

## 2022 Sustainable Solutions Challenge

### Stakeholder Interview Summaries – Prepared by Suraya Souidi

#### TERRY BAKER

Theresa “Terry” Baker is the University’s Executive Director of Dining Services. She believes that sustainability and dining aligns with her personal values to better the environment, helping to educate the students she serves to make better choices, while providing such options. From students’ experience at the University, Baker hopes that they walk away with insight on how to carry on the sustainable learning that she promotes into their lifestyles after college.

She has had experience implementing sustainability within dining at other universities, and since her arrival to her position in 2019, she has made sustainability a priority in our campus’ dining. She has both led and assisted in several initiatives, from instituting trayless dining in order to decrease water consumption, to playing an integral role in the composting rollout.

Her and her team’s efforts to make campus more sustainable demonstrates how important intersectionality is to implementing a sustainable initiative. In order for the composting rollout to be successful, Dining Services needed to work collaboratively with the Office for Sustainability, Procurement Services, and Custodial and Environmental Services to keep efforts focused on the same goal. From working with various departments at the University, Baker suggests that it’s important to “get people on the same program” with your initiative, referring to the stakeholder buy-in that is necessary to push a project past the idea phase. Demonstrable support is integral to posing any successful initiative. Though not every stakeholder will be supportive of initiatives such as composting at Tyler’s or trayless dining, it’s important to educate stakeholders and emphasize the initiative’s benefits.

Baker also advises that students be aware of any constraints that may be present during implementation, and emphasizes that envisioning too wide of a scope for a project may hinder a project from moving forward. She suggests that students focus on what issues are most important to stakeholders, and what is most effective with the simplest solution. This makes up her two-pronged approach:

1. Understanding the issues and choosing the most salient one to focus on
2. Analyzing the chosen problem and how to implement a relevant solution

Timing and collaboration is also important when proposing a solution: “Think about the academic calendar, because [the departments] need time to plan,” states Baker, adding “It’s not just about choosing a more sustainable water bottle to buy [for example], it’s about incorporating the necessary infrastructure [into a student’s solution] to get the water bottle”. Without understanding the constraints of the department where a student may want to propose a solution, the solution can be less appealing. Baker gives an example of a possible student solution that wants to take place in April. For Dining Services, April is one of the busiest months of the year, and a solution that takes place at that time would not be possible to implement. Baker also says, “if you propose to start in the fall and you give us the summer [to finalize the plan], that’s not a problem”.

Her advice for students is to consider the timeline for their solution from a business operations standpoint, and to be creative in their ideation process. “There’s a lot of opportunity on campus, so think about how students would actively engage in the solution to understand how it can be incorporated into their everyday lifestyle,” Baker suggests.