



SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry

2022 Campus Race to Zero Waste Case Study – Education and Awareness

Contact info

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Focus of Case study

Summary of campus stakeholder engagement techniques employed to create and implement SUNY ESF's Green Purchasing and Break Free From Plastic Policy and associated Green Purchasing Guide

Detailed description of campaign or effort:

SUNY ESF formally adopted its [Green Purchasing and Break Free From Plastic Policy](#) in November 2021. This policy restates the College's commitment to meeting [NYS Executive Order 4 green purchasing mandates](#), disallows the use of state funds to purchase many single-use plastic items for use on College property or for College events and complies with associated LEED O+M prerequisites. The Office of Sustainability partnered with the [NYS Center for Sustainable Materials Management](#), the Office of Business Affairs and many other campus stakeholders to create a [Green Purchasing Guide](#) to assist campus purchasers as they work to implement the newly created Policy. The Guide includes products that meet GreenNY purchasing specifications, third-party certifications and ESF's green purchasing guidelines.

This Policy and its associated Guide were deliberately created with implementation in mind from the project's outset. Too often, sweeping sustainability policies are developed by a small group of stakeholders that result in well-intentioned operational changes, which are greatly needed, but also burden staff teams that are already at or over capacity. This perceived burden leads to resistance to change and pushback against sustainability policies.

Instead of simply announcing a ban on many types of single use plastics and the expectation to comply with NYS mandates, the College's Green Purchasing Guide features live links to actual products that meet GreenNY, third-party and ESF green purchasing guidelines. Removing the burden of product research from individual purchasers has resulted in a warm reception from the campus community. Other State agencies have been in contact with ESF to learn more about the Policy and Guide development processes so that they will be able to replicate a version of the Guide tailored to their operations.

Planning steps & timeline to implement:

Green Purchasing & Break Free From Plastic Policy

- January 2020: ESF hosts Post Landfill Action Network's (PLAN) NE Beyond Waste Student Summit and signs PLAN's Break Free From Plastic Pledge
- April 2021: ESF professor and graduate student contact ESF Office of Sustainability to request assistance in drafting a Green Purchasing Policy, which is a necessary component of a LEED O+M certification submittal for a campus building (Baker Laboratory)
- May 2021: ESF Business Office provides data detailing expenditure amount and actual products purchased by the ESF campus from the top 10 vendors (by cost) in a typical pre-COVID fiscal year. The purpose was to understand the products that campus purchases so Policy goals could be tailored to match actual expenditures. At this point, the Office of Sustainability decided to create a Green Purchasing Policy for the entire campus, not just Baker Laboratory.
- May 2021 – June 2021: Office of Sustainability graduate student employee and NYS Center for SMM undergraduate student employee categorized raw data into the following product categories: trades/facilities, lab/field work, cleaning supplies, electronics, furniture, chemicals, food/dining, apparel, office supplies and miscellaneous. For each category, the top 10 products (by both cost and quantity) were identified. These categories form the basis of the Policy goals and the framework for the sections of the Guide.
- May 2021-July 2021: Green Purchasing Policy undergoes four rounds of drafting and revisions, ultimately becoming the Green Purchasing and Break Free From Plastic Policy. Policy goals are tailored to meet LEED prerequisite requirements, NYS green purchasing mandates and ESF's commitment to PLAN's Break Free From Plastic Pledge. This Policy formalizes ESF's January 2020 Pledge and disallows the use of state funds to purchase many types of single use plastic on campus.
- June 2021-December 2021: Development of Green Purchasing Guide (see attached case study). This Guide was created to aid in the implementation of the Green Purchasing & Break Free From Plastic Policy.
- November 2021: Green Purchasing & Break Free From Plastic Policy formally adopted by SUNY ESF
- Late January 2022: Green Purchasing Guide launches on ESF's website (document is web accessible and ADA compliant, via AbleDocs)
- March 2022: Four virtual Green Purchasing Guide training sessions offered to campus community, specifically geared toward purchase card holders. Policy goals and rationale discussed, as well as proper use of the Guide. Made very clear that this Guide is living and will continue to evolve and that Office of Sustainability staff are available to assist with research in finding products that meet Policy requirements.
- April 2022: Green Purchasing Guide Edition 1.2 uploaded to ESF's website (document is web accessible and ADA compliant, via AbleDocs)
- Ongoing since Guide launch: At the request of the campus community, Office of Sustainability staff routinely research more sustainable alternatives to commonly purchased products. Each new "green" product identified is saved and added to upcoming versions of the Green Purchasing Guide. The Guide will be updated regularly (2-3 times per year) to include these products, products meeting newly mandated NYS green purchasing specifications, and to ensure product links are still viable.

Resources and stakeholders involved

- **Office of Sustainability:** Project lead. Director of Sustainable Operations led development of the Policy and Graduate Student Sustainability Coordinator led development of the Guide.
- **NYS Center for Sustainable Materials Management:** Paid for web accessibility component of the Guide (~\$1,000 in total). Undergraduate student employee assisted in creation of the Guide. Guide included as formal deliverable to Center funding agency (NYSDEC). Goal of replicating Guide throughout NYS.
- **Construction Management program:** Jump started entire conversation by requesting assistance from Office of Sustainability to create Baker Laboratory green purchasing policy. Provided assistance drafting and reviewing Policy.
- **Office of Business Affairs:** Provided deep training to Office of Sustainability and Center for SMM staff so they could navigate complexity of NYS purchasing hierarchy. Provided raw data needed to perform analysis of typical year of College expenditures. Reviewed near final version of the guide to ensure accuracy and consistency with College purchasing requirements. Provided list of College staff that hold purchase cards. Incorporated Policy and Guide into training for new purchase card holders.
- **Computing & Network Services:** Reviewed relevant sections of Guide.
- **Purchase card holders:** Attended training sessions. Responsible for ongoing Policy implementation and expected to use the Guide to ensure compliance with state mandates and College policy.
- **Research Foundation:** Not mandated to follow State purchasing guidelines, but Vice President for ESF Research Foundation has set the goal and expectation that Research Foundation purchases align with College Policy and that the Guide be used whenever feasible.
- **GreenNY Operations & Engagement Subcommittee** Interdisciplinary committee composed of sustainability staff from various NYS agencies. Reviewed Guide twice and offered suggestions.
- **NYS Office of General Services:** Reviewed Guide to ensure alignment with NYS purchasing requirements
- **Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory:** Through the NYS Center for SMM, via a connection through NYSERDA, LBNL is completing a scope of work related to the Guide. Including, but not limited to an analysis of ESF's pre-Guide compliance with NYS green purchasing mandates as well as an estimate of potential GHG savings associated with purchase of Guide compliant projects vs traditional products

Describe the Results of this campaign component

- Banned purchase (state funds) of many single use plastic items for use on College campus and at College events
- [Adoption of Green Purchasing and Break Free From Plastic Policy](#)
- [Creation of Green Purchasing Guide](#)
- Direct, targeted email outreach sharing Policy and Guide to 149 State and Research Foundation purchase card holders
- Four virtual training sessions offered in March during Campus Race to Zero Waste competition period. Recording uploaded to ESF sustainability [website](#)

What would you do differently in the future?

- Research and understand ability to track policy compliance from outset

- Survey departments to better understand prevalence and use of single use plastics prior to Policy launch (create a baseline for future comparison)

What advice would you give to another college that wanted to do a similar effort?

- Gauge student, faculty and staff receptivity to banning many types of single use plastics on campus via a survey
- Formalize plastic free commitment with a policy created by multiple stakeholders and develop a mechanism to assist staff members with compliance
- If a Guide is created, make sure to have a dedicated staff person assigned to perform research to identify green alternatives to traditionally purchased products. Essential to take this work away from purchasers to minimize resistance
- Dedicated staff member must review Guide at least three times a year to ensure links remain active and to add green products to offering list
- Research procurement rules and regulations at your organization and create purchasing guide following these unique nuances
- Research purchasing tracking mechanisms and capabilities. Tracking is the most difficult part of policy compliance!
- Ensure that web-based resources are accessible and able to be read by screen readers

Photos and Graphics

Office Supplies

Important Note for Copy Paper: Purchasers located at the Syracuse campus should continue to request and purchase copy paper through the Copy Center (basement of Bray Hall). All copy available through the Copy Center meets GreenNY specifications.

Purchasers located at the Regional Campuses are asked to use the links in the pages that follow to purchase GreenNY-compliant copy paper.

Copy Paper - White

★ Preferred Sources

- None

★ W.B. Mason

- Mohawk, 100% PCR Recycled White Copy Paper, Single Ream
- Boise, Aspen 100% TRC Recycled White Copy Paper, Case
- Boise, Aspen 100% TRC Recycled White Copy Paper, Single Ream



★ Intivity

- Intl Paper Co., Nature Saver 100% TRC Recycled White Copy Paper, Case
- Mohawk, 100% TRC Recycled White Copy Paper, Single Ream



★ Liberty Office Supplies & Equipment

- Boise, Aspen 100% PCR Recycled White Copy Paper, Case of 5



★ ProfTech - On-contract, use Shipping Location: PFT-CC42

- Q1 Update: Bolland Enviro 100% PCR Recycled White Copy Paper, Cases
- Staples, 100% PCR Recycled White Copy Paper, Case
- Staples, 100% PCR Recycled White Copy Paper, Single Ream



★ ProfTech - Off-contract, use Shipping Location: PFT-NC42

- Eagle Office, 100% PCR Recycled White Copy Paper, Case
- Eagle Office, 100% PCR Recycled White Copy Paper, Single Ream



ESF Green Purchasing Guide Cover

Screenshot of virtual training session

Green Purchasing Guide & Break Free From Plastic Training

ESF

March 2022

Sue Fassler, Director of Sustainable Operations
Delaney Demro, Sustainability Education & Engagement Manager

The cover features a photograph of a modern university campus with several buildings and green spaces under a blue sky. At the bottom, there is a virtual meeting interface showing six participants in a grid. The participants are represented by circular icons with their initials or names: 'D', 'MT', 'WO', and others. The interface also shows a 'D' icon for the host and a 'MT' icon for a participant.

Sample image of Green Purchasing Guide, showcasing environmentally preferred office supplies


Food Service & Cafeteria

Rentable, Reusable Dinnerware
If you are in need of reusable dinnerware for a business related campus event, please rent china, flatware, and glassware from one of the following local vendors instead opting for single-use compostable items.

The Sustainability Division will strive to cover the entire cost of these rental items, please contact [Sue Fessler \(scfessler@esf.edu\)](mailto:scfessler@esf.edu) for information.




For smaller internal campus events, consider purchasing reusable dinnerware from a local thrift store and keeping them in your office for future use. If these items will be used for "personal" events (lunches, birthdays, retirements) then they must be purchased with personal funds. State dollars cannot be used to support these activities.

- [Taylor Rental](#)
- [Syracuse Tents & Events](#)
- [Auburn Party Rental](#)
- [Century Party Rental](#)
- [A Classic Party Rental](#)
- **Ralston Companies**
 - [China](#)
 - [Glassware](#)
 - [Flatware](#)



Reusable Takeout Containers

- ★ **OZZI**
 - [OZGO Take Out Containers](#)
- ★ **G.E.T Enterprises**
 - [Eco-Takeouts](#)
- ★ **Hubert**
 - [Reusable Takeout Containers](#)



Green Purchasing Guide | SUNY ESF 68

Sample image of Green Purchasing Guide, showcasing environmentally preferred food service items