

EXTRA CREDIT

Emma Melis (Individual)

City: Montreal

Username: emma.melis@rogers.com

Province: Quebec

Email: emma.melis@rogers.com

Country: Canada

School: McGill University

Extra Credit due on October 23 @ 6am PT.

Up to 100 points awarded for outstanding work.

Challenge

Start by reading [this article](#) that focuses on the fact that colleges and universities may be overlooking food insecurity as a major deterrent to their students' academic success.

- **Do some research and assess the food waste problem on your campus. Here are some questions to get you started.**
 - **What does your school currently do with its leftover food?**
 - Two cafeterias in residence provide compost receptacles, and one of the 12 residences has compost receptacles for food waste. Some of the libraries also have composting bins. HOWEVER, I actually recently discovered an unfortunate scandal surrounding the composting at my school. Essentially, McGill had a “financial accounting error” with (read: didn’t pay”) the composting pick-up service, and so the service stopped picking up and processing the compost that students and faculty member continued sorting. This has gone on for months now, and will persist until the university gets the heat turned up on them and resolves the mistake. Although I do believe that the school’s current general waste plan for the leftover food is to send it to be composted, I think they’re doing a terrible job of following through on that right now, and I’d like to band up with some student groups to hold them accountable for it, especially when there are 12,000 meals being served *each day* (according to a 2014 article by the Montreal Gazette), providing unimaginable amounts of wasted food.
 - **Does dining services donate any food to the school pantry or local community? (Is there a food pantry on your campus?)**
 - On-campus free food services:
 - Midnight Kitchen
 - Food For Thought
 - Yellow Door

EXTRA CREDIT

- Students Society of McGill University
- McGill School of Religious Studies
- McGill Indigenous Support Network
- **Is your school part of the Food Recovery Network?**
 - My school *is not* part of the Food Recovery Network, under that exact name, because I don't believe that the FRN extends so far north into Canada. However, some student-run groups *do* take some steps towards dealing with socio-economic and (largely) demographic-based food insecurity issues on- and off-campus.
- **What percentage of students from your school is food insecure?**
 - I was unable to find exact statistics surrounding the percentage of food insecure students at my university, however, based on what I know food insecurity to be (meaning a lack of access to a healthy variety of food groups due to geographic, social, or financial constraints), as well as taking into account the more general statistic that most North American (Canadian and American) universities have a food insecurity percentage ranging between 20-40% (<https://www.clasp.org/press-room/news-clips/food-insecurity-college-campus>), I would estimate that McGill has a food insecurity percentage among students of the mid/high 20s to low/mid 30s. This is because Montreal is considered an affordable student city with relatively lower student debt (due to slightly lowered and subsidised tuition) as compared to the rest of Canada. However, food insecurity for students, especially students of marginalised populations, is still rampant at McGill. An upper year student and friend of mine at McGill studying Law and Northern Indigenous Food Security, Alix G., provided me with some resources that I looked at which suggested that there is a largely-unnoticed financial burden imposed on them come wintertime: that we have to purchase good-quality winter boots and coats to stay warm, and spend more money on utilities like heating and electricity because the sun sets so early, all of which takes away from money to spend on food (not yet considering the fact that fresh produce becomes so much more expensive at that time because it's non-local and out-of-season).
- **Talk to two students who are food insecure to gain an understanding of how that impacts their daily lives and their academic pursuits.**
 - Student #1, F. L.: "It's really hard to balance studying, working, *and* shopping for affordable (somewhat) healthy food. I know that I hardly have time for that right now, let alone time to cook the food I scraped my money together to buy...! Plus, I mean, I'd

like to have some sort of social life because I'm young and I should enjoy myself while I'm in my early years of adulthood, so that's not always easy, especially with the hours I work and study. Living in [the Ghetto] – (*the informal name for the local McGill student neighbourhood*) – means I can live closer to campus, but it's at least a 15 minute walk to the nearest metro station, and from there it's 5 stops to the nearest affordable grocery store like P&A, and back, which means that it costs \$3.25 each way, so \$6.50 is gone right there. I never really stopped to consider that I was food insecure because I wasn't raised food insecure, but when you've eaten like 12 bowls of \$0.29 instant ramen noodles to sustain yourself over the past week, you realise that you're in a pretty bad spot and there might be some barriers to food security like location and money."

- Student #2, R.S.: "I would say that I'm in a decent position right now than a lot of my friends. I live with my sister in another part of the city where it's much cheaper because it's off-campus, but where there's also not many grocery stores that sell healthy or affordable produce and foods. At least cause we save money on housing and from living together with roommates, she and I can spend more money on foods that we get from grocery stores by going a bit farther from home. But most of my friends who haven't been so lucky are stuck with insanely high rent and high tuition (I'm on a scholarship) and they're busy working and studying to go to grad school, and they always love when we invite them for dinner because I just really don't think they're in positions to put their nutrition ahead of anything else on a large scale. They may still put aside time to work out and look fit, but I really don't think they're feeding their bodies the nutrients and foods it needs. Peanut butter sandwiches twice a day just doesn't do that."

Before you do, please read [this article](#)

Here is a quote from the article. *"Today, I am kind of hesitant to buy food, because I have less than \$100 and I need to do laundry. Do I want to do my laundry or do I want to eat today? That is the kind of question I'm dealing with."*

- **Write up a plan with some solutions to reduce food waste on campus based on your research.** (see end of document for plan)
 - **Share your plan with someone you think could make a difference on your campus' approach to food waste. Is it an advocacy group? An administrator? Someone in dining services? Student group?**
 - I devised this plan with the other members of my Environmental Residence Council (ERC) and Dorothy Y., our group's leader/moderator, because food waste, composting, and donations have been at the top of our priorities list since the beginning of the school year. As a council, it's been brought to our imminent attention that most of our school's cafeteria's don't always adequately divert their food waste, whereas it could well have gone somewhere

EXTRA CREDIT

to be properly composted or even have the untouched meals at the end of the day donated.

- **Who did you meet with and what was their response?**
 - I reached out to the co-founder and coordinator of my school's meal service provider and food director, in an email attached below. He was responsive and somewhat positive to my email, shown as follows:

Thank you for reaching out to us. This is great that ERC are being proactive in identifying how we can make McGill cafeterias more sustainable. MealCare is currently partnered with RVC and BMH to divert their surplus edible food which was previously disposed of, which is now taken to nearby homeless shelters through our program. We are hoping to expand to the rest of the cafeterias this year. If you want to learn more about what we do, and how we could potentially work together such as through either communicating volunteer opportunities to students in residences or coordinating food waste education events, please let me know. I would be happy to personally meet you as well as connect you to members of the McGill chapter executive team.

Best,

~~MINOR CAROLAN DUNN~~
Co-Founder, Managing Director | MealCare
www.mealcare.org | 438-580-6324

- **Take 3 photos of campus food waste. Caption them with what the waste is, where you found it and what you think could be done to reduce it. Tag your campus communications office, dining services if you can find them on social media, as well as @TurningGreenOrg. Use the hashtags #Savethefood and #PGC2018.**

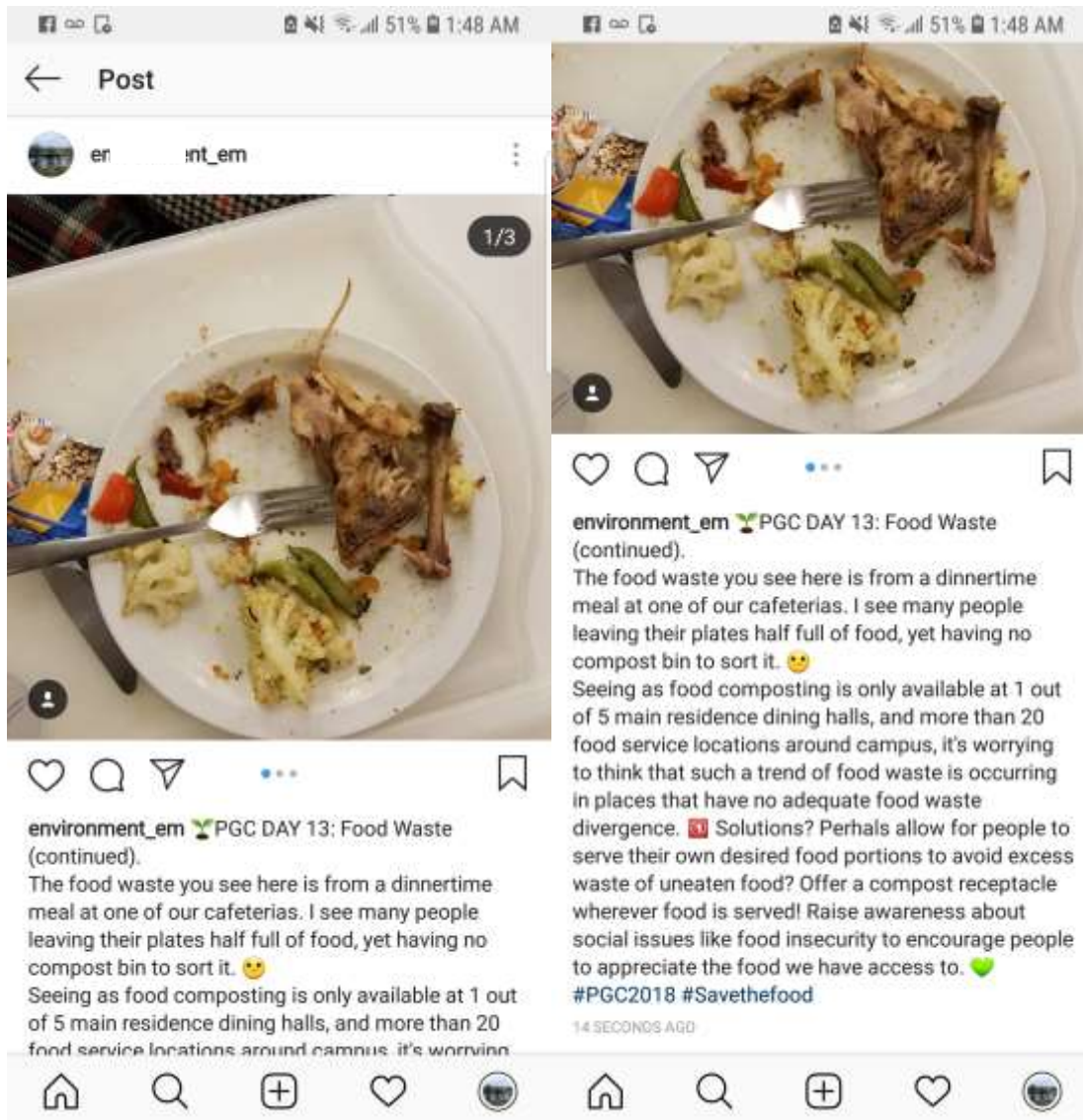


EXTRA CREDIT

Deliverables

Upload a PDF document with your plan, who you met with and their response, photos, and screenshot of your social media post.

SUBMITTED AT: 3:05 am ET 23 October 2018



The image is a screenshot of an Instagram post. At the top, the status bar shows 51% battery and 1:48 AM. The post is titled "Post" and is from the user "environment_em". It features two side-by-side photos of a white plate with a fork, containing remnants of a meal including chicken bones, green beans, and potatoes. The caption reads: "environment_em 🌱PGC DAY 13: Food Waste (continued). The food waste you see here is from a dinnertime meal at one of our cafeterias. I see many people leaving their plates half full of food, yet having no compost bin to sort it. 😊 Seeing as food composting is only available at 1 out of 5 main residence dining halls, and more than 20 food service locations around campus, it's worrying to think that such a trend of food waste is occurring in places that have no adequate food waste divergence. 📌 Solutions? Perhaps allow for people to serve their own desired food portions to avoid excess waste of uneaten food? Offer a compost receptacle wherever food is served! Raise awareness about social issues like food insecurity to encourage people to appreciate the food we have access to. 🌱 #PGC2018 #Savethefood". The post was made "14 SECONDS AGO". The bottom of the screenshot shows the Instagram navigation bar.

- **Write up a plan with some solutions to reduce food waste on campus based on your research.**
(see at end of document for plan)

SPECIFIC ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM:	MY PROPOSED SOLUTION:
Lack of accessible composting receptacles.	Install more receptacles for food waste! Residences with kitchens for students on reduced meal plans should have composting bins in proportion to the amount of food waste produced per pick-up period. This can be determined by a simple audit. There should be an equal ratio of garbage:compost:recycling receptacles according to waste output. Wherever food is served or processed, there should be compost bins to collect food waste. This is a logical tenet that is necessary and must be mandated.
Lack of actual composting service.	That issue shouldn't even exist. I find it highly unacceptable for a rich institution like McGill to not come up with some sort of financial solution to pay a composting pick-up service to pick up food waste output. McGill must be held accountable for this, and, if they actually have a financial error, look to remedy the problem as soon as possible.
Lack of education about food waste.	I think that many people who <i>aren't</i> food-insecure are unaware about it being a common issue on campus. By increasing awareness about it as a pertinent issue, I think students would be less inclined to waste the food they are lucky to have in their fridges and on their plates.
Prominence of food insecurity among general student body.	As I could tell after speaking to just a couple of students (and after observing my own trend of not always having the time or resources to buy and cook my own healthy food on the weekends when I don't go to the on-campus cafeterias), food insecurity is a large problem among students and my school, and it should be addressed at all levels of the institution –outreach campaigns led by students, student groups, and by school health and food services.
Prominence of food insecurity among marginalised groups of students.	It's an unfortunate reality that food insecurity is highest among certain marginalised groups of students. Usually these are international, POC, and Indigenous students who suffer from highest rates of marginalisation and food discrimination, all of which leads to food insecurity. Social justice activism on university campuses is very "trendy" right now – so why don't more people talk about food insecurity of these groups? I think this is a pretty important issue because it's based on so many other problems, and it should be discussed and acted upon more often.
Food services provided (food portioning is too standardised).	Food often goes to waste from people's plates because there's too much loaded on there. Perhaps the servers at the cafeteria are putting too much on there? If portions are standardised, and large amounts of food are disposed of in the garbage, uneaten, then there might be a problem with standardised portioning. I would like to see a pilot project enabled to test out the possibility of allowing students to serve their own portions according to what they think they can eat, in order to see if food waste output decreases.

EXTRA CREDIT

<p>FLOSN foods are inaccessible (geographically and financially).</p>	<p>Student neighbourhoods don't have enough nearby grocery stores which offer affordably-priced FLOSN produce and foods for students. McGill could offer an on-campus grocery store-like programme which could aim to resolve some of this problem. In fact, this is a fantastically massive hypothetical undertaking, but I think it would still be a great idea because it would centralise food sources for many students, taking into account food waste for "expired" goods and produce, the necessary affordability of foods, and the accessibility and convenience of shopping.</p>
<p>Campus-wide food collection initiatives.</p>	<p>There are some seasonal (around Christmas and Thanksgiving) food drives for non-perishable and nutritious foodstuffs. I think that there should be more frequent opportunities for all members of the McGill community – staff, teachers, TAs, administrative staff, and students – to contribute to food drives throughout the year. After all, food-insecure people eat more often than at Christmas and Thanksgiving...</p>