

W&M Sodexo Dining Sustainability Internship Program

OVERVIEW

The William & Mary dining sustainability internship program typically consists of about 10-15 William & Mary students who work with Sodexo to improve environmental, social, and economic sustainability of food served in the dining halls and throughout campus. Specifically, the program consists of the following main five committees:

- Farm committee
- Hydroponics committee
- Compost committee
- Food awareness committee
- Marketing committee

More information about each specific committee is provided later on.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ALL INTERNS

- Attend regularly occurring meetings with all other dining interns, as well as within specific committees if applicable. A meeting time and place is generally set at the beginning of, or shortly before the beginning of, each semester, in order to best accommodate interns' schedules. These meetings typically take place in the evenings around dinnertime.
- Keep track of and submit hours. Interns are expected to monitor their own hours on a spreadsheet, and then send in their spreadsheet to a specific Sodexo professional staff member. Interns are also expected to complete the appropriate paperwork and forms so that they can be officially hired and paid by Sodexo.
- Assist with tabling for, and running events, put on by the dining sustainability interns and/or related to food sustainability within Sodexo when available.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR LEAD INTERNS

Typically, two of the dining sustainability interns serve as lead interns. The lead interns share responsibilities with all interns, as well as a few others:

- Meeting weekly with relevant Sodexo professional staff members;
- Coordinating weekly meetings with all sustainability interns;
- Maintaining contact between other dining interns and Sodexo professional staff members; and
- Overseeing committees, though specific committees overseen can be divided between the lead interns.

Lead interns typically work, on average, 4-5 hours more per week, and they are hired and rehired as needed.

QUALIFICATIONS/ELIGIBILITY

- Interns must be current, full-time enrolled students at William & Mary.
- Interns must fit one or more of the following criteria:
 - Have academic / coursework background in sustainability, business, environmental science, or another related field
 - Have work or volunteer experience in sustainability, business, environmental science, or another related field
 - Have experience with communication with authorities & students, organizing groups, and/or putting on events; and/or

- Interns should be self-motivated, persistent, go-getters, organized, and enthusiastic, and they should enjoy talking with others.
- Specifically for marketing interns: Marketing interns must have some background experience with graphic design and/or media-related software, and/or be able and eager to learn about this type of software.

COMPENSATION

- Interns are all paid \$9/hour.
- Interns may get a free meal from one of the dining halls once per week.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications typically open up once per academic year. This is often around the end of fall / beginning of spring semester, though it does vary some from year to year. Interns are to fill out an online application form, and those who make it past the application round are offered an interview. A cohort of new interns is then selected to fill the dining sustainability interns team. It is also possible that some prospective interns get put on the waitlist, and they could be taken off the waitlist at any point within the next twelve months.

SPECIFIC COMMITTEE INFORMATION

COMPOST COMMITTEE

Composting involves processing food waste and scraps in such a way that they essentially decompose, and their elements are returned to the earth. Composting is a great alternative to putting waste in a landfill, where it decomposes without the presence of oxygen and results in many environmental hazards.

William & Mary has a compost partnership with two outside organizations to help with composting. One is McGill Waverly, a facility in Waverly, Virginia, where all food waste from the dining halls is transported to in order to be heated to high temperatures and heavily processed, resulting in a soil amendment. The other is NOPE – Natural Organic Processes Enterprise – the organization that comes to W&M three times a week to pick up food waste and transport it to McGill Waverly.

In William & Mary's dining halls, all food waste is composted. In Commons Dining Hall and Sadler Center Court, the food waste is separated into compostable bags behind the dish returns. In Marketplace, students are expected to sort their waste between bins for trash, recycling, and compost, based on the appropriate signage. Additionally, for students, faculty, and staff members who accumulate food waste outside of Sodexo, there is a public compost bin by the dumpsters behind Sadler where students can dispose of their waste.

One of the biggest tasks of the compost committee is education and outreach throughout the college community on what compost is, how and what to compost, the benefits of composting, etc. The compost committee also collaborates with catering services, clubs/organizations, campus-wide events, and other entities to assure that their food waste is composted, and that they use compostable plates / utensils / cups / etc. instead of disposable ones.

Sample tasks and/or projects that interns could be assigned to include:

- Monitoring the public compost bin and directing students to dispose of their waste in the appropriate receptacles
- Sending outreach emails to other campus individuals & groups
- Leading activities in and/or presenting on compost education
- Designing educational fliers, stickers, and other merchandise about compost

FARM COMMITTEE

As of the spring 2016 semester, William & Mary established a partnership with KelRae farms, a family-owned farm business about a half-hour away in Toano, VA. KelRae farms has set aside eight football-length rows set aside for William & Mary students to tend to – through seeding, weeding, and harvesting produce. The harvests are then brought back to, and served in, the dining halls. Typically, tomatoes, melons, and greens are among the most commonly harvested products.

In order to successfully maintain the farm, both dining sustainability interns and volunteers organize rides and shifts several times per week to go out to Toano. The farm committee also runs several special farm days, including several for clubs and organizations upon request, and one to celebrate the spring season. The farm committee also helps out with the “Farm to Fork” Dinner that takes place on the Sunken Gardens every fall semester.

Additionally, because Kelrae is not a certified organic farm, the farm committee works on researching organic practices, in relation to both the seeds that are purchased and ways that the soil is treated. Although many organic soils, mulches, and related products have been tested, the one that has proven most successful thus far – and will most likely be used throughout the future – is mushroom compost.

Sample tasks and/or projects that interns could be assigned to include:

- Coordinating with other dining sustainability interns to gauge availability for weekly shifts
- Setting up volunteer sign-up forms
- Writing grants and obtaining sources of funding to help fund organic products and practices
- Arranging and conducting meetings with Sodexo and Kelrae staff members
- Seeding, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting crops

HYDROPONICS COMMITTEE

Thanks to a green fee grant from the spring 2017 semester, Sodexo was able to install eight hydroponic grow walls in Commons Dining Hall. These are PVC-pipe-based structures that operate without soil, but rather with nutrient-rich water that circulates throughout the pipes. Seeds are planted in sponges, which are each put in cups. The water is regularly monitored for pH and electrical conductivity. And when the produce from a wall is ready to be harvested, it is trimmed off and brought to one of the stations in Commons for the chefs to prepare and serve.

Theoretically, the grow walls have the capacity of supporting 600 crops. However, due to maintenance and crop growth issues, typically only 5 or 6 of the walls are thriving at any given point in time. The most common types of crops that are planted are lettuces and herbs, and since the onset of its operation, the red-leaf lettuce has generally been the most productive crop.

To maintain the wall, dining sustainability interns hold shifts twice a week, each lasting about an hour. After completing the tasks, the interns fill out informational forms and spreadsheets on Google Drive.

Sample tasks and/or projects that interns could be assigned to include:

- Coordinating with other dining sustainability interns to gauge availability for weekly shifts
- Emailing the hydroponics listserv to keep interested community members up to date
- Setting up fliers and videos and purchasing items to help to promote, and educate on, the grow walls
- Keeping track of data on a Google spreadsheet

FOOD AWARENESS COMMITTEE

The Food Awareness Committee works alongside marketing and nutrition initiatives in dining services to help to promote and incentivize eating more eco-friendly in the dining halls. The committee was originally more focused on the Meatless Mondays campaign, but it has evolved into more of a general food awareness committee to promote generally reducing meat consumption and eating with environmental sustainability in mind. The committee also focuses on reducing food waste, through past initiatives such as Weigh the Waste and current initiatives such as the Clean Plate Club.

Sample tasks and/or projects that interns could be assigned to include:

- Meeting with Sodexo officials and the campus dietician
- Sending out emails to the listserv to keep interested students and community members up to date
- Organizing intern work shifts for tabling and events themselves
- Collecting and analyzing data on food consumption / waste in the dining halls

MARKETING COMMITTEE

The marketing committee works alongside all the other committees, as well as the other marketing interns for Sodexo and the Sodexo professional staff marketing manager, to assure that the dining sustainability interns' events and initiatives reach a large audience. It is strongly preferred that marketing interns have experience with graphic design and/or media-related software, as much of their role as a dining sustainability intern will involve using it.

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

Interns are encouraged to launch any other feasible ideas of their own that relate to food sustainability. They can gain funding assistance through Sodexo and/or the Committee on Sustainability, such as through Green Fee grants. They can work with other groups and individuals around campus to put their ideas into reality. Etc.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any uncertainties about the above information and/or other questions about the program, please do not hesitate to contact us at wmgreending@gmail.com ! We're happy to help!