Indoor Composting: Reducing Costs and Avoiding Flies

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Associated Students Recycling at UCSB

Funded by student lock in fee, employs 17 students that handle several components of UCSB’s waste management program:

- Recycling
- Electronic Waste
- Composting
- Education & Outreach
Composting at UCSB

Wide variety of programs

• Coffee grounds in landscaping
• Vermicomposting
• Community garden composting
• Commercial composting

Average of 80 tons per month
Composting at UCSB

Commercial Composting

- Pre- and post-consumer food composting in residential dining
- On-campus takeout food service converting to compostable serveware
- Post-consumer compost bins near eateries
Composting at UCSB

Commercial Composting

• Sent to Engel & Gray in Santa Maria, CA (north SB County)

• Accepts food scraps & certified compostable products
The Need

- Post-consumer compost bins are available near eateries, but many people eat lunch in their offices or take coffee/food to go.
- UC Zero-waste goal requires that we find a way to capture these waste streams.
- Commonly requested from offices wanting to improve their sustainability.

*Compost bins must be more common and more accessible, and people must be aware of where they are and how to use them.*
History of Indoor Composting

• Paper towel composting project
  – Led by student Zero Waste Committee
  – Placed bins in restrooms for paper towels & food waste
  – Emptied and audited daily by students during pilot, after showing consistently low contamination (2%), transitioned to custodial staff
History of Indoor Composting

• Paper towel composting project
  – Cancelled after several months under custodial staff due to very high cost of compostable bin liners
TGIF Funded Pilot

- Project was funded through a TGIF grant in 2014

- Associated Students Recycling purchased yellow Slim Jim bins, black hinged lids and printed descriptive signage

- Student staff collect food and compostable waste from pilot departments 3 times per week
Recruiting Pilot Participants

• Targeted email contact
  – Participants selected with goal of having a variety of users (students, admin, environmental and non-environmentally focused, regular and transitory users)

• Initial skepticism
  – Concerns over pests & odors
  – Concerns over pickup schedule

• Pilot buildings
  – Facilities main office building
  – Athletics staff kitchen & front lobby
  – Life Sciences Building & affiliates
  – Geography
  – College of Creative Studies
Communication with Participants

- Website information on program
- Email information for distribution
- Tutorial at staff meeting
- Specific contact and quick response

Procedure Adjustments

- Switch from compostable liners to standard for bins, consolidate in compostable liners
- Change standard liners weekly
Student Involvement
Expansion

- Quantitative audits
- Evaluation from current participants
- Campus-wide recruitment and notification through staff emails, opt-in participation
- Expanded education and outreach about UCSB waste goals, importance of composting, and student contributions to sustainability
Thank you!