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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UF's first consumer-facing composting station unveiled at the Reitz Union

GAINESVILLE, Fla.— UF students, employees and campus visitors will have the opportunity to participate in a new post-consumer composting pilot program at the J. Wayne Reitz Union this summer as part of a collaborative campus effort to further reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill.

The #GatorsBEATWaste Station, designed in partnership with PepsiCo, Business Services, Gator Dining and the Office of Sustainability, was unveiled on Monday in the Reitz Union Food Court across from Starbucks and Pollo Tropical. The station is outfitted with easy-to-follow instructions and graphics to help guests navigate the disposal process in a few simple steps.

At the station, Reitz Union guests can find a step-by-step walk through of the waste disposal process, which includes sorting food waste from recyclables, and proper disposal of landfill items. Volunteers will be on site during peak hours to help familiarize newcomers with the station and to answer any questions about waste reduction and recycling.

“Most people generally understand recycling as it relates to common items like bottles, cans, paper and cardboard, but composting is a newer addition to UF’s waste reduction efforts,” said Allison Vitt, outreach and communications coordinator for the Office of Sustainability. “Our hope is that this station will serve as an interactive tool that will not only allow individuals to reduce landfill waste but will also help educate the broader campus community about the process and benefits of composting.”

Alachua County’s Solid Waste & Resource Recovery website explains composting as a natural process where organic materials like food scraps and other compostable products break down into a nutrient-rich soil amendment which can then be applied to gardens and lawns where it will add nutrients back into the soil.

A waste audit of the Reitz Union food court conducted in 2014 revealed that nearly 65% of the waste materials – by weight - could have been composted instead of going to the landfill, Vitt said.

In 2014, both campus residential dining halls began collecting pre- and post-consumer food waste for composting. Since then, the program has expanded to also include pre-consumer food waste collection from 35 dining locations. Gator Dining is also working to transition non-recyclable products and food containers to compostable versions. In spring 2019, plastic straws were phased out in favor of compostable straws throughout all of the dining locations on campus.

For questions or concerns about the program or about the proper disposal of materials, please use the hashtag #GatorsBEATWaste on social media, or e-mail info@sustainability.ufl.edu.

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