Draft 10/15/14

Revised iCAP Section 4.7 Purchasing/Waste/Recycling

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**Purchasing/Waste/Recycling**

As the first iCAP recognized, reducing campus purchases (especially of products with low recycled content) and decreasing landfilled waste would cut greenhouse gas emissions, improve use of land and natural resources, educate students on sustainable practices, and contribute to other environmental benefits. The University committed, and must continue to commit, to reducing the environmental impacts from the products and services it purchases and discards -- when its vendors produce and extract natural resources, process and transport them, and collect and dispose of the waste. The first iCAP acknowledged that this area requires campus units to engage in a “whole system” approach to resource management.

While there have been several positive initiatives in this area, overall the relevant iCAP targets and strategies have not been effectively implemented.

Among the achievements in this area compared to the iCAP baseline year (2008), the University switched to a landfill which captures methane emissions and uses them to generate electricity[[1]](#footnote-1); dining halls use trayless service, aerobic digesters and composting to reduce food waste and divert it from landfill; the University participated in national recycling challenges; and campus units have implemented innovative programs to recycle Nitrile gloves and reuse laboratory chemicals.

However, the University has performed poorly on several measures related to purchasing and waste: the total amount of waste sent to landfill has increased (each year from 2009-13 was higher than the baseline level), and the amount of waste diverted to recycling has decreased (each year from 2010-13 was lower than the baseline level). Recycling on campus is unorganized and plagued with gaps -- lacking accountability and incentives for campus units, providing inadequate recycling bins, and landfilling many recyclable commodities (types of plastic, glass, food and electronics). Despite campus policy statements, purchasing has not implemented environmental standards and preferences; for example, campus units continue to procure office paper with mostly zero recycled content.

In objectives and strategies for purchasing, waste and recycling, this iCAP attempts to refocus campus attention and strengthen efforts to reduce emissions and other environmental harms. The objectives and strategies are intended to apply to all campus buildings and personnel, including “auxiliaries”.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Instead of a single landfill diversion target for all waste, this iCAP targets specific measurements by product category of recycling and other reuse as well as reduced purchases. Also, instead of asking for adoption of a policy statement for Zero Waste purchasing, this iCAP targets actual implementation in purchases reflecting certified environmental standards and preferences. The indicators apply to measures of weight or volume, and “landfill” includes incinerators.

As for strategies, several of the first iCAP’s strategies in this area have not been, and are unlikely to be, implemented at UIUC.[[3]](#footnote-3) The revised iCAP emphasizes waste-related measurements, accountability, incentive programs, communications and systems analysis for campus units and students. Additionally, the new strategies highlight weaknesses that have become obvious in recycling bins and collections, purchasing systems, and other waste-related operations. The strategies guide the campus to utilize State of Illinois and other contracts which reflect environmental standards, and to apply sustainable purchasing tools and certifications.

**Purchasing/Waste/Recycling Objectives and Strategies**

*Objectives*

1. Reduce purchases, waste, and landfill; increase recycling and other reuse
   1. By June 30, 2020
      1. Divert from landfill 90 percent of all waste (including agricultural and landscaping)
      2. Divert from landfill 75 percent (or 5 percent more annually) of: commodity waste by category (paper, cardboard, all plastics, glass, metals); food waste; electronics; batteries; and construction/demolition debris
      3. Reduce purchases of office paper, computers and selected other products by 15 percent (compared to 2014); ban single-use bags and selling bottled water
   2. By June 30, 2025
      1. Divert from landfill 95 percent of all waste (including agricultural and landscaping)
      2. Divert from landfill 90 percent (or 5 percent more annually) of: commodity waste by category; food waste; electronics; batteries; and construction/demolition debris
      3. Reduce purchases of office paper, computers and selected other products by 30 percent (compared to 2014)
2. Apply environmental standards and preferences to reduce the emissions from purchases
   1. By June 30, 2016
      1. Apply standards to all purchases of office paper (at least 30 percent recycled content), cleaning products (Green Seal), computers (EPEAT Silver), other electronics (Energy Star), and freight/package delivery services (EPA SmartWay) (or comparable certifications)
      2. Identify standards for products accounting for 50 percent of purchases
   2. By June 30, 2020
      1. Apply standards to products accounting for 50 percent of purchases
      2. Identify standards for products accounting for 75 percent of purchases
   3. By June 30, 2025, apply standards to products accounting for 75 percent of purchases

*Strategies*

1. Measure the performance by campus units (such as specific building, department and auxiliary) on purchasing, waste, landfill, recycling of specific commodities, and other product reuse
2. Develop accountability, training and incentive programs for waste reduction by campus units and students; raise awareness of waste reduction goals through events and communications
3. Apply systems analysis in selecting actions to minimize emissions from purchasing, waste and recycling
4. Research and apply environmental calculators to target for reductions products which account for significant emissions from campus purchases
5. Select landfills which effectively capture methane emissions and use them to generate energy.
6. Increase use of recycling bins by increasing number and locations, expanding the recycled products (including all plastics, glass, food waste, electronics, batteries and Nitrile gloves), and implementing uniform signage
7. Increase sorting of recyclables from combined waste at waste sorting station
8. Extend the replacement cycles for computers and other products
9. Revise the iBUY and other purchasing systems to curtail purchases of products and services which fail to satisfy selected certified environmental standards and preferences
10. Apply surcharges to encourage environmentally-preferred purchases and recycling
11. Utilize purchasing contracts which apply certified environmental standards and preferences, including contracts available for State of Illinois agencies and collectives of universities
12. Apply sustainable purchasing tools and standards provided by the U.S. General Services Administration, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, State of Illinois Central Management Services, and other certifying organizations
13. Engage campus units and vendors to reduce purchases and associated emissions; solicit and apply students’ suggestions on reducing paper and other products used in classes and buildings
14. Expand reuse of durable products on campus through cataloguing system

1. The University estimated that this change yielded a reduction from 14,697 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions in 2008 to a negative (saving of) 163 metric tons in 2014. Because life-cycle analyses of emissions from the University’s purchases, waste and recycling are generally lacking, we cannot present a reasonable comparison between the University’s performance in 2014 and in the baseline year. As proxies for such life-cycle analysis, more waste together with less recycling tend to indicate a larger carbon footprint. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Auxiliaries include Housing, Intercollegiate Athletics, Recreation and other categories of buildings and personnel. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Examples of strategies from the first iCAP which were not implemented include: “Make campus purchasing entities (all units and departments with purchasing privileges) responsible for costs of the disposal of the products consumed”; “Use carbon and other environmental indicators for purchasing to avoid environmentally irresponsible products and corporations”; “Develop a campus incentive for reducing trash with the possibility of charging for waste”; “Consider a campus-wide bottle or can deposit program”; “Implement full-cost accounting and life-cycle analysis structures for major purchases exceeding $25,000 by 2015”; and “Work for legislation to enable the resale of campus goods to the general public”. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)