

Case Study: Allegheny College's Success with Reuzzi's Reusable To-Go Container Program

Submitted by Kelly Boulton, Director of Sustainability, and Kurt Hatcher, Sustainability Coordinator, Allegheny College, January 2025.

Highlights:

- 99% Reusable Container Return Rate with Reuzzi
- \$10,000 Saved
- 16,000 Disposables Averted and Counting!

Background: Allegheny College, a liberal arts institution in Meadville, Pennsylvania, had been running a reusable to-go container program for nearly a decade prior to partnering with Reuzzi. The program, which used token-based Ozzi return machines, initially saw strong adoption and good return rates. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted campus operations in 2020, the program's success faltered. The campus also selected a new dining vendor in 2022, causing additional strain on the program. The system struggled with a steep decline in return rates and continued operational challenges.

Challenges with the Previous Program: Before adopting Reuzzi, Allegheny College encountered several issues with their reusable container program:

- **Accountability:** Token-based system did not allow for tracking, reminders, or chargebacks.
- **High Loss Rates:** Over a two-year period, nearly 96% of the containers purchased were lost.
- **Significant Financial Loss:** Containers were often not returned by students, resulting in a financial loss of over \$10,000.
- **Lack of Vendor Support and Buy-in:** The college struggled with insufficient support from their new dining vendor, leaving them unable to troubleshoot issues or make program improvements. The dining vendor was unwilling to implement accountability measures within the token-based system.
- **Sustainability Concerns:** Despite the college's commitment to sustainability, the increased reliance on disposable containers post-pandemic ran counter to its environmental goals.

These challenges prompted the decision to seek a more efficient, sustainable solution to the campus' to-go container needs.

Criteria for Tracking App Selection: When the team at Allegheny began considering the Reuzzi platform, there were multiple items to evaluate:

- **Time Constraints:** The college needed to implement the new system within a six-week window. This timeline was tight, with the start of the fiscal year, a new dining vendor coming on board, and students returning to campus all coinciding. Fortunately, the college's previous experience with a reusable program and Reuzzi's fast-track helped them plan and execute the transition smoothly.
- **Student Buy-In:** Another worry was whether students would embrace another app. Many students were already juggling multiple apps for dining, communication, and other campus services, so there was concern that adding another app to manage to-go containers might face resistance. This concern was not realized.
- **Role of Dining Employees:** It was vital that the program didn't add any burden to staff. Reuzzi's user-driven design was ideal.

Implementation of Reuzzi: After considering available tracking solutions, the Allegheny team, partnered with Parkhurst Dining, moved forward with Reuzzi and began the implementation process. Reuzzi's user-friendly mobile app-based system allowed students to easily check out and return reusable containers, tracking all transactions directly through their phones. The college worked with Reuzzi to roll out a comprehensive marketing campaign and educational initiatives to ensure maximum engagement.



Key Elements of Implementation:

- **Student Involvement:** Getting students involved early played a pivotal role in the program's success. Students labeled containers, performed outreach, helped work marketing tables, and more.
- **Education & Outreach:** The team at Allegheny College made a concerted effort to educate the campus community about the new program. This included:
 - Training orientation leaders and resident assistants (RAs) before the academic year started.
 - Conducting presentations to student government to encourage leadership buy-in.
 - Designing clear signage throughout dining areas to inform students about the change.



- Hosting tabling events at dining locations and distributing flyers and other marketing materials across both college and dining provider social media channels.
 - Using campus news channels, social media, and word of mouth to spread the word.
- **Staff Training:** Allegheny staff were trained by Reuzzi in the new processes to ensure smooth adoption and implementation, helping students get set up with the app and making sure that the new system was consistently reinforced.
- **Consistent Communication:** The sustainability team sent reminders before breaks to return all items. Personal emails were sent to any users with items in “Lost” status to recover missing containers.
- **Reuzzi Features and Customer Care:** Allegheny staff took advantage of Reuzzi’s Express Return and Verification features during breaks to ensure accurate inventory updates. The team conducted in-person demonstrations in staff offices, helped troubleshoot with any users experiencing issues, and Reuzzi provided outstanding customer care.

Results: After implementing Reuzzi, Allegheny College saw dramatic improvements in its to-go container program:

- **Increased Engagement:** Although no precise data were available about pre-Reuzzi usage, anecdotal evidence and Reuzzi metrics indicated a significant increase in student engagement with the program. Reusable containers are now spotted being used across campus.
- **Higher Return Rates:** The most notable success was the program’s return rate, which skyrocketed to 99%. This was a remarkable improvement, considering that previously, nearly all containers were lost or trashed.
- **Cost Savings:** Over two years, Allegheny College spent about \$10,000 on disposable and reusable containers. With the Reuzzi system, this spending was dramatically reduced, and the campus moved closer to its sustainability goals. In one semester, 16K disposable to-go containers were averted.



Marketing & Adoption: Reuzzi's system became nearly the only option for takeout on campus, with the containers being mandatory in all dining locations, except for mobile app orders placed through the GET app (which will soon be an option) or for campus visitors. This widespread adoption, coupled with ongoing marketing efforts, contributed to the program's success:

- **Widespread Campus Marketing:** The college used a combination of signage, tabling events, social media posts, and in-person engagement by dining services staff to spread the word.
- **Engagement from Key Stakeholders:** The college targeted key stakeholders such as student government, residence life staff, ESS students, sustainability interns,

environmental organizations, and more to encourage adoption and promote the program to students.

- **Incentives to Drive Participation:** To further incentivize students to participate, Allegheny College offered rewards through the Reuzzi app. Students could earn raffle prizes for Reuzzi points accrued by returning containers, providing an additional layer of motivation to participate in the program.
- **Notable Adoption:** Today, approximately half of Allegheny College's student body is actively using the Reuzzi system, and the program is widely viewed as a success.

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BEFORE FALL BREAK

Green Box Return Raffle

- Return all green boxes before fall break.
- Users with 100% return rate will be entered into a raffle.
- Ten winners will receive Allegheny swag - (announced Monday 10/14)

AFTER FALL BREAK

New User Raffle

- DOWNLOAD the Reuzzi app
- CREATE an account with your Allegheny email address
- CHECKOUT a green box
- Ten raffle winners will receive Allegheny swag - (announced Monday 10/21)

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Questions? Contact sustainability@allegheny.edu

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alleghenysustainability Return ALL your green boxes BEFORE Fall Break to be entered in a raffle. We'll be verifying all returns over break so we know how... more

October 8, 2024

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It's FREE* and EASY.

Use the Reuzzi app to checkout and return green boxes plus earn points and rewards.

*If you fail to return your box you may be charged \$7.00

Reusable Takeout Program with 

TO GET STARTED JUST:

- 1 **DOWNLOAD** the Reuzzi app and create an account with your Allegheny email address.
- 2 **CHECKOUT** a green box at the card swipe station at Brooks or McKinley's with the Reuzzi app.
- 3 **RETURN** a green box in McKinley's and Brooks with the Reuzzi app.
- 4 **EARN** rewards for using boxes often and returning them promptly.

Questions? Contact sustainability@allegheny.edu

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alleghenysustainability The new and improved Green Box reusable takeout program is here! Download the app and create an account with your Allegheny... more

August 22, 2024

Key Takeaways: Through the automated Reuzzi app system, coupled with Allegheny's marketing efforts, success was found in:

- **Strong Adoption & Engagement:** Dining vendor, staff, and student leadership buy-in was critical along with effective marketing and education, especially during the adjustment period, which resulted in widespread student use of the Reuzzi program, over 50%.
- **Impressive Return Rates:** 99% of containers were returned with Reuzzi tracking and incentives, a vast improvement from the previous system.
- **Sustainability & Cost Savings:** The move to Reuzzi has led to significant reductions in the costs associated with disposable and reusable containers, helping the college meet its environmental goals.
- **Dishwashing:** Staff will continue to improve dishwashing and drying time, which can be a bottleneck.

Conclusion: Allegheny College's partnership with Reuzzi has been a transformative success for their sustainability efforts—improving their to-go container program significantly in terms of operational efficiency, cost savings, and environmental impact. The transition to the Reuzzi system was smooth, thanks to careful planning, staff training, and an all-encompassing marketing campaign. The results speak for themselves: 99% return rates, widespread student engagement, and a significant reduction in costs and container waste. With the continued success of the Reuzzi program, Allegheny College will proudly meet its environmental goals!

Would you like to experience great results like these with your reusable to-go program? Contact Reuzzi today! Visit www.reuzzi.com to learn more, or email Luke at luke@reuzzi.com.