



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

Recommendation on Environmental Stewardship

Approved by the University Senate - December 18, 2019

The University Senate Recommends that the University:

1. adopt a goal of eliminating the use of single-use plastic, such as plastic straws, bags, and polystyrene food containers (e.g., Styrofoam) on campus in a time-bound and phased manner, and to replace them with earth-friendly products;
2. prioritize, in its purchasing activity, vendors that do not use single-use plastics and are involved in recycling raw materials, while furthering relationships with companies committed to the use and manufacture of products made from recycled materials;
3. establish a plan to for source-reduction of waste on campus, while increasing the collection of recyclable materials, recycling, and post-waste recovery.

As a step towards the goal of eliminating the use of single-use plastics on campus, the Senate endorses the proposed initiative for Reduction of Single-Use Plastic Water Bottles as outlined in the letter and attachments sent by the University President dated November 4, 2019. The Senate endorses the formation of a broad-based Committee to oversee the implementation of the initiative, including member(s) to be named by the Senate.

Rationale

The recommended courses of action taken together: acknowledge the responsibility of the University to mitigate the side effects of climate change, ocean pollution, and human health effects that result from the operations of the University; make a meaningful contribution to environmental stewardship, and reinforce leadership of Montclair State University amongst, public institutions, in addressing environmental issues; reinforce Montclair State University's commitment to the global effort to reduce the use of single-use plastics, lessen the human carbon footprint, and reduce the production of waste.

In the USA, approximately 100 billion plastic bags are used annually, with over 4 billion of these used and disposed of in New Jersey. These bags are a threat to our environment and health, clogging storm drains, and releasing toxins into our air when incinerated and into contaminated fields when placed in landfills. The continual use of disposable plastics is causing irreparable damage to our marine life and oceans. Plastic pieces on the ocean surface now outnumber sea life 6 to 1. It is estimated that by 2050, if this plastic use rate continues, there will be more plastic material, by weight, than fish.

Waste and litter from single-use plastics and other disposable products are creating an environmental crisis. The main cause of concern is waste and accumulation of plastics, which are proving harmful to ecosystems and the environment in the short and long term. Removing and reducing single use bag can mitigate harmful impacts to oceans, rivers, lakes, forests and the wildlife that inhabits them while simultaneously relieving pressure on landfills and waste management.

State legislatures have considered a number of measures to reduce the prevalence of plastic bags at grocery stores and other businesses. Institutions, including producers, are also helping cover the costs of waste management and raising awareness about the threats posed by single use plastic. Policy changes are being urged at the local municipal level, and universities around the world have targeted single use plastics due to adverse ecological impacts. For example, restaurants, museums, colleges, and even entire cities are banning plastic straws amid the growing awareness of single-use plastic's impact on the environment.

The state of New Jersey has begun legislation for the banning of single use plastics, more notably on plastic straws, single-use shopping bags and plastic polystyrene food containers. The initial proposed bill, which was introduced in legislature in September of 2018, proposed a 5 cent tax was to be placed for the use of plastic bags. However, Governor Phil Murphy vetoed this proposal in hopes for stricter measures on the use of plastics.

While state and city-wide solutions have had some success, institutions of higher learning have, in many cases, taken the lead on this issue and found success in doing so. Duke University eliminated all forms of disposable plastic in all 34 of its campus dining locations, including single-use plastic carryout bags, plastic hot and cold beverage cups, plastic straws and plastic utensils. This adds to previous efforts that eliminated Styrofoam and bleached paper products from campus. Dining venues, including vendors, on the university campus are required to use paper bags and utensils, straws and drinkware made from polylactic acid, a biodegradable plant-based substance with properties similar to traditional, oil-based plastics. In April 2018, the University of Portland took the lead in banning plastic straws, with a number of other colleges and universities following suit; California State University, Chico and Knox College in Illinois eliminated plastic straws, and other universities, such as Furman University, Vassar College, Washington University in St. Louis, and Roger Williams University, are following suit.

As concerned and informed members of campus life at Montclair State University, we propose a resolution to ban single use plastic such as carryout plastic bags, straws, and food containers on campus in a time-bound and phased manner. Nearly 20 NJ towns, including Hoboken, Point Pleasant, and Bradley Beach have put in ordinances to ban these products. Further, colleges around the country have made laudable efforts in reducing their plastic use, granting prestige and renown as early adopters of this movement to combat a growing risk. Reducing plastic use helps the environment, but also saves retailers and consumers money in providing non-reusable materials. We seek support from our MSU administration to join the effort that leads to a plastic ban on campus. Please consider this resolution to ban single use plastic bags, straws, and food containers, as a strong beginning effort to promote environmental stewardship on campus.