

Oberlin College Green Purchasing Policy

1. Policy Statement

Oberlin College is committed to the use and purchase of environmentally and socially responsible materials and products.

This document outlines the multiple factors that determine Oberlin's procurement decisions. These procurement decisions amend economic criteria with strong commitments towards environmental and social responsibility. In 1999, the Oberlin College Sweatshop-Free Apparel Code of Purchasing established Oberlin College's commitment to purchase socially responsible apparel. This Green Purchasing Policy expands our commitment to social responsibility beyond apparel to all products. People authorized to make purchases on behalf of the college are expected to support our commitment to environmental responsibility through the guidelines and procedures contained in this Green Purchasing Policy.

This Green Purchasing Policy provides a means for implementation of the Environmental Policy Statement of March 2004, proposed and approved by the General Faculty Planning Committee and the Board of Trustees, and the Strategic Plan of March 5, 2005, approved by the General Faculty and the Board of Trustees, as it relates to all college purchases. The Green Purchasing Policy shall be implemented to complement the American University and College President's Climate Commitment signed by President Nancy Dye in November, 2006.

2. Desired Environmental Attributes

When determining whether a product is environmentally preferable all phases of the product's life cycle will be considered, including: raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, operation, maintenance, disposal, potential for reuse and ability to be recycled. **The following environmental attributes should be considered desirable:**

- *Biodegradable **
- *Carcinogen-free*
- *Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC)-free*
- *Compostable*
- *Durable*
- *Energy efficient*
- Heavy metal free (e.g., no lead, mercury, cadmium)
- Less hazardous
- *Locally manufactured or grown*
- *Low volatile organic compound (VOC) content*
- Low-toxicity
- Lower embodied energy
- Made from rapidly
- *Renewable materials*
- *Persistent, bioaccumulative toxin (PBT)-free*
- Preservation and enhancement of local economy
- *Recyclable*
- *Recycled post consumer content*
- Reduced *greenhouse gas emissions*

- Reduced packaging
 - Refurbished
 - Resource efficiency
 - Reusable
 - Third-party sustainability certification
 - Upgradeable
 - *Water efficient*
- * ***Italicized bold listings*** indicate terms defined in section 5. Appendix of Environmental Purchasing Definitions

3. Goals

I. Maintain high environmental standards: Purchase products that meet the latest and most credible environmental standards available. In addition, any product that earns LEED credit will be considered a priority.

* See Appendix 4 and 5 for information about these certifications.

II. Integrate a Closed Loop Supply Chain: To develop and maintain a consistent ‘cradle-to-cradle’ supply chain and purchasing process which considers economic, ethical, social and environmental impacts for all contracts and purchases; where all waste should first be eliminated or avoided and where any remaining waste be considered feedstock for new product development. To reuse, return or negotiate with suppliers the reduction or elimination of all packing materials.

Ethical and social impact will be documented by posting the supplier and subcontractor’s annual corporate, social, ethical and environmental reports and other supporting documentation. When reports are not currently available the goal will be to work with suppliers to develop and implement corporate social, ethical and environmental reports.

III. Integrate High Environmental Standards into Buildings and Facilities Management: To integrate green purchasing concepts and products into designs, construction documents, final construction and outfitting of all Oberlin College buildings, renovations of property or facilities owned by Oberlin College.

IV. Research and Procure Alternative Energy: To conduct research and procure alternative energy from reliable, certified alternative energy suppliers.

V. Safety: To ensure that the products and services purchased by Oberlin College improve and strengthen the health of the campus community and natural resources. In addition proper MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets) are identified in all contract specifications and kept on record.

Strategy for Implementation:

The Purchasing Office will implement the Purchasing Policy. The Committee on Environmental Sustainability (CES) will help the Purchasing Office establish goals, benchmarks, assessments, reporting mechanisms, etc. The role of the

Office of Environmental Sustainability will be to provide the Purchasing Office with the technical support necessary to implement the policy and to assist with implementation primarily through education--both of the Purchasing Office to get them up to speed on green purchasing and other offices/departments to follow the policy.

4. Appendix of the Latest and Most Credible Environmental Standards

Cleaning Supplies, paint, windows, doors, etc. *See Appendix 5	<i>Green Seal*</i> certified
Lumber	<i>Forest Stewardship Council</i> certified
Floorings	<i>Floor Score certified, Green Label Plus, or SCS Sustainable Choice certified</i>
Appliances	<i>ENERGY STAR</i> approved
Computers	<i>EPEAT</i> certified
Products for indoor environments (paints, bedding, furniture, etc *See Appendix 5)	<i>GreenGuard</i>

5. Appendix of Environmental Purchasing Definitions

Biodegradable – The ability of a substance to decompose in the natural environment into harmless raw materials. To be truly biodegradable, a substance or material should break down into carbon dioxide (a nutrient for plants), water, and naturally occurring minerals that also do not cause harm to the ecosystem. In terms of environmental benefits, a product should take months or years, and not centuries, to biodegrade.

Buyer – Anyone authorized to purchase on behalf of the organization or its subdivisions.

Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) – Any of a group of compounds that contain carbon, chlorine, fluorine, and sometimes hydrogen and have been used as refrigerants, cleaning solvents, aerosol propellants and in the manufacture of plastic foams. The uses of CFCs are being phased out because they destroy the planet's stratospheric ozone protection layer.

Compostable – A product that can be placed into a composition of decaying biodegradable materials and eventually turn into a nutrient-rich material. It is synonymous with "biodegradable," except it is limited to solid materials. (Liquid products are not considered compostable.)

Durable – A product that remains useful and usable for a long time without noticeable deterioration in performance.

Energy efficient product – A product that is in the upper 25 percent of energy efficiency for all similar products, or that is at least 10 percent more efficient than the minimum level meeting US federal government standards.

ENERGY STAR- Developed and promoted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Energy Star currently certifies and labels appliances, heating and cooling systems, clothes washers, dehumidifiers, dishwashers, commercial and residential refrigerators & freezers, commercial food service equipment, room AC, lighting, office equipment, and manufactured homes. Criteria for product categories are updated regularly and designed to reduce energy use. In addition, Energy Star and the EPA provide information for reducing the costs of operating buildings through their website and informational material.
Website: www.energystar.gov

EPEAT- Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool is a self-declaration system operated by the Green Electronics Council to help purchasers in the public and private sectors evaluate, compare and select desktop computers, notebooks and monitors based on their environmental attributes. EPEAT was developed with funding from the EPA and the Zero Waste Alliance. EPEAT evaluates products based on: material selection, design for end of life, product longevity/life cycle extension, energy conservation, end of life management, corporate Performance, and packaging. EPEAT™ Performance Tiers evaluates electronic products according to three tiers of environmental performance – Bronze, Silver and Gold. The complete set of performance criteria includes 23 required criteria and 28 optional criteria in 8 categories. To qualify for acceptance as an EPEAT product, it must conform to all the required criteria. Environmental groups were active participants in the EPEAT development process along with other key stakeholders. Manufacturers voluntarily announce what performance criteria they meet based on good faith and pay an annual fee. Dell, Apple, Samsung, Sony, Gateway and many other manufacturers participate in EPEAT.
Website: www.epeat.net/

FloorScore- is a program for testing and certifying hard floor services compliance with California's indoor air quality emission requirements laid out in California Section 01350 program. Scientific Certification Systems developed the program with the Resilient Floor Covering Institute (RFCI). US Green Building Council approved FloorScore Certification as an indicator for LEED Credit in November 2006.
Website: <http://www.scscertified.com/iaq/floorscore.html>

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)- FSC creates the standards for SmartWood and Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) (third-party certifying organizations) to certify forests and chain of custody forest products. As of 2005 FSC has three different labels for wood products: “FSC Pure,” “FSC Mixed Sources,” and “FSC Recycled.”

Website: www.fsc.org

Greenhouse gases – Any of several dozen heat-trapping trace gases in the earth's atmosphere that absorb infrared radiation. The two major greenhouse gases are water vapor and carbon dioxide; lesser greenhouse gases include methane, ozone (O₃), CFCs, and nitrogen oxides.

Greenguard- Greenguard is a for profit company that rates the indoor air quality of a variety of products. Greenguard certified office furniture earns LEED credits for Commercial Interiors Rating System. Companies pay to be Greenguard certified. According to Environmental Building News, “the most any one company has paid to date is \$180,000 per year.” When considering the indoor air quality of products it is important to remember that after the first few months of occupancy, emissions from furnishings diminish to very low levels, and emissions from maintenance and cleaning products are the real issue in terms of air quality (EBN Volume 12, No.10)

Website: www.greenguard.org

Green Label Plus- The Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) developed the Green Label in 1992 as a label for carpets and adhesives that pass their independent testing program for indoor emissions from carpets. The program was updated with stricter standards and called Green Label Plus in 2004. “[C]arpet must be tested by Air Quality Sciences, Inc. of Atlanta (the only certified testing laboratory).”¹ There are 109 certified products from 25 different companies, including: Atlas Carpet Mills Inc., Beaulieu of America, Blue Ridge Commercial Carpet, C&A Floor coverings, Inc, Camelot Carpet Mills, Constantine, Millikin and Company, Lees Carpets by Mohawk Industries, InterfaceFLOR Commercial.

Website: http://www.carpet-rug.org/drill_down_2.cfm?page=8&sub=3

Green Seal- Green Seal is a non-profit formed in 1989 that began certifying products in 2000. Green Seal certifies Hand Cleaners, Electric Chillers, Cleaners, Fleet Vehicle Maintenance, Floor Care Products, paints, papers, newsprint and windows and doors. Green Seal is a member of the Global Ecolabeling Network (GEN).

Reputable: Product standards are developed with the input of the public and industry stakeholders, academia and government agencies. Standards must meet U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements, International Standards Organization (ISO) requirements and the requirements of third party certifiers. Green Seal cites Ecolab as having Green Seal approved products.

Widely Used: All Federal government contracts reference Green Seal Standards for Industrial and Institutional Cleaners (GS-37) for cleaning products. Green Seal certification is required for all industrial cleaning products bought by schools, and local

¹ July 2004. Carpet Industry and California Agree on New Green Label *What's Happening. Environmental Building News.*

and state agencies in Minnesota, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York. Montana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Washington are considering adopting Green Seal standards. Ecolab, a leading cleaning supply manufacturer, launched a line of products that meet Green Seal criteria in 2005. Maplewood-based 3M Co, Johnson Wax Professional, Benjamin Moore, Dutch Boy and Anderson Corporation product Green Seal certified products.

Website: www.greenseal.org

LEED rating system – A self-assessment system developed by the US Green Building Council for rating the environmental preferability of new and existing commercial, institutional, and high-rise residential buildings.

Website: www.usgbc.org

Life cycle cost – The amortized annual cost of a product or service, including capital costs, installation costs, operating costs, maintenance costs, and disposal costs discounted over the lifetime of the product or service. (Compare with Product Life cycle.)

Locally manufactured or grown – Manufactured or grown within 100 miles of Oberlin, Ohio.

Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) – Written or printed material about a product that includes information on the product's physical and chemical characteristics; physical and health hazards; exposure limits; whether the product contains carcinogenic ingredients above a certain threshold; precautions for safe handling and use; control measures; emergency and first aid procedures; the date of preparation of the MSDS or the last change to it; and the name, address, and telephone number of the manufacturer.

Persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic compounds (PBTs) – Toxic chemicals that persist in the environment and increase in concentration through food chains as larger animals consume PBT laden smaller animals. They transfer rather easily among air, water, and land, and span boundaries of programs, geography, and generations. As a result, PBTs pose risks to human health and ecosystems. They are associated with a range of adverse human health effects, including effects on the nervous system, reproductive and developmental problems, cancer, and genetic impact. They include heavy metals and chemicals such as mercury, dioxins, and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls).

Post-consumer recycled content – Percentage of a product made from materials and byproducts recovered or diverted from the solid waste stream after having completed their usefulness as consumer items and used in place of raw or virgin material.

Product life cycle – The culmination of environmental impacts for a product, including raw material acquisition, manufacturing, distribution, use, maintenance, and ultimate disposal of the product. (Compare with Life cycle Cost.)

Recyclable product – A product that after its intended end use can be diverted from the solid waste stream for use as a raw material in the manufacture of another product.

Recovered materials – Waste materials and by-products that have been recovered or diverted from the solid waste stream.

Recycled materials – Material and byproducts that have been recovered or diverted from solid waste and have been utilized in place of raw or virgin material in manufacturing a product. It is derived from post-consumer recycled materials, manufacturing waste, industrial scrap, agricultural waste, and other waste material, but does not include material or byproducts generated from, and commonly reused within, an original manufacturing process.

Refurbished product – A product that has been completely disassembled and restored to its original working order while maximizing the reuse of its original materials.

Renewable materials – Materials made from plant-based feedstock capable of regenerating in less than 200 years such as trees and agricultural products. Rapidly renewable resources, such as grain-based feedstocks, regenerate in less than two years.

Sustainable – An action is said to be sustainable if it satisfies present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

SCS Sustainable Choice- Scientific Certification Systems certifies selected carpets and floor coverings for compliance with the NSF 140 Carpet Assessment Standard. The criteria is stipulated by the Sustainable Carpet Assessment Standard and California Gold Sustainable Carpet Standard, California Department of General Services. Eight major carpet companies offer a total of over 25 different products that are SCS Sustainable choice certified. About 190 companies have products that meet SCS's other environmental standards. SCS does not identify products that meet their standards with any label that end users can see. Based in Emeryville, California. SCS is a private for-profit company and independent third-party certifier that claims no financial, management or ownership connections between their staff and the clients they certify.

Upgradeable product – The ability to increase a product's performance or features without replacing the product.

Virgin material – Any material occurring in its natural form. Virgin Material is used in the form of raw material in the manufacture of new products.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) – Chemicals that readily evaporate and contribute to the formation of air pollution when released into the atmosphere. Many VOCs are classified as toxic and carcinogenic.

Water efficient – A product that is in the upper 25 percent of water efficiency for all similar products, or that is at least 10 percent more efficient than the minimum level meeting US federal government standards.