



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

## **Master of Science**

**Emily M. Freeman**

Will defend her thesis

### **Restaurant Industry Sustainability: Barriers and Solutions to Sustainable Practice Indicators**

#### **Abstract**

Restaurants have a cumulative impact on the environment, economy, and society. The majority of restaurants are small-medium enterprises (SMEs). An extensive literature review revealed that considering businesses from a sustainable development lens is most applicable. Sustainable development is the means by which a company progresses to achieving the identified set of sustainability goals and harnesses competitive advantage. The purpose of this thesis is to identify barriers to restaurant sustainable indicators and explore solutions for restaurateurs on how to incorporate sustainable business practices. Energy consumption, water use, waste production, and food throughput are the four indicator areas addressed in this thesis. Interviews were conducted with five Tempe, Arizona restaurants, two purporting to be sustainable and three traditional restaurants. Results show for traditional restaurants, the primary barriers to the sustainability indicators are cost, lack of awareness, and space. For sustainable restaurants the most common barrier was logistics for collection. The sustainable restaurants have energy-efficient equipment and a majority of their food purchases are from local or organic sources. The difference in perception of barriers to sustainable business practices is marked between the two types of restaurants. I created a matrix to identify if the indicator metric was applicable and present at a particular restaurant, and the potential barriers for each metric. Restaurants can use the assessment matrix to map their current practices according to sustainable practices and find potential solutions. Identifying the barriers from within restaurants helps inform the reasons why sustainable practices are not automatically adopted by SMEs. The assessment matrix further helps restaurants overcome the barriers by mapping out how to incorporate sustainable solutions.

Wednesday, April 20, 2011  
9:00 am-11:00 am  
Wrigley Hall (GIOS) 481

Faculty, students, and the general public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Hallie Eakin, Co-chair  
George Basile, Co-chair  
Eric William, Member