

Case Study: CNU Leads the Way with Reuzzi Tracking 100% Reusable To-Go Options

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Highlights Using Reuzzi:

- 96% *Reusable container return rate*
- ~\$48K Annual savings
- 211,571 Disposables averted, corresponding with 2,305 tree equivalents!
- Fewer trash pickups, less recycling contamination, and a cultural shift to 100% reusables

Background:

Before transitioning to a fully reusable take-out program, Christopher Newport University (CNU) provided both reusable and disposable options. However, during a tabling event, it was observed that approximately 95% of students chose disposables due to convenience. The university was spending around \$1,000 per day on disposable containers, totaling approximately 2,400 disposables used daily.

Seeking a way to incentivize reusables and gamify the system, CNU explored options and discovered Reuzzi through a webinar by the Post Landfill Action Network (PLAN). After comparing multiple vendors, Reuzzi was selected for its cost-effectiveness and tracking capabilities. The Vice President of Auxiliary Services supported a full transition to reusables, making CNU one of the few institutions to implement a 100% reusable take-out program.

Implementation:

The transition began in fall 2023 with a rapid 1.5-month setup. The process included:

- Students using the Reuzzi app to check out and return reusable containers.
- Each container and return location getting unique Reuzzi QR codes and tracked to individual accounts in real time.
- Marketing via social media, banners, and first-year information tables to ensure awareness.
- Introducing a Green2GoReusables brand for campus identity.



[Photo Reference](#)

Student quote: "I'm also honestly a fan of the Reuzzi app. It was easy to sign up and create an account, and I haven't had any problems with it not working or glitching...It's also kind of fun to get points for returning the boxes." [Reference](#)

Challenges & Solutions:

- **Student Resistance & Fraud.** Upper-class students accustomed to disposables resisted the change. Additionally, about 75% of lost bins resulted from students exploiting loopholes (e.g., screenshots of check-out/return screens and QR code fraud). Reuzzi immediately addressed these by disabling screenshots, rotating return QR codes weekly, and implementing other configurable measures to prevent fraudulent activity.
- **Inventory Management.** Initial inventory challenges required fine-tuning. Once right-sized, the program showed a strong return on investment.
- **Education & Buy-In.** Awareness campaigns helped shift student perception, with first-year adopting the program more readily than upper-class students. Over time, students recognized that reusable containers were now the norm and embraced the system.
- **Logistical Adjustments.** More restrictive policies were introduced in AY 24-25, including charging for lost containers to maintain accountability and improve return rates.
- **Outstanding Customer Care.** CNU appreciates that Reuzzi responds promptly to staff requests and automatically sends reminders to users via the app and email to return containers. In addition, when students have questions, they write directly to Reuzzi via the app or email—freeing CNU staff from having to answer most student questions.

Results

- 211,571 disposables averted, corresponding with 2,305 tree equivalents!
- 96% return rate
- Annual savings of ~\$48K by avoiding disposables
- Reduced take-out from 2,400 to ~750 per day, which aligns with CNU's goal of encouraging in-hall dining
- Less waste and recycling contamination due to the elimination of disposable misuse
- Expanded program features, including a sweepstakes-based rewards system, water filling station Reuzzi points, and future integration with student ID cards

Recommendations for Other Institutions

- **Set clear accountability measures.** Charging for lost containers encourages responsibility and program longevity.
- **Embrace gamification.** Have fun with Reuzzi points, Climate Champ badges through the app, and rewards—students appreciate the many carrots that come with Reuzzi.
- **Optimize outreach.** Ensure students sign up for the Reuzzi app before arriving on campus and promote awareness through various channels.
- **Vet container options carefully.** It's good that Reuzzi is container-agnostic. Some container brands are more durable than others, and recycling programs for damaged containers should be considered.
- **Consider RFID integration.** While CNU currently uses QR codes, RFID options with Reuzzi may streamline tracking further.
- **Expand strategically.** Take advantage of the many features that Reuzzi offers, including Item Codes to track reusables on the go and Action Codes to reward good behavior. CNU is looking to extend Reuzzi tracking to water refill stations for additional sustainability benefits.

Conclusion

Despite initial resistance, CNU's transition to a 100% reusable take-out program has been a significant success. With proper accountability, strategic planning, and iterative improvements, CNU now boasts one of the leading reusable dining programs in the country. The campus has seen measurable cost savings, environmental benefits, and cultural shifts toward sustainability. With continued enhancements, the program is expected to maintain a 98-99% return rate in the coming years, setting a benchmark for other universities to follow.

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.