Composting at Cal

Lisa Bauer
UC/CSU Sustainability Conference
June 26, 2006
Campus Context

- Population: Approximately 45,000
- Location: Berkeley, California
- Setting: Semi-Urban, San Francisco Bay Area
- Footprint: 178 acre campus park, 1200 acre total
Dining context

4 dining commons, serving over 5000 meals per day
4 restaurants and cafés, serving over 8000 meals per day

Service types include “serveries” (cafeteria style) cafés, convenience stores, grag-n-go
Waste Minimization Activities

- predominantly unprepared food = less packaging
- Food in bulk when possible
- reusable plates/ flatware when dining in facility
- Customer can ask for smaller portions if desired
- Tray size cut in half = greatly reduced food waste
- Plates are smaller, oval
- To-go containers are compostable
Green Cal Dining info

- Green Certified Business in Alameda County, CA
- Green cleaning chemicals and buildings
- Cal Dining supports green education of students in their facilities
More Green Cal Dining info

- Unlimited # of entrees, passes per meal—all you can eat
- Organic salad bars in all dining halls
- Cal Dining is a certified organic food service entity
- Inevitable goal of all organic food at Cal Dining eateries
Waste Diversion Activities

- Cardboard recycling
- Mixed paper recycling at desksides
- Beverage/food service container recycling
- Equipment reuse and recycling through surplus outlet on campus
Food Waste Diversion Activities

- Eat the World, Save the Earth
Food Waste Diversion Activities

- Donations of usable food to homeless shelters
  - Including prepared food
  - Left over food
  - Perishable vegetables/fruits during breaks
Food Waste Composting

- Pre-consumer through entire school year and summer sessions
- Post-consumer during special occasions
Food Composting Program

- Commercial vendor-Norcal Waste Services of Alameda County
- 32 gallon green toters
- Collected twice weekly
- Toters lined with compostable plastic bags
- Cost is $21 per toter per month for twice weekly service, or about $.15 per gallon
- Substantially more than disposal cost for same volume
Food Composting Program

- Cal Dining staff handle virtually all of food waste composting
Food Composting Program

- Education is frequent, multilingual
- Part of new worker orientation
- General responsibility for all workers to compost
Food Composting Program

- Challenges
  - Getting employees to compost consistently
  - Stopping employees from composting everything
  - Keeping containers sanitary and in good appearance
  - Overfilling containers = very heavy
  - In general, it is responsibility of lead staff to control composting participation
Food Composting Program

- Compost goes to rural site in California, where it is processed and sold to soil blenders, nurseries, orchards, professional landscapers, farms, and vineyards

- Diversion tonnage is approximately 120 tons per year
Food Composting Program

- Previous efforts were run by Berkeley Worms, a student composting collective
Other composting

- Unit 1 Residence Hall pilot: to-go container, pizza box composting
  - Turning a problem into an opportunity
  - RSEC education assistance
  - Hall staff is now purchasing compostable cups for conferences, water coolers
  - Bathroom towels will be next
Composting fervor!

- What’s next?
- The Greek
- Campus Restaurants
- Nothing succeeds like success and good press
- Thanks to Cal Dining for their commitment and vision
Thank you!