For the past six years, Seattle Pacific University (SPU) and their dining services (managed by Sodexo) have collaborated to offer a campus-wide reusable container program. The University has replaced all single-use takeout containers in their main dining hall, Gwinn Commons, with polypropylene reusable clamshells. Students pay an initial $5 fee to use the containers for 4 years and return their dirty containers to the cafeteria in exchange for clean ones.

Launch at the University

In 2018, Seattle Pacific University and their dining services took a major step to reduce waste on campus.

By the Numbers

- 100+ containers washed per day
- 23,900 container reuses per school year
- > 3,000 containers provided to students for reuse since March 2021

Key Observations and Takeaways

**Student Engagement:** Students have shown overwhelming positivity toward the reusable container program. They particularly enjoy using them to take food to class, study spaces, and other areas outside of the dining hall. Students also praise the subsequent reduction in food waste from being able to take leftovers with them instead of having to throw them away.

‘It’s pretty nice to have them if we need to get to class or want to go study somewhere [but need to get food].’

“Saves money because I don’t need to buy staples [like rice] since I can take leftovers.”

**Staff Perceptions:** The positivity toward the reusable containers is not only noted by students but by staff as well. Staff members have noticed the impacts of the program, noting that students find it easy to understand and helpful. With additional signage and advertising about the program, SPU imagines reusable containers becoming part of the status quo for both students and staff!

“Students seem to be able to easily figure out how the program works. It just makes sense. If I were a student, I would be using it all the time!”

“They are widely used and appreciated by everyone.”

**Recovery Rates:** Students are required to show proof of their container purchase with a carabiner or return their used container to get a new one. This model ensures that recovery rates remain high, otherwise students must pay for an additional container. No significant loss of containers has been noted.

Seattle Pacific University
Choose to Reuse Program
Established in 2018
Reuse Seattle is a City of Seattle initiative led by Seattle Public Utilities and the Office of Economic Development, with implementation supported by Cascadia Consulting Group, Blue Daisi, and PR3. Reuse Seattle is also supported by all of the vendors, service providers, and facilities who have partnered to move Seattle forward. Its goal is to make reuse scalable and affordable for consumers, businesses, and the City. Seattle is creating the blueprint.

Since 2022, Reuse Seattle has supported music and entertainment venues, restaurants, cafes, institutions, and public schools in implementing reusable foodservice ware.

Reuse Seattle’s ultimate goal is to saturate the marketplace so that reuse becomes the new standard and reuse options are woven into the fabric of daily life in all of our communities. The longer-term vision involves tech-enabled reuse collection bins in parks, offices, schools, and transit stops. The Reuse Seattle vision is for facility-based, closed-loop reuse systems to become connected and interoperable with external public space collection systems. This will enable these systems to be serviced by the same collection, transportation, washing and digital infrastructure—dramatically lowering the cost and environmental impact of reuse. Reuse Seattle offers a collaborative, low-risk pathway to achieving this interoperability by using system standards that PR3 has developed in consultation with large and small companies and cities across the supply chain.