or creating a text messaging system to notify students when edible food was available. The idea to redistribute edible food to students would simultaneously address food insecurity on campus. By July 20th, our group had developed a survey for our research method to determine which of the two project ideas was more feasible. Results from the survey have confirmed that our proposal and aim to reduce food waste is needed. The remaining portions of this project include creating a budget, researching other university efforts that mirror our ideas, narrowing down which idea we will choose, and reaching out to contacts within the industry.

After we received approval to begin working on our project, we decided on two research methods to determine whether we would use biofuel or a text messaging system to reduce food waste. The first was a survey consisting of seven questions. The results are showing that students would rather have a text messaging system notifying them of surplus food rather than a biofuel generator. It also showed that while students believe the university wastes an abundant amount of food, many do not participate in any initiatives on campus that reduce waste. Our group has also decided to reach out to knowledgeable faculty that will be able to advise on whether they believe biofuel or text notifications are feasible.

On July 21st, we met to discuss our plans for the next several weeks. We decided we would meet this weekend, on July 25th, to analyze our data further. While we have collected data from students, we believe that the advice from experts in biofuel and dining services will aid us in solidifying which idea we will choose. In addition, our research will clarify the logistics of each idea.

Work completed

1) July 13, 2021 -- Group began researching potential sustainability initiatives for the university (CR, JG, RM, SD).
2) July 16, 2021 -- Group decided that a food surplus text messaging system or compost biofuel refinery were the best approaches to addressing food waste on campus. The Proposal Prospectus was drafted (CR, JG, RM, SD) and submitted (SD).

3) July 20, 2021 -- Group members proposed survey questions (JG, RM, SD).
4) July 20, 2021 -- Qualtrics survey created and posted to class discussion board (JG).
5) July 20, 2021 -- Survey posted to social media and community/organization discussion forums (CR, JD, RM, SD).
6) July 21, 2021 -- Group met to discuss project progress and delegate future tasks (CR, JG, RM, SD).

Work to be completed

1) General Meetings – we plan on meeting together to discuss and analyze the results of our survey, as well as review our research reports (SD, JG, RM, CR).
2) Research – learn about similar projects that have been implemented at different locations and review their results (JG, SD).
3) Interviews/Outreach – reaching out to campus organizations and professors to discuss the logistics of our project (CR, RM).
4) Cost Considerations – determine the costs associated with implementing a(n) app/text messaging system versus putting forth research towards biofuel production (RM, CR).
5) Specify Proposal – decide which method of food waste reduction would be more practical, based on the results of our research (SD, JG, RM, CR).
6) Financial Conclusions – finalize research on cost based on which method we choose (CR, RM).

Schedule for Completion

- July 23rd - Complete all 5 parts of the Project Memo
- July 24th - Close survey, finalize interview questions, begin to parse through data, extract key insights.
- July 26th - Finalize findings and submit PWG #2. Develop team notes for Research Report.
- July 27th - Submit Research Report
- July 28th - Follow up with interviewees and professors on progress, seek guidance for final proposal.
- Aug 3rd - Complete PWG #3, contribute to the final proposal.
- Aug 4th - Peer Review
- Aug 5th - Regroup with team for final proposal merge.
- Aug 6th - Review final draft, fix up last minute errors, submit.

Assessment of Group

Being the only male on a team of females, I was not too sure how the project would pan out. This was my first time working with a group of all women, and I was interested in seeing the differences between this and a team of all men (which I have worked in many before). Simply put, this team is much more proactive than most other teams I have been a part of during my time in college. I cannot conclude anything about men or women because of this, because my sample size is insignificant, but I believe it is an interesting start to an experiment. This team has maintained great communication in the group chat,

and does a great job of making the team aware of what work there is to do. I have had no issues with this team thus far and feel like I am doing my share of work with very little friction. Overall, this project has been steady sailing so far.