

Formal Report Proposal

To: John Connell, Ponderosa Arbutus Residence Advisor

From: Diana Choi

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Subject: Reducing Food Waste at Arbutus Ponderosa Residence

Introduction:

At the UBC campus, more than 100 tonnes of food waste is composted annually, and about 190,000 tonnes of food are wasted every year in the Metro Vancouver region. That adds up to around \$700 a year to each household's grocery bill in Metro Vancouver alone (Love Food Hate Waste, 2016). UBC has a closed-loop composting system, whereby our foods turn into compost for landscaping. Although UBC campus is playing a great role in managing food waste in the most sustainable way as possible, students living in UBC campus could potentially lead to greater changes in alleviating this issue by altering their food wastage habits. Currently, there are about 500 students living in Arbutus building and I believe raising awareness could result in changing our habits to minimize food waste.

Statement of Problem:

The major issue is that students have a tendency to go buy groceries in bulk every week and this leads to some foods going bad before we can even eat them. Although we throw out things like meat bones, egg shells, fruit skins and so on, there are still a lot of food that is thrown out that can be avoided. The majority of the students do not see the full impact that food waste has on the environment. Tossing away a small amount of food is equivalent to throwing away a large amount of water because it takes that much of water to produce the food. Another serious issue is that the majority of the residents do not separate compostable items from non-compostable items. This is very problematic as rotting non-compostable garbage increases greenhouse gas emissions, causing global warming.

Proposed Solution:

I believe providing educational information is not only a great approach to raise awareness of the prevalence of food insecurity, but also to educate others on how to make sustainable choices to minimize food waste. In order to raise awareness effectively, I would like to propose of creating an educational/social event within the Arbutus residence, where students can learn how to store food, extend expiry dates, and the importance of separating organics from other garbage.

Before the Event:

- Create posters on bulletin boards to inform when the event is taking place
- Create electronic posters and post them on social media, such as Ponderosa Commons Facebook Group page
- Provide a “Donation Box” where people can donate food before the expiry dates – these foods can be donated to one of the Vancouver charities
- Create an online survey to get a general idea of the residents’ food wastage habits
- Select a focus group (1-2 groups) and conduct on-site observation of the focus group to examine their food wastage habits

At the Event:

- Provide information on the importance of food reduction and the role of UBC Sustainability community to achieve Zero Waste production
- Provide an educational information and demonstration on ways to store food and extend expiry dates
- Encourage students to separate organics from other garbage
- Provide a space where the residents can donate canned/dry food

After the Event:

- Re-examine the focus group by reviewing their food wastage habits after the event to see if there are any improvements on food waste reduction

Scope:

To determine students’ awareness on wasteful food amongst student housings, I will be investigating the following questions:

- How often do residents go grocery shopping?
- How much do residents spend on weekly grocery shopping?
- How much food are wasted on a weekly basis?
- How often do residents cook in their residence?
- How often do they separate organics/food waste from other garbage?
- How much are residents aware of UBC’s Sustainability objective on Zero Waste production?
- What are ways to store foods to ensure that they are last longer?

Methods:

I will conduct my research project primarily through face-to-face interviews with the focus group and online questionnaire of Arbutus residents to collect data for analysis.

Qualifications:

As a Sociology major, I have conducted similar research on the reusable food container. The project was designed to raise awareness on UBC's sustainability objectives. The fundamental purpose of the project was to introduce reusable container program called Eco-to-Go, which encourages the colleagues to sign up for \$5 membership and exchange their membership for a container and replacing the single-use plastic, paper and Styrofoam containers. I believe my experience and perspective will have an asset when conducting this project.

Conclusion:

As stated above, I will be able to measure Arbutus resident's habits on food wasting and raise awareness of the issue to minimize wasted food by creating the educational event and performing an on-site observation of the focus group. UBC has a great objective to help and improve the overall environmental issues in Vancouver. UBC prepare students as a future generation of leaders with sustainability skills they can contribute to the larger world. With your approval, I will begin with the research right away.

References:

UBC. "Responsibility." UBC Food Services. Scholarly Communications and Copyright Office, 03 June 2015. Web. 06 Oct. 2016. <<http://www.food.ubc.ca/responsibility/>>.

"The Food Waste Production." The Food Waste Production. Love Food Hate Waste, 14 Sept. 2015. Web. <<http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.ca/>>.