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Dining Program at UB Changes Waste to Watts

Food scraps from Campus Dining and Shops become transformed into clean, renewable energy

(Buffalo, NY) – Campus Dining and Shops (CDS) at the University at Buffalo (UB) is excited to announce the expansion of an already successful composting program to now include transforming food scraps into renewable energy. Through a partnership with Natural Upcycling and Noblehurst Farms in Linwood, NY, seven tons of food scraps are diverted weekly and converted into electricity.

In 2009, CDS lead the university in pioneering a new waste-management system using an Eco-Smart food dehydrator. Since that time, over 4.9 million pounds of soil amendment has been produced on campus and retuned back to gardens across Western New York. “This new collaboration allows us the opportunity to convert our excess food scraps into clean, renewable energy instead of going to landfills or commercial composting facilities,” says Jeff Brady, executive director for Campus Dining and Shops.

At UB, CDS employees in all dining locations collect food scraps (like produce peelings, coffee grounds, egg shells) and combine those with post-consumer food waste from the residential dining centers to be placed daily into the Eco-Smart food dehydrator. Food scraps in excess of what the dehydrator can handle in a day are placed into specially designated compost totes. These scraps are then transported to Noblehurst Farms where the food waste is broken down by the farm’s anaerobic digester into methane gas which is then converted to electricity, which serves to take the farm off the grid entirely (the equivalent of powering 400 households for a year). Excess energy is bought by a local utility company and post-process liquids are used to fertilize farm soil. In this zero-waste process, everything is used.

“We’re committed to finding innovative ways to reduce food waste,” added Brady. “In this instance, the benefits are widely shared and that helps our students, our farmers and our local economy.” CDS plans to set up a demonstration model for students to understand the process and at the same time, promote responsible eating to reduce food waste.

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UB’s Campus Dining & Shops’ (CDS) primary purpose is to offer a variety of high quality, high value, and innovative dining options designed to fit the varied lifestyles and nutritional needs of the university community. CDS is a multi-unit company employing over 1,300 people. In addition to providing the university’s dining services, CDS also serves the UB community through management of the UB Card Office, Three Pillars Catering, Retail and Convenience Stores, and Vending. In our day-to-day operations we rely on inherent core values: quality items, value prices, environmentally friendly settings, ethical treatment of all, and conducting all phases of our business with integrity.