



Fall 2019 - Spring 2020 Year-End Report

Key Takeaways

Waste Watchers expanded programming by increasing student membership by ~50%, staffing over 150 hours of events (four times more than in 2018-2019), and collaborating with the Office of Sustainability and Bon Appetit in the Food Waste Reduction Campaign and Waste Interface Design Pilot.

Introduction - Who We Are

Waste Watchers (WW) is a student-led initiative under the MIT Recycling and Materials Management Office focused on decreasing waste stream contamination and educating the MIT community on proper waste sorting practices. We work across campus with Institute event planners to make their events more sustainable; stationing student WW at the event waste bins to educate and direct event-goer waste streams. In addition, WW partners with other groups and projects across campus to promote a clean/zero waste MIT.



Progress Summary

Accomplishments

- Staffed 14 events with 168 WW hours worked
- Gave a talk at TEDxMIT: Operation Earth
- Received the Bon Appetit Student Activist Grant
- Coordinated and staffed the Food Waste Reduction Campaign with Bon Appetit, MIT Dining, and the Office of Sustainability
- Staffed MIT Cafes (Sloan, Koch, Stata) daily for one week as part of an effort to build foundational knowledge throughout the MIT community
- Collaborated with the Office of Sustainability, School of Architecture and Planning, and Climark on the Waste Interface Design Pilot

Program Logistics

- Selected and welcomed our incredible new Admin, Amulya Aluru, in January 2020
- Updated training slides to reflect the new waste contract with RTS

- Increased visibility by reaching out to on-campus event planners and presenting in panels and conversations across campus.

Awards

- ***Bon Appetit Student Activist Grant Recipient:*** Waste Watchers was one of ten national recipients of the BA grant. This grant was awarded to “student groups with compelling projects to improve food system sustainability.”

Outreach

- ***MIT Office of Sustainability (MITOS) - WW*** partnered with MITOS on the *Food Waste Reduction Campaign* and the *Waste Interaction Design Pilot*. In addition, WW presented as a panelist in the MITOS Waste Forum.
- ***TEDxMIT: Operation Earth - WW*** presented at TEDxMIT on the issue of recycling contamination in the US, and how Waste Watchers is one of MIT’s responses to solving this global problem. Peers from other colleges/companies reached out to us on how to replicate the WW effort, and we created a detailed guide for distribution. (https://youtu.be/w2xbv-yKl_M)
- ***Bon Appetit Dining - WW*** worked closely with Bon Appetit Dining Company on understanding and improving the waste streams in MIT Dining Halls. We worked with MITOS and Bon Appetit in running the *Food Waste Reduction Campaign*.
- ***Sustainable Event Planning Working Group - WW*** collaborated with the Working Green Committee to create a Sustainable Event Planning Guide that will be shared with all event planners across campus.



Program Improvements

- ***Program Guide Development:*** We developed and shared a guide that discussed how to start and grow a waste education group at a company, school, or community organization. We shared this document with individuals who requested support after the TEDxMIT talk.
- ***Improved WW Internal Relations:*** We ordered mugs for all active WW and started a monthly Town Hall Meeting for all members
- ***Business Cards:*** We designed and ordered business cards to allow for easy networking at events across campus.
- ***T-shirts:*** Reordered shirts to meet increased demand as the number of WW grew ~50%.

Challenges Encountered

Spring 2020 Semester

- Due to the COVID-19 national pandemic, MIT's Spring 2020 semester was transitioned to purely online and off-campus learning on Monday, March 16 2020. Students were required to evacuate campus immediately and all events larger than ~150 attendees were immediately canceled. As one of the foundational goals of Waste Watchers is staffing various events to increase community knowledge, the majority of our operations were cut short.
- In an effort to continue maintaining the Waste Watcher community and efforts, Admins and members are working remotely to begin planning new campaigns for the Fall 2020 semester and evaluating the past two semesters of work done. Through events like CP*, we hope to introduce incoming freshmen to the Waste Watcher initiative and expand the impact of our organization.

Future Direction

Growth and Ongoing Collaborations

- Redesign posters on waste receptacles across campus to promote accuracy and consistency.
- Develop a Sustainable Event Waste Sorting Guide to be a companion for the Sustainable Event Planning Guide.
- Staff the first dinner during First-Year Orientation, and present at one of the early orientation events about waste sorting at MIT.
- Expand the Waste Watcher Administrative Team to include an Event Logistics Coordinator.
- Continue to collaborate with MIT Dining and the Office of Sustainability.
- Enable WW to pursue projects they feel passionate about.
- Designate different WW as point people for events they sign up for to promote leadership within the WW community.
- Continue to build community amongst WW: have bonding events, town halls/open discussions, WW swag, etc.

Thank you to our collaborators for helping make this year a success, and thank you to our manager Ruth Davis for all your advice and support!



Events in 2019-2020

(14 events total; 168 hours worked)

Event	Event Planned By	# Hours	Selected Comments
MIT Career Fair (1400 attendees)	Career Fair Committee, CAPD	9.0	
Trashion (75 attendees)	UA Sustainability	3.0	
MIT Winterfest (1,000 attendees)	Institute Events	3.0	
First-Year Orientation Dinner	Office of the First Year (OFY)	8.0	The contamination levels at all subsequent meals were reported to be the lowest they've ever been during orientation.
Orientation Parents Lunch	OFY	6.0	
Climate Symposia	Energy Initiative	35.0	Staffed 4 events over the academic year.
2.009 Presentations	2.009 Faculty	15.0	
SA+P Luncheon	SA+P	1.5	
Winter Family Day	MIT Open Space Programming	8.0	
PKG Community Conversations: Health	PKG Center	4.0	
PKG Community Conversations: Climate	PKG Center	4.0	WW gave a short pitch about the group to all attendees.
Graduate Student Visit Day Events	Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL)	2.0	
Food Waste Reduction Campaign- Waste Audit	WW, Bon Appetit, MIT Dining, MITOS	15.0	Two waste audits, working directly with MIT undergrads. Many students mentioned that WW presence made them much more conscious of how much they were wasting.
Waste Interface Design Pilot	WW, MITOS, SA+P, Climark	61.0	Daily data collection and weekly waste audits.