



MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

University Senate

Recommendation for the elimination of single use plastics

Approved by the University Senate December 15, 2021

The University Senate recommends a ban on all single use plastics such as carryout plastic bags, and polystyrene food containers (e.g., Styrofoam) on campus in a time-bound and phased manner, such as a range from six to eighteen months, and replace them with earth-friendly products.

Further, to make a meaningful contribution to environmental stewardship and reinforce leadership in environmental issues amongst public institutions, Montclair State University will prioritize vendors not using single-use plastics, and further relationships with companies committed to supporting and/or making products out of recycled goods.

Finally, Montclair State Administration will establish a web presence for the phase out of single use plastics that will serve to inform and update the campus community about this important initiative.

Background

The origins of this recommendation were sent to former President Cole in April, 2019. Much of the background information dates from that timeframe, and was crafted by former members of the Socially responsible business practices and policies committee. Because President Cole did not fully accept the recommendation, we have recrafted it.

On Nov. 4, 2020, Governor Phil Murphy signed into law P.L. 2020, c117, which prohibits the use of single-use plastic carryout bags in all stores and food service businesses statewide and single-use paper carryout bags in grocery stores that occupy at least 2,500 square feet beginning May 4, 2022. Under the new law, polystyrene foam food service products and foods sold or provided in polystyrene foam food service products will also be banned as of May 4, 2022, and food service businesses will only be allowed to provide single-use plastic straws by request starting Nov. 4, 2021. https://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/2021/21_0505.htm

The legislation provides for long term phase out, through May 4, 2024, of the following:

- Disposable, long-handled polystyrene foam soda spoons when required and used for thick drinks;
- Portion cups of two ounces or less, if used for hot foods or foods requiring lids;
- Meat and fish trays for raw or butchered meat, including poultry, or fish that is sold from a refrigerator or similar retail appliance;

- Any food product pre-packaged by the manufacturer with a polystyrene foam food service product; and
- Any other polystyrene foam food service product as determined necessary by the DEP.

We dispose of 100 billion plastic bags annually in the U.S., over 4 billion of which are 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 plastics 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 plastics 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.

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 a 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.

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.