

Colby's Proposed Reusable Mug Program: FAQs

How will the program work?

Every Colby student will be given their own reusable mug, hopefully at the beginning of the Fall 2019 semester. These mugs will replace the single-use cups previously provided by dining halls, and will be paid for out of the dining services budget for single-use cups. Students will be given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own sustainable habits by using their new mug instead of wasteful single-use cups from the dining halls.

Why do we want to implement this program?

This program is being designed to fit the needs of both the student body and our dining services. We hope to reduce Colby's environmental footprint by eliminating unnecessary waste while at the same time encouraging students to cultivate sustainable habits and a more eco-friendly lifestyle.

What is the reasoning behind the switch?

Currently, Bon Appetit is spending over \$13,000 every year to buy about 150,000 single use compostable cups, many of which are never successfully composted. This creates unnecessary waste, which this program will eliminate while saving Colby money at the same time.

Who has been working on this?

This initiative was first proposed by an Environmental Studies student and Eco-Rep working for the Office of Sustainability. This student has collaborated with the Sustainability Office and Dining Services to develop a proposal ready for constructive feedback from Colby's student body.

What has been the process for developing the program so far?

Last November, this proposal started as an idea from a student. Collaboration with student leaders at Bates College, which just implemented a very similar program, helped form the basis for our proposal. Throughout January, this idea was developed during meetings with Marietta Lamarre, our Bon Appetit manager, and our Sustainability Director Sandy Beauregard. We have also completed extensive research on similar programs at other NESCAC schools to get an idea of what kind of program has potential to succeed at a school of our size. With a first draft of the proposal finished, the next step in this process is surveying the student body to gauge support for the program and incorporate comments and suggestions from students on improvements that can and should be made.

How will it impact staff?

So far in the process the dining staff representative has been enthusiastically supportive of this initiative and is excited to work with us to ensure success. The staff will not be adversely affected by the program.

What is the financial impact of this program?

Depending on which model of mug we choose, the dining services will save between \$600 - \$6,500 during the first year of the program, and will save between \$10,500 - \$12,000 in all following years.

I'm worried about personal convenience - what if I forget my mug but still want to take coffee or tea from the dining hall?

The design of this program has been chosen partly because of the responsibility it shifts to the Colby student to bring their own reusable mug to the dining hall. Yes, it will take some time to get used to planning ahead when you want coffee or tea to go, but ultimately we are hoping this program will have a lasting impact and encourage students to use reusable mugs not only at Colby but also at home and after graduating.

Why are we choosing this program over the dining hall providing mugs that students can take and return?

We considered this model during the brainstorming process! Although it might have potential to ease responsibility from the students, it is unlikely to work at Colby. A few years ago we actually tried this model, where the dining halls provide reusable mugs which students use and return to the dining halls, and it proved financially unsustainable and generally ineffective. The mugs were not returned and many ended up in the trash or recycling, so that the cost of buying new mugs every year resulted in costing the college more money than it was saving. We want to learn from this experience and introduce a slightly different model program in the hopes of success!

I have an opinion/feedback about this program!

Awesome! We want as much feedback as we can get to structure the program in the students' best interest! Head over to this [form](#) and tell us what you think!

I think I know a better solution to this goal of eliminating single-use cups from dining halls!

That's great! We are excited about our program but always looking for ways to improve it because we want to give the program the best chance of success as possible! Please fill out this [form](#) so we can hear about your idea and incorporate it into our proposal!

I have a question not on this list!

Fantastic! We'd love to answer it, just fill out this [form](#) and we'll get back to you as soon as we can!

Modeled after:

<http://www.middlebury.edu/sustainability/our-commitment/sustainable-dining/sustainable-to-go-containers/faqs>