

# **Duke Stores Environmental Leadership Program**

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## **Introduction**

With smog alerts and erratic weather as daily reminders, human impact on the environment has become more and more pronounced during the last few years. As individuals and institutions realize that we cannot wait for our government to lead the way to a more sustainable future, a new wave of interest in the environment is rising nationally and especially here at Duke.

Just in the last year, Duke has seen environmental initiatives popping up in nearly every aspect of campus life. Right now, the University is nearing a commitment to make all new construction and renovations comply with high efficiency and sustainability guidelines. The Medical Center recently initiated the implementation of an Environmental Management System and the University looks to be following suit. Duke Transit just won a grant that will allow them to start using biodiesel, a cleaner and renewable alternative to diesel. Procurement Services is currently developing a comprehensive Green Purchasing Policy that will promote the use of products made from recycled materials. And last fall, Duke Medical Center joined the EPA's Environmental Stewardship Program, with the ambitious goal of reducing their solid waste output by 50% over the next ten years!

As you may know, Duke Stores has also gotten in on the action. Vending Services and the Duke Card office have been working with students to try and find a way to cut down on the energy drain created by vending machines. This semester, Duke Stores is carrying energy efficient and long-lasting compact fluorescent bulbs in all of its stores. This is a great start, but there is more we can do! Outlined below are two initiatives: Green Purchasing and a Recycling Bottle Fee.

## **Green Purchasing**

*What is "green purchasing"?*

Green purchasing means, quite simply, that purchasers take into consideration the environmental impact of products when making purchasing decisions, giving preference to more environmentally friendly products when quality and price are equal or superior.

*What is a Green Purchasing Policy?*

A Green Purchasing Policy is a formal set of guidelines and goals that establish an institution's commitment to green purchasing. The guidelines are integrated with established purchasing criteria and included in job training. (See the attached Sample Green Purchasing Policy)

### *Why should Duke Stores implement a Green Purchasing Policy?*

There are several benefits to adopting such a policy:

1. Recycled product purchasing confirms Duke's commitment to the environment and the community. Such products evidence Duke's values and help to foster good will between you, students, employees and the public.
2. Green purchasing is already taking place on an ad hoc basis within Duke Stores. Institutionalizing that commitment to green purchasing means Duke Stores can begin to receive recognition for the good it is already doing.
3. Adopting a Green Purchasing Policy encourages your suppliers to find and promote environmentally preferable products to you and all of their customers. (See the attached Sample Letter to Vendors)
4. Recycled products can offer superior quality.
5. Buying recycled closes the recycling loop. Duke spends \$250,000 annually on its recycling program while recovering only about \$40,000 in material sales. The reason no substantial market exists for recycled materials is that many institutions have implemented recycling programs without a corresponding recycled purchasing program. The result is that materials markets become flooded while demand for products made from those materials languishes. We need to "close the loop" here at Duke.
6. Market development translates into economic development. Recycling creates jobs and serves as a catalyst for new enterprises.

### *How do we make it happen?*

The first thing to do is find out how we are doing in terms of green purchasing now. What percentage of recycled content is currently being used in our spiral bound notebooks? Note cards? Printer paper? Envelopes?

Once we know where we are, we can set realistic goals and determine the wording of our Green Purchasing Policy.

Once the policy has been adopted, we notify vendors and suppliers that in future purchasing contracts preference will be given to environmentally friendly products with comparable cost and quality.

## Recycling Bottle Fee

### *Overview*

During the 90s, many institutions created recycling programs without implementing a corresponding green purchasing program. As a result, the market for recycled materials has been flooded. This oversupply has caused the prices for material sales to drop precipitously. Today, Duke effectively gives away the plastic it collects because the price has fallen to a ridiculously low \$3 per ton.

Unfortunately, almost all the recycling programs created in the 90s, including Duke's program, were intended to fund themselves through material sales. Clearly, the current market makes that impossible and recycling programs are being closed down at universities, like Virginia Tech, and in cities, like New York. In fact, with an annual deficit of \$150,000, Duke's recycling program may face significant cut backs in the near future if something is not done.

### *The Bottle Fee*

It is time for a paradigm shift in the arrangement of recycling programs. The fundamental problem with the 90s recycling programs was the assumption that the people creating the waste disposal problem should not have to pay for its solution; rather, that the funds should come from somewhere else: material sales. This arrangement means that funding for disposal is completely independent and therefore disproportionate to the size of the problem. Even as consumption goes up, recycling dollars can be going down (as they have in the last few years).

Several nations, states and municipalities have moved in the last 5 years to tie the purchase of a bottle or can to the cost of its proper disposal. *At Duke, this could be done by requiring a fee for every can or bottle sold on campus.* Doing this has several advantages:

1. The people creating the problem would be the same ones paying for it. Currently, Duke Recycles is being funded out of the general operating budget, which means that tuition and alumni dollars are required to fund it. With a bottle fee, the people who purchase bottles will be paying for their disposal.
2. Using the 2 million bottles and cans sold during the 2001-2002 year, we can see that a five-cent bottle fee would generate approximately \$100,000 for recycling, which would likely save Duke's recycling program by significantly closing its deficit.
3. By tying purchasing to disposal, funding for recycling would increase and decrease in proportion to the number of bottles sold on campus.
4. The program could be tied in with green purchasing to create powerful incentives to use recycled materials. For example, bottlers that use 100% post-consumer

content in their bottles and cans could be exempted from the fee, giving them a competitive advantage in return for their environmental stewardship.

5. Duke Stores would become a visible leader in the growing trend called “Extended Producer Responsibility.” This term refers to policies being implemented around the world that aim to tie the proper disposal of a product into its commercial origins. If Duke Stores is successful, this model will likely be repeated at dozens of universities and other large institutions, probably saving many recycling programs along the way.

Clearly, this is an ambitious, if not contentious, proposal that will take time to examine and evaluate. We must determine the impact that a fee would have on sales and contracts with vendors. We must analyze the extent to which a fee would drive sales off campus, thus bypassing the fee, while still contributing to the disposal problem. (Given that the majority of bottles are bought on food points which cannot be used off campus, this effect may be small.) And, while the Facilities Management Department has shown full support for this proposal, we must ensure that the recycling program will reflect with improved service the windfall that such a fee would create.

Environmental Alliance looks forward to working with Duke Stores on these and any other initiatives that would further promote environmental stewardship here at Duke.

The Environmental Alliance is a student organization committed to promoting the implementation of sustainable practices at Duke University. By educating, organizing and lobbying, we strive to make Duke University a model campus for environmental responsibility.

## **Sample Green Purchasing Policy**

Duke Stores will give preference to environmentally superior products, where quality, function and cost are equal or superior. Products and packaging materials will contain a prescribed minimum post-consumer recycled content and will be minimized and/or substituted with more environmentally appropriate alternatives whenever possible. All products will be chosen based on efficient use of energy, natural resources, and potential for safe, non-hazardous disposal.

Duke Stores will inform all suppliers / vendors of products and services about the policy and will work with them to meet its criteria.

Where practical and cost effective, products will be ordered in appropriate quantities to avoid having to dispose of obsolete products.

**“Whenever practicable,”\* products should be purchased which contain the following in order of preference:**

- 1) The highest percentage of post-consumer recovered material available in the marketplace;
- 2) The highest percentage of pre-consumer recovered material available in the marketplace; and

Paper products should, at a minimum, meet the Federal Government Standard of a minimum 30% post-consumer recovered material and a minimum 50% total recovered material.

\* "Whenever practicable" means a) the recycled products can perform the function intended at least as well as a product produced from only virgin material, and b) the cost of the recycled product reasonably approximates the cost of the product produced from only virgin materials.

**In addition to the recovered material content of a product, other important criteria considered in selecting products are:**

- 1.) The ability of a product and its packaging to be reused, reconditioned for use, or recycled through existing recycling collection programs; and
- 2.) The volume and toxicity of waste and by-products a given product and its packaging generate in their manufacture, use, recycling and disposal.

**Equipment purchased or rented by Duke Stores are to be compatible, whenever practicable, with the use of recycled-content products (e.g. photocopy machines).**

**Product specifications and requisitions for products must conform to the following guidelines:**

- 1.) Specifications and requisitions shall not require the exclusive use of products made from virgin materials, nor specifically exclude the use of recycled-content products;
- 2.) Performance standards must be reasonable and related to function, and shall not be designed to exclude the purchase of recycled-content products;

- 3.) To the extent such information is known, Duke Stores staff shall identify in the purchase requisition products available with recycled content and vendors from whom such products are available; and
- 4.) The Purchasing Agent has the authority to specify a minimum recycled-content standard in bid solicitations.

## Sample Letter to Vendors and Suppliers

January 13, 2003

Duke University

Re: Notification of Duke Stores Environmental Procurement Policy

Dear Valued Supplier:

On behalf of Duke Stores, I am pleased to inform you of our recently adopted Environmental Procurement Policy. This policy further demonstrates Duke University's commitment to environmental protection and resource conservation.

As a valued supplier/vendor you are encouraged to review the attached policy and assist us with meeting its requirements.

Specifically, we ask you to be a partner with us to:

(insert selection criteria here)

Please do not limit your efforts to these goals. We will reward suppliers who find us new ways to incorporate recycled and environmentally friendly products into our purchases. These goals should apply to all new products as well as any repair and replacement parts you supply to us. Thank you for your assistance.

We look forward to discussing with you how we may work together to meet our new policy requirements. Thank you in advance for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,

<<University Official>>