Composting Pre-Consumer Waste from Chaney Dining Hall

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Composting Basics:

What?
Composting is the decomposition of organic matter. The product called compost can be used as a soil amendment and adds nutrients to help plants grow.

Why?
Alternative to overflowing landfills, lessens waste removal costs and is a natural fertilizer vs chemical fertilizers.

Composting Composition:

All about color!
- Browns: including leaves and yard waste
  Excellent source of carbon
- Greens: food waste including vegetable and fruit scraps
  Excellent source of nitrogen
- Moist environment: open to the air and rain sources will allow for better decomposition
- Balance of carbon to nitrogen
  Ideally more carbon than nitrogen
  Results in less smelly compost

Pre-Consumer Waste By The Numbers:
Chaney averages 54 pounds of waste per day. This equates to 300-400 pounds per week. Since October of 2015, Chaney has contributed 5,000 pounds of pre-consumer food waste to the compost pile and out of the landfill!

Composting Quality Tests:
- pH levels: determine what vegetation will thrive in the compost.
- Total moisture content: less than 40% moisture indicates not enough organic matter, greater than 80% indicates not enough oxygen to stimulate composting process
- Total carbon content: a greater ratio of carbon to nitrogen content results in a less smelly pile and a nutrient rich compost.

Compost Quality Test Results:
- Average pH level: 5.9
- Average total moisture content: 52%
- Average total carbon content: 23%

Our Composting Process:
1. Collect pre-consumer waste from kitchen
2. Load in a back loader for transport to compost pile
3. Dump food waste on pile and mix
4. Let nature decompose the pile and test for compost quality
5. In the Fall, use compost in flowerbeds

Special thanks to Dining Services, Physical Plant, Sustainability Coordinator, and ECO for making this project a possibility!

STEP 1: Collect food waste
STEP 2: Transport
STEP 3: Add food waste and mix
STEP 4: Compost Quality Testing in 105°C and 550°C ovens