

Single-Use Plastic Water Bottle Ban Policy

Policy Background

Responsible Position for Policy: Sustainability Manager

Office/Department Responsible for Policy: Office of Energy and Sustainability

Division Responsible for Policy: Office of Energy and Sustainability

Scope of Policy: Dining Services, Authorized P-Card Users

Original Issue Date: 1999; revised 11-19-2024; This codifies existing practices on campus.

Last Revision Date: NA

Log of Previous Revisions: NA

I. Policy Purpose

(A) In March 2004, the Board of Trustees adopted the following general Environmental Policy Statement:

The core mission of Oberlin College is the education of its students. One aspect of such education is the demonstration by its actions of the College's concern for, and protection of its physical environment. Oberlin College must be a responsible steward of the environment. As such, the College will seek 1) to reduce the rate at which it contributes to the depletion and degradation of natural resources; 2) to increase the use of renewable resources; and 3) to consider other measures that can enhance the physical environment in which we live. The development of priorities and the implementation of decisions regarding energy production and use, the use and development of our grounds, facilities construction, modernization, maintenance, transportation, and materials use will be informed by the environmental impact they have. The President or delegated officials will periodically advise the community of the College's progress in this area.¹

(B) The college previously banned single-use plastic water bottles as part of a resolution of the Student Senate in the late 1990s. Single-use plastic water bottles remained mostly off campus until 2020 with the onset of the pandemic. Single-use plastic water bottles do not support the college's Climate Commitment, or Oberlin's leadership around sustainability. This policy reinstates the ban that was in place for several decades.

II. Policy Statement

- (A) Campus Dining Services at Oberlin College and Conservatory shall not offer single-use plastic water bottles in any dining hall, retail store, or vending machine on campus.
- (B) For special or catered events, either through Campus Dining Services or another provider including campus departments or student organizations, every effort must be made to offer water in bulk containers. In cases when bulk water cannot be provided, boxed or canned water should be provided.

¹ [Oberlin College Environmental Policy, March 2004](#)

III. Policy Scope/Eligibility

- A. The Policy applies to Dining Services, as well as all staff, faculty, and students using college resources to purchase beverages.
 - a. Campus Dining Services:
 - i. Single-use plastic water bottles shall not be sold in any campus retail space, dining hall, or vending machine.
 - b. P-Card Usage:
 - i. P-card users, including faculty, staff, and student organizations, must make every effort to avoid buying single-use plastic water bottles for office use, special events, and other similar uses.
 - ii. If portable water is needed, the purchase of reusable water bottles which are filled from a tap or bottle refill station, in lieu of single use plastic, is strongly recommended.
 - c. Special Events — applies to **both** Campus Dining Services and P-Card Users
 - i. Single-use plastic water bottles shall not be offered for large catered or special events where bulk water is available.
 - ii. Every effort should be made to avoid single-use plastic water bottles for boxed, to-go catered meals. Alternatives to single-use plastic water bottles should be explored, including boxed water or water in cans.

IV. Definitions

- (A) Single-use plastic water bottles: Plastic water containers that are designed to be discarded after one use.
- (B) Bulk water: The use of large containers or coolers for dispensing water.
- (C) Boxed water - single use containers made from food grade paperboard (like a milk carton) for single use.
- (D) Canned water - aluminum cans or aluminum bottles, made for single use.
- (E) Reusable plastic water bottles - designed to be reused, using materials that are PFAF (perfluoroalkyl) chemical free.

V. Administration

- (A) The administration of the Policy will be managed by the Office of Energy and Sustainability (OES). The Sustainability Manager is responsible for keeping the Policy up to date, coordinating a detailed review with all relevant stakeholders at least once every 2 years, and creating institutional guidelines to implement the Policy.

VI. Procedures

- (A) Reporting: Annually, after the close of the fiscal year, the Sustainability Manager will review single use plastic water bottle purchases on campus with Campus Dining Services and the Procurement Manager. The Office of Energy and Sustainability will also coordinate an annual meeting at the beginning of each fiscal year with Campus Dining Services. The purpose of the meeting is to review the Policy and discuss recommended revisions as needed. The meeting will also be an opportunity to discuss challenges and any non-compliance issues.
- (B) Enforcement and Non-Compliance: In case of non-compliance to the Policy, Campus Dining Services or the faculty or staff member will have an intentional meeting with the Office of Energy and Sustainability staff to discuss the reasoning behind non-compliance and how to address it.
- (C) Policy Waiver: If both bulk water and canned/boxed water is not feasible in a given situation, the Sustainability Manager can review and waive the requirement. To receive a waiver, contact the Office of Energy and Sustainability. The Sustainability Manager will review the situation and may provide technical assistance by finding a suitable alternative, or waiving the requirement.

VII. Related Information

(A) Related Policies:

- (1) Oberlin College Environmental Policy - Approved May 2004
https://www.oberlin.edu/sites/default/files/content/office/environmental-sustainability/documents/environmental_policy.pdf
- (2) Oberlin College Environmental Policy Implementation Plan - Adopted by the General Faculty of Oberlin College November 2015
https://www.oberlin.edu/sites/default/files/content/office/environmental-sustainability/documents/environmental_policy_implementation_plan.pdf
- (1) The Policy will be posted on the [OES website](#), and the [procurement webpage](#).

VIII. Approval Process

- (A) Frequency of Review: The Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Office of Energy and Sustainability in collaboration with Campus Dining Services, the Dean of Students Office, and other relevant stakeholders.
- (B) Review Process: If revisions or changes are recommended, the Sustainability Manager will manage the process.
- (C) Necessary Approval Constituents: Vice President of Finance and Administration

Signature: _____

Date: 11-19-24 _____