In October 2010, student workers from Bon Appétit and Facilities instated weekly Clean Plate Days to complement the existing program that sends food scraps to pigs at Barthold Farms. To raise awareness about the amount of food generated in Café Mac and encourage students to reflect on their own habits, the program gets student volunteers to help diners clean their own plates every Tuesday. Since the program began, student workers have continually working to improve it. In 2011, student began using prompts and incentives to get the student body more excited in the program, and in the spring of 2012, workers sent out a survey to the student body to get their responses. The results suggest that the many students view the program favorability, with negative views being the minority.

In addition to improving the image of the program with students, in late 2011 student workers began looking into ways to document the program’s effectiveness at reducing the waste created by diners. Before the program was instated for the fall semester, preliminary averages suggested that students produced two sixty-gallon buckets full of food during a typical lunch period. However on Clean Plate Days, waste dropped to about one bucketful. In spring of 2012, student workers began collecting data in earnest, to see what types of trends could be seen from the data. Like the previous semester, food waste dropped significantly on Clean Plate Days. Additionally, the data illustrates that that students may be remembering waste reducing behaviors practiced on Tuesday since waste was less on Wednesdays than on Mondays. Additionally, overall waste per person decreased over the semester, suggesting that Clean Plate Days may be effectively changing long-term behaviors.
Overall, Clean Plate Day (Tuesday) had less waste than Wednesday and Monday, with Monday having the largest amount of waste.
Throughout the semester, waste per person decreased on all days of the week, suggesting that Clean Plate Day has been an effective measure to reduce the amount of waste that diners through away after a meal.

Every Tuesday, waste was reduced between 9 and 30 percent per person from Monday levels. Five out of the eight Wednesday’s in which data existed, waste levels were lower than on Monday, with percentages fluctuating between 1 and 21 percent below the baseline. This suggests that waste reducing practices from Tuesday may be carrying over to Wednesday.
Responses to Clean Plate Days

While Clean Plate Day received both positive and negative responses, the majority of the responses were positive, suggesting that much of the student body thinks the program is important.

** Responses are from a February email survey sent out to the student body.