

2025 Sustainability Awards - Southwestern University

Southwestern University

Essay:

Southwestern University is excited to submit Pirate Dining's Sustainable Procurement Program for consideration in the NACUFS Sustainability Awards. This initiative exemplifies our commitment to supporting the local community by purchasing locally sourced products, utilizing environmentally friendly materials, and actively reducing waste. We take pride in our efforts to enhance sustainability.

Overall Impact of Initiative or Program

Introducing sustainable products into our operation has been a positive experience. It allows our students to support their community by boosting local economies while enjoying the products they love in a sustainable way. This program was made possible by the collective efforts of our entire team, including the general manager, residential manager, executive chef, and marketing team.

Local Products

We practice sustainability by prioritizing the purchase of locally made products. In our retail locations, students can buy items sourced from Georgetown or Austin. Currently, we offer ten locally made products, including Lulu's Pie Shoppe's delicious pies and Stoke's fresh juice. By offering these high-quality, diverse products, we aim to reduce our carbon footprint through local production and delivery.

In our Residential Restaurant, we feature products from The Common Market, which provides local, farm-fresh items from independent family farmers and ranchers in Texas. This aligns with our values of prioritizing local sourcing, equity, diversity, and health. We keep our salad bar stocked with lettuce from True Harvest that is grown in Belton, Texas. True Harvest is

committed to keeping sustainability a top priority by avoiding the use of pesticides and prioritizing sustainability by using biodegradable growing materials and implementing a zero-waste program.

Eco-Friendly Products

At Pirate Dining, we are committed to sustainability by offering our customers eco-friendly product choices. Our catering department provides products designed and manufactured with minimal environmental impact, often using sustainable materials, reducing waste, and promoting ethical practices throughout their lifecycle. We actively encourage our guests to choose these options by highlighting the environmental benefits. In our residential restaurant, we use Eco-Takeouts® containers, which are recyclable, BPA-free, non-toxic, and help reduce waste. This allows us to position our to-go food program as environmentally friendly and a clean, healthy way for diners to enjoy meals on the go.

Moonshot

To minimize food waste, we have partnered with Moonshot, a company dedicated to collecting and transforming food waste into compost. This partnership has successfully diverted millions of pounds of food waste from landfills, conserving landfill space and significantly reducing climate-warming emissions. In 2024 alone, Moonshot helped us divert 41,917 pounds of food waste from landfills.

Creativity & Innovation

We hosted events featuring themed décor and a special menu to introduce our new local products. To celebrate our partnership with True Harvest, our team visited their hydroponic farms and created engaging content that we shared on social media. To ensure we receive the best feedback from the student body, we rely on recommendations from the Food Student Advisory Committee. This helps us identify which local products students want on campus and which align best with their sustainability efforts.

Low Start-Up Resource Costs/High Return

One of the significant risks we identified was the potential waste from local products. To mitigate this risk, we place initial orders in limited quantities to ensure the products sell. Additionally, most of our partner products have a long shelf life, allowing us to minimize waste and maximize their use. The business agrees to buy back the product that doesn't sell or expire, and the business agrees to make sure that product is stocked, expired product is removed and delivered which allows us to significantly reduce the costs that are associated with buying and selling the products.

Applicability of Initiative

Although this initiative is complex, it can be replicated in most operations. The first step is to identify the preferences and needs of the clients or student body. This includes determining the types of local products they wish to support and their desired level of sustainability. Next, research and connect with businesses that share similar goals. We have found that most businesses are enthusiastic about forming partnerships and can be beneficial to most programs.

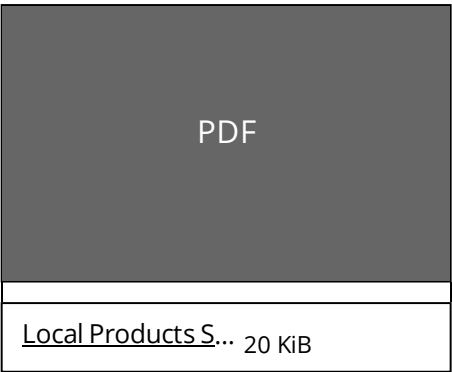
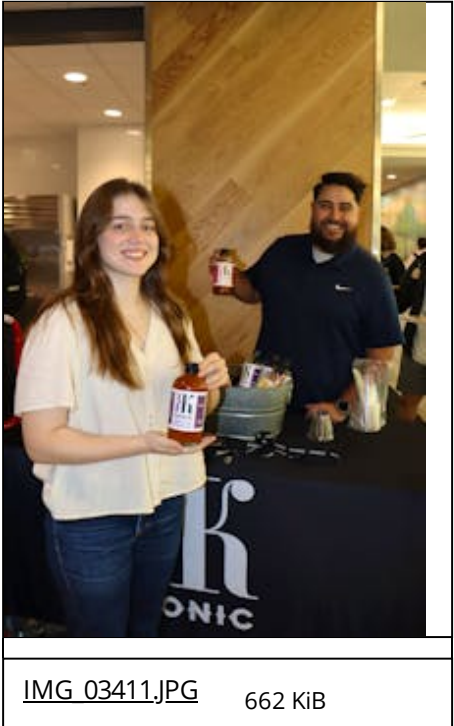
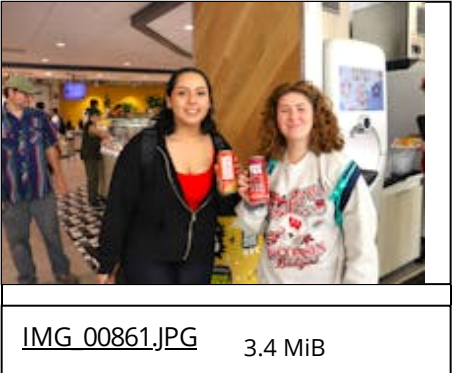
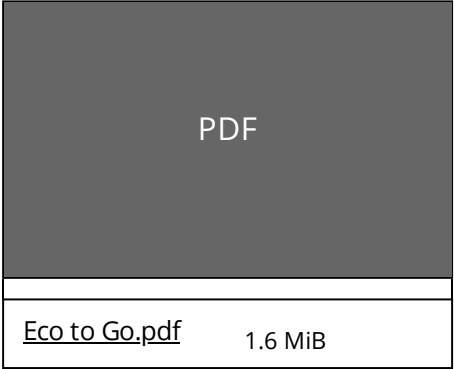
Effectiveness of Measurement

To measure the success of these initiatives, we tracked the sales of local products and compared them to the previous year's sales. We observed a 22% increase in sales from 2023 to 2024. Moonshot simplifies tracking our annual compost results by providing data on the total compost diverted from landfills, the number of trees planted, miles not driven, and pounds of carbon dioxide saved. We will use this dashboard to compare our compost results year over year, demonstrating our commitment to reducing waste and promoting sustainability.

Education, Outreach, and Marketing/Communications

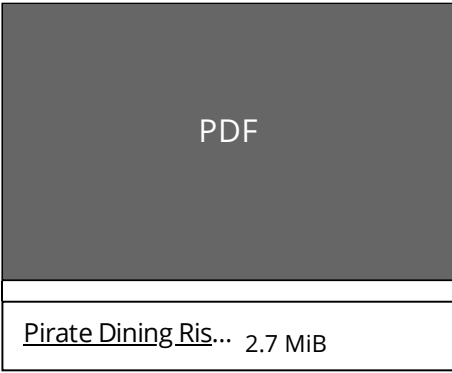
Through social media, we have successfully raised brand awareness and generated excitement for these products with engaging stories and posts. We also hosted brand ambassadors, allowing students to sample the products and connect with the brands. While students tried these products, they were able to learn about all the benefits that came with buying local and the initiatives the businesses took to be sustainable. The feedback from our students has been overwhelmingly positive, with many eager to try these offerings. Our sales in 2024 have increased by 22% compared to 2023. It has been crucial to share university news page highlighted our local products and highlighted our sustainability efforts. The Student Government Association played a crucial role in encouraging the partnership with Moonshot, as they aimed to engage the campus community in reducing waste and enhancing the university's sustainability efforts. It is important to us to receive input on what is important to the student body.

By nominating Pirate Dining's Sustainable Procurement Program, we hope to inspire other institutions to adopt similar practices and contribute to a more sustainable future. This recognition would not only honor our achievements but also encourage continued innovation and commitment to sustainability in the food service industry.

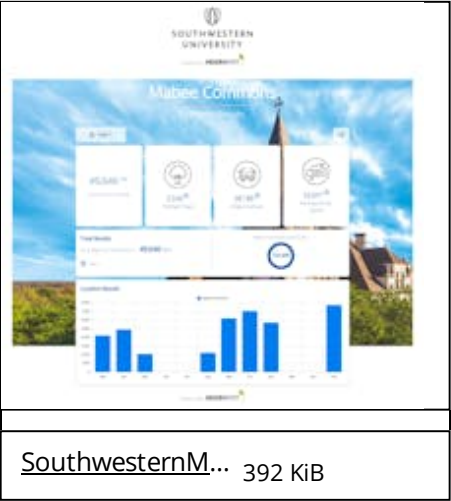




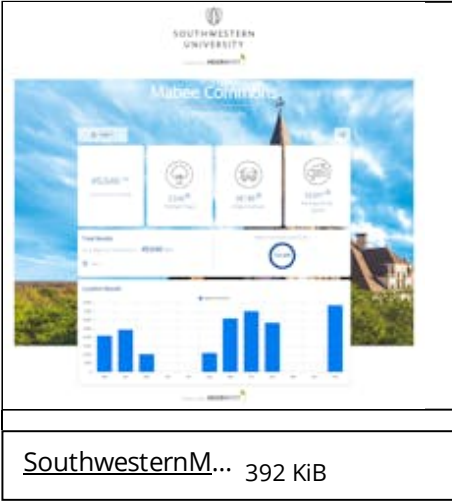
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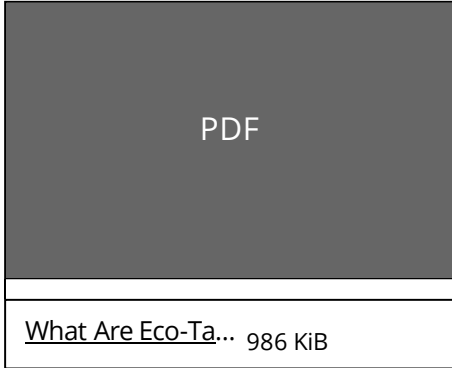
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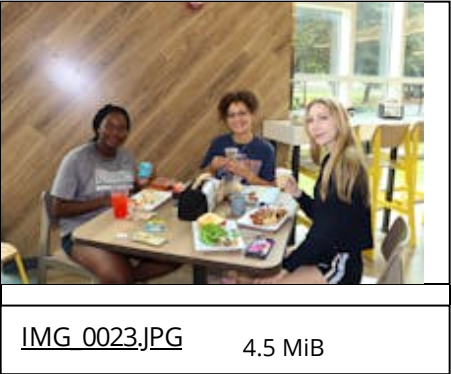
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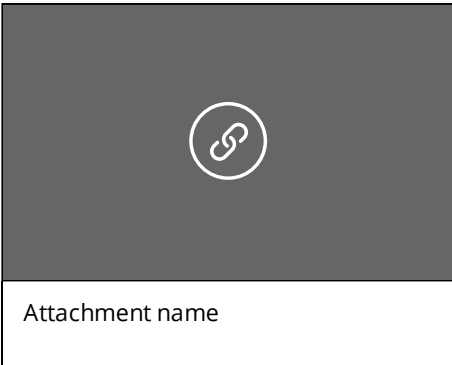
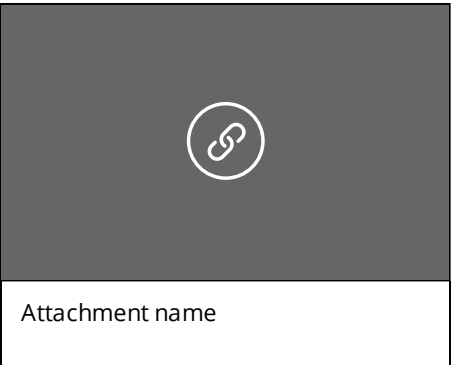
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