



Johnson & Wales' Commitment to Sustainability: A Campus-Wide Effort

Amid the energy of student life at Johnson & Wales University (JWU) in Providence, RI, sustainability is more than an idea—it's an active, campus-wide initiative. From the dining halls to residence halls and even the benches that offer a quiet moment of rest, JWU has embedded environmental responsibility into the student experience. Every day, 10,000 students participate in a system designed to reduce waste, repurpose resources, and create a more sustainable future.



Transforming Waste Into Opportunity

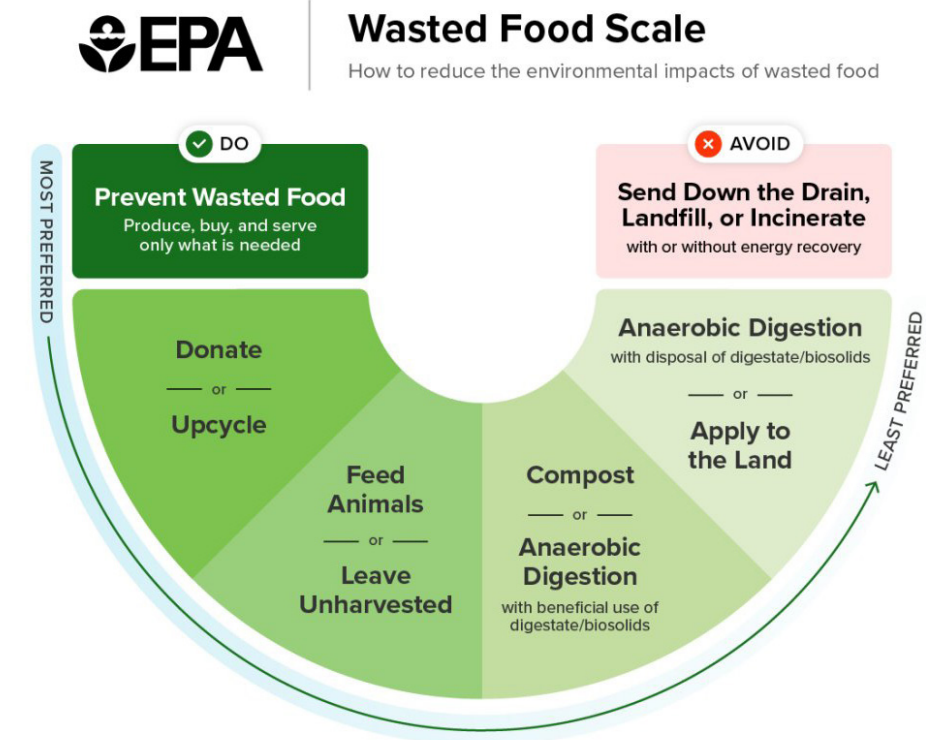
Dining halls are natural hubs of activity and potential waste. JWU has reimagined them as spaces for sustainability. Three-stream waste bins are strategically placed to sort trash, recyclables, and food scraps, which are collected twice a week for composting. Students play a critical role in keeping waste streams clean, reinforcing the culture of environmental responsibility.

JWU's two "all-you-care-to-eat" dining halls further this mission by distributing durable, green clamshell containers for take-out meals, reducing reliance on

disposable packaging. Students return used containers to the dining hall and pick up a new clean container that has been washed and sanitized. Launched in August 2024, this initiative is a tangible way students engage in sustainable practices daily.

Closing the Loop: Food Rescue & Waste Diversion

JWU follows the EPA Wasted Food Solutions Scale, prioritizing the highest-value use of food. The [Wildcat Food Rescue Program](#) salvages surplus food from catering events and student labs, repurposing it into meals prepared by student volunteers in the culinary labs. In the spring semester of 2025, 6,500 lbs of food was rescued and upcycled into **3,900 meals**. These meals are then stored in fridges across campus for easy student access. Additionally, campus freezers hold sorbets and ice cream created by students from leftover produce ingredients from culinary labs in a new upcycling project called Second Scoop. Creative strategies like this ensure good food nourishes people, not landfills.



The next step in JWU's approach is repurposing food scraps. In partnership with **Izzo Brothers Farm**, kitchen prep waste from dining halls is used to feed pigs, keeping valuable organic material in the food system. Meanwhile, the university has introduced food scraps collection in dining locations and student residences, with Harborside Village leading the way. **Fourteen apartments** have participated in food scrap collection since fall 2024 through Bootstrap Compost, with the resulting compost enriching JWU's community gardens. Since November 15, 2024, JWU has diverted **5,895 pounds of organic waste from landfills through composting**—closing the loop on campus sustainability.



Beyond Food: Recycling & Circular Solutions

Sustainability at JWU extends beyond food systems. In 2018, the university partnered with [Trex](#), a composite decking material company, collecting over 1,500 pounds of film plastic to create campus benches—tangible symbols of waste transformed into value. Today, JWU continues to recycle more than 120 pounds of film plastic each month, alongside structured programs for cooking oil, wood pallets, scrap metal, textiles, and electronic waste. With compost enriched gardens boasting pollinator plants and herbs for the culinary labs, their efforts have earned them recognition as a [Bee Campus](#). JWU also earned the [Tree Campus](#) certification by planting trees and hosting campus tree planting events to strategically enrich students' experience on campus. In the last two years, they planted over 88 tree saplings around campus.

Scaling Up With CET

Now, JWU is taking the next step in its sustainability journey with [CET's](#) support. With funding from the [City of Providence's USDA Grant program](#), CET is helping JWU refine its waste diversion programs by reducing contamination and strengthening participation.

By incorporating CET's guidance on image-based signage at waste stations and targeted digital outreach, JWU is equipping students and staff with clearer guidance on sustainable waste practices. By streamlining these efforts, JWU is making sustainability an intuitive part of daily life on campus by empowering its community to take meaningful action.

JWU's sustainability journey is far from over. With a strong foundation and the right partnerships, they are proving that a university can be a model for environmental responsibility, innovation, and progress. For more information on JWU's ongoing sustainability efforts, visit [their webpage](#).

COMPOST

Unlike the pig buckets in your labs, these compost bins are able to not only process food waste, but also fiber (napkins) and compostable items (utensils)

Pizza Box

World Centric Utensils & Cups

Napkins

World Centric Bowl

World Centric Compostable Plastic Cup

Food Waste

JWU ECO
Energy Conservation Office
@JWUPVDECO

Want to support sustainability on your campus?
Explore CET's no-cost waste assessment and implementation support—[get started today](#).