

In Virginia, colleges, universities, and state agencies are leaders in food waste prevention, food rescue, and composting. The following document highlights some of the programs that are already in place at these institutions. The information discussed below is based on information provided to DEQ from colleges, universities, and state agencies.

Food Waste Prevention

Colleges and universities have extensive food service operations that are designed to feed students and community members every day. When asked about food waste prevention in dining hall environments, there are a number of approaches that have been widely implemented. These strategies are discussed below.

Trayless dining encourages consumers to take only what they can eat. This strategy is particularly effective in an ‘all you care to eat’ or buffet style dining hall. Many food service providers found that eliminating the use of trays in dining halls encourages customers to take smaller quantities. Trays can lead to students taking more food than they are able to eat in a single sitting, meaning that some of that food ends up becoming *plate waste*. Trayless dining encourages consumers to eat their food one or two plates at a time, while allowing those who are still hungry to come back for additional food.

In commercial dining facilities, **waste tracking technology** can assist chefs and their staff to better understand food waste. While some institutions use manual food logs, technology-enabled systems can save commercial kitchens time and provide advanced analytics on waste patterns. Some organizations have developed in-house tools that track waste, while others partner with third-party companies that offer waste tracking technology. Many Virginia colleges and universities use the same third-party provider. This company offers a waste tracking system that uses images and weight information to monitor food waste. As kitchen staff understand more about the food that is being wasted, they can more easily target specific solutions to address those waste trends.

What is plate waste?

Plate waste is any food that is leftover on someone’s plate at the end of a meal. This might include inedible parts of food like fruit peels or bones. Plate waste would also include food that was leftover on someone’s plate because they took more than they needed or did not like something on their plate.

Many schools identified student plate waste as a key contributor to overall food waste. To help students become more conscious of the waste that they are sending back on the dish return, some schools have held educational events that bring attention to how much edible food is wasted. At James Madison University (JMU) and the College of William & Mary, dining halls sponsor ‘**Wipe Out Waste**’ events where plate waste is sorted between the edible and inedible parts of food. These events bring awareness of the amount of food that is uneaten by students in the dining hall. Waste measurement events can also provide valuable insight to dining hall staff. By sorting between edible and inedible food waste, chefs can better understand emerging trends and student

preferences. If many students are wasting the same type of food, chefs could reduce portion size or try a new recipe.

In addition to events focused on community engagement and outreach, conducting a **campus food waste audit** can help institutions better understand their waste stream. Understanding the largest source of campus food waste is essential when selecting which interventions and programs will be suitable for specific contexts. For more guidance on conducting a food waste audit see the Environmental Protection Agency's [A Guide to Conducting and Analyzing a Food Waste Assessment](#).

Reducing portion sizes is another effective way that colleges and universities are cutting down their food waste. Serving smaller portion sizes can help dining facilities minimize student plate waste. In an all-you-care-to-eat dining hall, students should be encouraged to take less at first and then come back for more if desired. When reducing portion sizes, institutions may want to consider portions on foods that are more resource intensive.

A similar strategy used by many colleges and universities was **the use of small or uniquely shaped plates**. One study conducted by the University of Illinois College of Agriculture, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences found that switching from round plates (9" x 9") to smaller oval plates (9.75" x 7.75") reduced student plate waste from 15.8% to 11.8%.¹

To prevent food waste before university breaks, multiple schools reported to DEQ that they **donate perishable items to the local food bank**. These donations help ensure that any perishable items are redistributed before dining operations are closed for the summer or winter break.

Because colleges and universities often operate extensive dining operations, they can participate in purchasing models that support the reduction of on-farm food loss. Multiple colleges and universities in Virginia **partner with local food hubs**. Food hubs help connect institutions with local farmers, reducing both time and distance between farm and consumer. Food hubs facilitate purchasing commitments so that farmers know exactly what to plant and when to plant it, providing a level of clarity that minimizes the amount of food that goes unpurchased, reducing food loss on farms.

In addition to working with food hubs, colleges and universities can form similar partnerships and purchasing agreements by working directly with farms and farmers in their areas.

Estimating Food Orders for Events

When planning an event, there are a few steps that hosts can take in order to prevent wasted food. If multiple meals are going to be served at an event, provide guests the opportunity to indicate which meals they plan to join. At events such as conferences or multi-day meetings, registration forms can include a question about which meals registrants plan to attend. It is unlikely that every guest will attend every meal, but by gauging intention ahead of time, event planners can cater their orders to attendee estimates.

¹ <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2020.105293>

Food Rescue Programs

Virginia Tech's Campus Kitchen

Virginia Tech (VT) Dining Services works to divert wholesome quality food through their Campus Kitchen program. This program increases food access and reduces wasted food by redirecting quality unserved products from on-campus dining centers to hunger relief agencies in the New River Valley. Since launching in 2015, the program has diverted over 263,000 pounds of food. Leftover food is rescued by a team of student volunteers who visit dining centers, collect food, and transfer it to partner organizations in the New River Valley. Food diversions occur multiple times per week. Campus Kitchen is managed as a partnership between VT Engage and Dining Services. In addition to food being distributed in the surrounding community, some of the food rescued by Campus Kitchen volunteers is brought to The Market of Virginia Tech, which is a campus-based initiative that provides food assistance to VT students. Student volunteers regularly rescue grab-n-go items, processed produce, sliced cheese, and deli meats. Fresh produce, frozen prepared proteins, breads, and retail items are also included in rescues, but on a less regular basis. Any food that is leftover on the serving line, at the end of service, must be composted per their food safety protocols. Food that has not been on the serving line, is within its expiration window, and meets food safety guidelines, is properly cooled and stored for future service. Food that does not meet internal food quality standards, but is still safe for consumption, is diverted through Campus Kitchen and The Market of Virginia Tech.

Volunteer Recruitment

At George Mason University (GMU), volunteer opportunities for food recovery shifts are posted on the university's volunteer portal. This portal helps connect students to a variety of volunteer opportunities in their campus community. Multiple universities reported to DEQ that the availability of student volunteers was one of the largest barriers to expanding their food rescue programs. Posting these opportunities on an open volunteer portal helps make food rescue volunteer opportunities accessible to all students at the university, rather than relying on the support of one student group.

Food Recovery Network at James Madison University

At JMU, a student chapter of the Food Recovery Network, a national organization that provides resources to students who lead food recovery efforts on college campuses across the country, works in coordination with dining staff to rescue food on a weekly basis. Student volunteers working with JMU's chapter of Food Recovery Network typically rescue baked goods, produce, and prepared foods. These foods are brought to local non-profits and JMU's on-campus food pantry. In addition to this regular diversion, JMU donates all perishable foods to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank before school breaks. JMU also has several community partners that are scheduled to pick up bread at the end of the day from the university's Panera location. This initiative is a part of Panera's Day End Dough-Nation Program.²

² <https://www.panerabread.com/en-us/food-values/community/day-end-dough-nation.html>

Food Recovery & Reusable Containers

Food recovery is an effective way to redistribute wholesome food to feed people. In college and university settings, leftover food is often in large containers and needs to be repackaged before distribution. If institutions partner consistently with organizations that serve food, there may be an opportunity to transfer food in large quantities and in reusable containers. Some schools who use reusable containers for food rescue have two sets of reusable containers. One set remains with the food recovery group, and one remains with the partner organization. When the food recovery group drops off a new delivery of rescued food, they leave the containers filled with food and take the now empty containers that had been used for the previous delivery.

Zero Waste Events at the University of Virginia

At the University of Virginia (UVA), sustainability staff encourage event planners to consider waste from event planning to execution and clean-up. Zero Waste Event Training covers three main areas of event logistical coordination:

1. Supplying attendees with reusable/compostable service ware
2. Ensuring that compost and recycling receptacles are present in the event space
3. Communicating effectively with attendees.

To prevent excess food waste, UVA encourages Zero Waste Event hosts to inform and prompt their attendees to bring reusable containers to events to bring home excess food. If event hosts call far enough in advance and schedule a pickup, UVA Food Assist, a student run food recovery group, will come to an event, recover untouched food and donate it to the UVA Food pantry where it is then free to those in need. Zero Waste Event hosts are also trained on how to properly identify compostable materials such as leftover food, uncoated paper products, and commercially compostable items so that they can effectively compost as much leftover material as possible. UVA Recycling provides a compost collection bin and drop-off and pick-up services free of charge.

To further combat waste, UVA recently partnered with an app-based system that alerts community members when there is leftover food at an event. This system allows community members to subscribe to free food notifications and allows event hosts to distribute food that would otherwise be ineligible for rescue. After a successful trial semester, UVA is continuing to use this app and has included information about how to use it in their Zero Waste Event Training. Several colleges and universities reported that when it comes to diverting waste food from events, informal messaging systems existed among the student body. While these apps seem to be successful at mitigating some wasted food, they provide no formal or standard process for managing waste from campus

“We’ve had a really positive experience with Free Food Alert so far. The admin team has been incredibly helpful and responsive, and it’s clear they’ve put a lot of thought into the app’s functionality. We’ve also received great feedback from participants – both hosts and subscribers. The platform is very user-friendly and intuitive. After their initial trial semester UVA had over 640 subscribers, 34 trained hosts, and 20 successful events to date.”
-UVA Office of Sustainability

events. By providing before and after pictures, the app allows for more opportunities to determine the amount of food that was rescued from a given event. This data collection is dependent on event hosts completing a post-event survey, which is not a mandatory component of the app.

In addition to event-based efforts, the Office of Sustainability's Hoos Reuse Program works with the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, donating nearly 1,500 pounds of non-perishable items to the food bank during UVA's Move-Out Donation Drive in spring 2024. During the summer of 2024, Morven Kitchen Garden Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program also made biweekly deliverables to the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and the Newcomb Community Food Pantry.



Volunteers sorting compost at an alumni event



Team of UVA Zero Waste Ambassadors showing off their waste sorting stations

Little Ram Pantries & Ram Fridges at Virginia Commonwealth University

At Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), a team of researchers, students, and staff are working together to develop a new approach to mitigating food waste. Research conducted in VCU's School of Social Work found that 35% of VCU students reported experiencing some form of food insecurity (Kim & Murphy, 2022).³ VCU's campus food waste prevention efforts are helping to promote food security and normalize emergency food assistance.

Little Ram Pantries, which were inspired by the concept of Little Free Libraries, act as anonymous, satellite locations of VCU's Ram Pantry. With 12 locations around campus, Little Ram Pantries provide free shelf-stable items to community members whenever they need it. In 2024, the program was expanded to include Ram Fridge locations with funding from USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program.⁴



A Little Ram Pantry and Ram Fridge at VCU's Cary Street Gym

This new initiative both mitigates food waste and helps feed students by diverting unsold food – in single-serving, clamshell packaging – from VCU's all-you-care-to-eat main dining hall to the two new refrigerators. This diversion occurs in cooperation with the vendor who operates the dining hall. Three times each week, a team of student workers check the refrigerator and pantry locations to perform food safety inspections. Students use a standardized Google form to confirm the temperature, the number of items, and make a record of what, if anything, needed to be thrown away.

In addition to performing safety checks, students help to restock the refrigerators and pantries with food from the main Ram Pantry location, supplementing the rescued food that is stocked with leftovers from VCU dining. The Little Ram Pantries and Ram Fridges also welcome donations as long as the items comply with the posted donation guidelines (donation of unopened/sealed dairy products, bread products and pre-packaged meals is encouraged alongside fresh, uncut produce). Pantry locations can be stocked with shelf-stable foods if items have no evident damage or spoilage.

³ Kim Y, Murphy J. Mental Health, Food Insecurity, and Economic Hardship among College Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Health Soc Work*. 2023 Apr 24;48(2):124-132. doi: 10.1093/hsw/hlad006. PMID: 36898047.

⁴ <https://www.sare.org/publications/food-loss-and-waste/diverting-food-waste-from-an-urban-public-university/>

Working with a doctoral student in the College of Engineering, VCU's research team can monitor use of Little Ram Pantry locations with the help of a magnetic sensor system that generates anonymous time-stamp data every time a door is opened. Students accessed the eight dry foods pantries more than 2,400 times in 2021–22 and over 5,200 times during the 2022–23 academic year, as tracked by the in-box sensors.⁵ Before the end of 2025, the team at VCU hopes to have a new generator of sensors installed in the Ram Fridges that will also include a temperature sensor to better ensure food safety goals.

In the next phase of their project, VCU is directing their focus on food waste prevention, working to develop a new food waste tracking system. Led by faculty in the College of Engineering, VCU's researchers are in the process of developing a scanning system that will record returned plates before they are washed to track plate waste. The data will provide dining services with information about preferences, allowing them to make more informed decisions about menu planning, with the goal of reducing waste and better meeting the needs of their customers. VCU plans to make all the technology, coding, and best practices associated with these efforts an open access resource. During the USDA grant, VCU researchers plan to host a conference for Virginia colleges and universities to come to VCU to learn about their new systems and discuss best practices.



Dr. John C. Jones adding food to the Cabell Library Ram Fridge

⁵ <https://www.foodsystemsjournal.org/index.php/fsj/article/view/1243>

In addition to their existing efforts, VCU is piloting a program that will allow commercial dining locations to divert food that is leftover at the end of the night. This program is managed through an app-based system and allows participating locations to design surprise bags, which are sold at a third of the cost. Environmental results after one semester include avoiding 1,923 pounds of CO2 and saving 69,764 gallons of water.

Ram Pantry

Ram Pantry, VCU's on campus food pantry, was founded in 2014 and acts as a resource for any student who lack adequate access to nutritious food for a healthy, active life and learning. Ram Pantry is stocked thanks to existing partnerships with a number of organizations in the community, including FeedMore, the food bank that services the Richmond region. After working with VCU's foundation to meet the necessary requirements for 501(c)(3) non-profit organization status, the Ram Pantry is now a Feeding America recognized food bank, allowing the pantry to be consistently stocked with donations from FeedMore. This connection allows VCU's Ram Pantry to have a consistent and reliable source of food, ensuring that they are better able to meet the needs of their student population. Ram Pantry also sources fresh produce from local farmers markets and their own urban gardens which are managed by an Office of Sustainability staff member.

Despite high rates of food insecurity, VCU's Ram Pantry was largely underutilized, with only 40 students per month using the resource. In an effort to address the stigma and normalize food assistance, VCU faculty developed the Little Ram Pantries pilot. They were inspired by the take a book, leave a book model of Little Free Libraries. Following that model, VCU aimed to shift the narrative of food access, emphasizing the value of food stewardship and framing food as a communal resource.

Composting Programs

George Mason Procurement Policies

George Mason University (GMU) has made significant strides towards becoming a greener campus by integrating zero waste standards into their university procurement policies. As the university has scaled up their organics collection on campus, they have worked to reduce potential contaminants by requiring that single use items are BPI or CMA certified compostables. This approach prevents contamination by alleviating some of the confusion that consumers encounter when they are trying to understand which items can be tossed in the compost bin. To manage food scraps from dining facilities and campus collection locations, GMU works with a compost hauler who transports the collected organic waste to an industrial compost facility. The university also supports on-site 'backyard' composting at their campus garden and at the campus food forest. These sites are open to the university community and neighbors, who are welcome to contribute fruit and vegetable scraps to the piles. These piles give students, and the broader community, the opportunity to better understand the composting process and the role compost plays in a circular food system.

Many institutions with food service operation tend to categorize their organic waste collection by differentiating between pre-consumer waste and post-consumer waste.

Pre-consumer food waste is typically made up of any food scraps that are created in the production of food. This waste stream is typically made from the inedible or less desirable parts of fruits and vegetables, such as cores, peels, or seeds. When implementing a new compost program, many colleges and universities start with this waste stream because it is easier to manage contamination, particularly when kitchen staff are properly trained on composting procedures. For institutions that are processing food scraps on campus, collecting only pre-consumer food waste can help composters better manage the types of food waste that are being added to compost piles. This type of waste might also be referred to as “**back-of-house**” (or the parts of a dining facility not seen by consumers) food waste.

Post-consumer food waste (or “**front-of-house**”) is any waste that is created once food has left the production stream and includes a wider variety of inputs. Post-consumer food waste could include plate waste (food left uneaten on someone’s plate) or food leftover on buffet lines or compostable food service packaging. Collecting these organics can contribute significantly towards the amount of organic waste that an institution is able to divert. These programs need to address potential contamination. Effective post-consumer organics collection requires training the general campus community about which items can be added to the collection bin. Signage and community engagement events can be helpful tools when trying to minimize contamination at public facing collection sites. Limiting the procurement of single-use items that are not compostable can also help reduce contamination. When expanding compost collection to the post-consumer waste stream, institutions should work with their procurement team and develop standards around purchasing single-use items that have been certified as compostable by a third party. Compostable packaging should only be collected if the processing facility is able to accept it.

Rethinking Waste at the University of Richmond

At the University of Richmond (UR), the Rethink Waste program is working towards making UR a three-waste stream campus in an effort to make compost collection available to everyone on campus, everywhere on campus. On a three-waste stream campus, all waste collection sites collect compostables, recyclables, and landfill materials. In addition to composting in their back-of-house dining operations, post-consumer compost collection is available at all retail dining locations, in the student commons, and in the student on-campus apartments. They have also expanded this collection into some office break rooms, and various outdoor locations, including the Robins Center Arena and the Robins Football Stadium.

The university is continuing to explore opportunities to expand their compost program. In the last two years, UR has gone from a pilot residential compost program with a single bin to a program open to all students living in apartment style housing with compost hauler collection points at all apartment dumpster enclosures. UR is also working to incorporate compost collection into traditional residence halls.

At large scale events and sporting events, student employees, known as Rethink Waste Representatives, assist guests with waste sorting. For the past two years UR has won first place in the Campus Race to Zero Waste organics diversion challenge, a national competition that challenges colleges and universities to divert waste in several categories, at their annual Rethink Waste Basketball Game. In the same challenge, UR also won first place in the organics diversion category at their annual Rethink Waste Football Game. In 2024, UR collected over 290,000 pounds of organic waste for compost which is hauled to Waverly, VA and processed in an industrial scale compost facility. The university's Rethink Waste Program was created in an effort to move the university towards their goal of 75% waste diversion. The program's waste diversion efforts are coupled with a clear effort to change the habits of the campus community. The program is continuing to explore opportunities to demystify the management of organic waste, which they noted can be very abstract to students, faculty, and staff who have never encountered the idea of composting and do not understand its benefits compared to landfilling.

Community Engaged Composting at William & Mary

William & Mary (W&M) Dining Services, in partnership with the university's contracted dining provider, oversees a robust composting program managed primarily by a team of 18 student interns. Since first launching in 2020, students have spearheaded the continuous growth of W&M's post-consumer compost program, utilizing creative funding solutions and a flexible program design. W&M's campus compost program includes back-of-house compost operations in dining facilities and a network of 22 post-consumer compost collection locations across campus. Collection locations are outdoors at a range of campus buildings. A complete list of collection locations is available on an online map that is updated by student interns.⁶ This program has continued to expand without significant increases in compost hauling costs by moving the bins to three centralized collection points. Interns transport bins between pick-up

⁶ <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a7da400b0f52432d8965164ce746071e>

and drop-off sites using an electric golf cart equipped with a towing hitch, allowing W&M's compost hauling to collect compost from just three locations, rather than directly servicing all campus bins.

In addition to on-campus efforts, the program supports off-campus composting for students living nearby. Those who enroll in the program receive weekly Sunday pick-ups conducted by the interns. The interns also manage a request form that allows anyone on campus to request a compost bin for an event. Interns coordinate bin transfers to those events and work with event hosts to confirm compostable materials are being used. Dining services covers the regular costs associated with the program, including compost hauling and staffing of the internship program. One-time investments of equipment have been largely funded by W&M's student government and by W&M's Green Fee, a grant program that provides funding for on-campus sustainability projects. The Green Fee provided the funding for the electric golf cart used to move compost bins around campus, and more recently funded a new set of compost bins for indoor composting at catered campus events. The public compost bins located around campus were primarily funded through student government allocations.



A compost collection bucket that was decorated by a student who participates in W&M's Off Campus Compost Collection Program.

Dining Sustainability interns lead a wide range of outreach efforts to promote food waste prevention and composting. Highlights include Farm Fest, an event attended by 400+ students that spotlighted local food sourcing; Fitwell "Nourish to Flourish" classes featuring community garden and cooking workshops; and Food Waste Prevention Week with campus tabling, tracking events like Wipe the Waste, and compost education. Additional efforts include Swem Library Earth Day trivia, "Interns on the Street" composting education videos, campus clean-ups, and sustainability presentations for student organizations. Interns also mentor youth through the Sustainability Club at a local elementary school. When staffing allows, interns host compost education events at the Williamsburg Farmers Market, teaching the broader community about compost and providing public access to compost collection.

Separate from the internship program, W&M's Compost Club is a student-run organization that partners with a local elementary school to host Compost Club. Each week W&M students plan and coordinate activities for the elementary schoolers who are part of Compost Club. W&M's students teach the younger students about compost, help them with planting, and teach them how to use compost in their school garden. Each week the elementary schoolers collect their own food scraps and bring them to the club on Fridays. W&M students use buckets to collect the food scraps, bringing them back to campus for composting. In an effort to close the compost loop, W&M donates processed compost to local community organizations and Recognized Student Organizations, in addition to using the compost in university's campus garden. Finished compost is accessible to W&M through a "compost credit" system, through which W&M's compost hauler provides a share of compost back to the institutions who contribute food scraps. In 2024, William & Mary diverted approximately 235,000 pounds of compostable material from the landfill.



An elementary school student spreads compost in Compost Club's plot in the school garden.

Composting & Research at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science

The Batten School of Coastal & Marine Sciences at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) is the marine science graduate school for William & Mary located in Gloucester. VIMS has access to the funding opportunities provided by W&M's Committee on Sustainability Green Fee Grants. VIMS used this funding opportunity to establish their campus composting program beginning in July 2024. VIMS currently has two large compost bins that are picked up once a week by the same hauler that services W&M's main campus compost program. After a successful pilot, the program will soon expand to include four permanent bins and four extra bins for events. Across campus there are twelve communal bucket locations that are emptied once a week by a team of volunteers. In addition to these campus bins, 40 buckets were purchased and distributed for those in the VIMS community to participate in the program.

Organizers of the program estimate that another 40 people use their own buckets from home to collect compost.

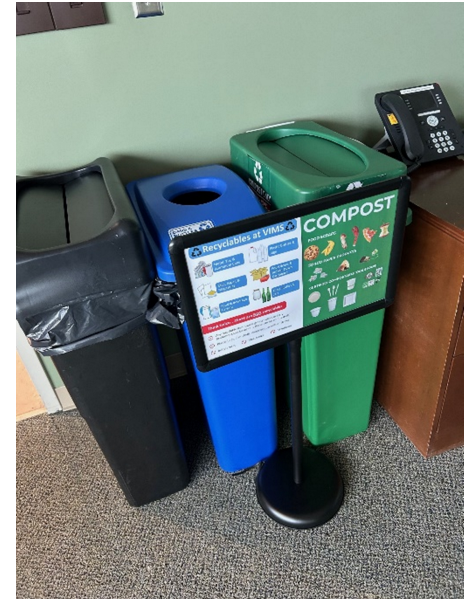
The expansion of composting at VIMS will support the composting of research fish which became a large component of the program in the spring of 2025. To prevent odors, the composted fish are frozen or refrigerated and added to the bin the morning of compost collection. Two of the permanent compost bins are located at VIMS' community garden and two are located outside of the fisheries building.



Compost collection containers outside the fisheries building



Various compost collection containers being used at VIMS



Community Engagement

University of Mary Washington

At the University of Mary Washington (UMW), students have several opportunities to engage with food waste prevention, both in the classroom and through experiential learning opportunities. These educational opportunities are ongoing and may continue to grow as the university works towards developing an interdisciplinary Food Studies minor. One course featured in this program is *Alleviating Food Waste*, taught by faculty in the College of Business. Over the past three years, this course has engaged 70 students and produced at least two research studies that were presented at major academic conferences. Students collaborate with community partners including the Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank, the Fredericksburg Food Co-op, and other local organizations. UMW's Pollution Prevention Planning course provides students with an overview of the environmental dimensions of food waste. Students have additional opportunities to engage with food systems as paid student fellows through the university's Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Summer Institute. Here, students conduct projects such as studying the composting system at a local community garden and developing plans to enhance composting on campus.

Randolph College

Randolph College is in the early stages of developing a composting system on campus (previously, pre-consumer organic waste was donated to Lynchburg Grows, a local urban sustainable farm, for composting). The compost will be processed at the college's organic garden using a three-bin system. Compost will be moved from one bin to another during processing. The compost will be used on-site and will provide a new educational tool in the garden, which is a living classroom used during the organic gardening physical education class offered twice a year. The garden includes a large section that is divided into plots that can be used by students, faculty, staff, and members of the local community. In addition to community composting, the garden uses sustainable agricultural practices such as natural pest management solutions and rain barrels. There are opportunities for students to conduct research, have an internship experience, and work as a student assistant in the garden. The organic garden is also home to a flock of chickens that provide fresh eggs to the Randolph College Food Pantry. The garden also provides fresh organic produce and herbs to the Food Pantry in order to help provide access to fresh food in the community. This garden acts as an experiential learning opportunity, giving students the opportunity to connect with their food system. By connecting to and better understanding food systems, students are more able to understand the impact and consequences of wasted food.

Ferrum College

Composting efforts at Ferrum College are coordinated between dining services and environmental science faculty members. The college uses an in-vessel composting system to process campus food waste. Food scraps are collected in the dining hall and retail locations using five-gallon buckets. Scraps are transported to a barn on campus, where two composting

bins are located. Bins are rotated by hand with the assistance of electric augers, which aerate the bins. Food scraps from campus are mixed with sawdust donated by a local cabinet shop, which acts as the carbon source for the compost. The composter bins are used in introductory environmental courses as an experiential learning opportunity for students. Students can earn credits for managing the composters for a semester. Finished compost from this system has been donated to a number of community gardens in the county.

Virginia Department of Corrections

The Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC) uses an in-vessel composting system to process food waste created at some of their facilities. Food waste is collected in kitchens and dropped off each morning at the State Farm Facility where compost is processed by a team of inmates. DOC's system can process up to 8,000 pounds of food scraps each day.