

Phasing out Single-Use plastics at UTD

24

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FACTS

* Almost every piece of plastic ever made still exists today!

* It takes around 450 years for one plastic bottle to break down into the ground

*Over 4 million plastic bottles are used by Americans every hour!

*The U.S. annually produces over 9 billion plastic bottles. Around two thirds end up in landfills or incinerators.

* On average, every person who switches to a reusable drinks bottle saves 100 disposable bottles per year

Source: [History Of Plastics](#)

Plastics and health

Studies have found that certain chemicals in plastic can leach out of the plastic and into the food and beverages we eat. Some of these chemicals have been linked to health problems such as metabolic disorders and reduced fertility.

Source: [Harvard Health](#)



information brochure

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Why phase out plastics?

The University of Texas system and The University of Texas at Dallas have placed an emphasis on sustainability efforts throughout their history, specifically from a waste reduction perspective. Because single-use plastics bans are becoming widespread across other campuses, such a ban is a logical **next step for UT Dallas**, a campus that wants to remain a leader in the sustainability field.

Institutions classified as “aspirational peers” of UTD have taken actions against single-use plastics on their campus, including the entire University of California system, Iowa State, Purdue, Colorado College, Emory, UMD. Etc.

ALMOST THREE QUARTERS (74%) OF THE 14,148 RESPONDENTS TO THE PRINCETON REVIEW’S 2022 COLLEGE HOPES & WORRIES SURVEY INDICATED THAT “HAVING INFORMATION ABOUT A COLLEGE’S COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR DECISION TO APPLY TO OR ATTEND THE SCHOOL.”



Office of Sustainability

The Office of Sustainability's mission is to engage the UT Dallas community as a catalyst and champion for environmental stewardship and social responsibility while fostering a culture of sustainability evident in all aspects of the campus experience.

[WEBPAGE](#)

Sustainability Committee

The Sustainability Committee is a standing committee comprised of actively engaged students, staff and faculty at UT Dallas. This committee is charged with cultivating a culture of environmental responsibility and participation among the campus community. Hosting an open meeting each month (all may attend), this committee prides itself in raising awareness of campus sustainability at each meeting and through organized events and activities.

[WEBPAGE](#)

Sustainability at UTD



UTD has achieved STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System) Gold status from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's (AASHE)

At the University of Texas at Dallas, sustainability is a huge priority that brings pride and recognition to campus. Drawing upon the expertise of outside professionals through sustainability frameworks allows UTD to lead stakeholders in a way that has proven effective.



Food Waste and Composting

Bicycle Friendly University



UTD Eco Hub

Bee Campus USA

Noteworthy achievements

- UTD now has 1.28 million square feet of **LEED certified space** across 8 certified buildings, over 10 acres of pollinator habitat, 8,000 trees, and 3 monarch waystations.
- UTD obtained **Bicycle Friendly University** certification, **Bee Campus USA** certification and **Tree Campus USA** certification.
- UTD runs the **Comet Composting** program which provides students, faculty and staff the opportunity to compost on campus. The community has composted over 600,000 lbs. of food waste.
- * UTD operates a **single-stream recycling program**; cardboard, paper, aluminum cans, metal cans, plastics (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7) and unbroken glass bottles can be placed in all campus recycling bins.
- UTD and UT Arlington collaborate to lead **RCE North Texas**, a Regional Centre for Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development that is part of a global network coordinated by the United Nations.

A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

The UTD Strategic Plan Theme #9 states to "Ensure a sustainable, rewarding campus environment"

The newest edition of the UTD Sustainability Policy (UTDBP3013) also clearly outlines similar priorities, including but not limited to "Procurement" and "Materials and Resource Management."



PLAN's Mission

The Post-Landfill Action Network supports students in reimagining systems beyond the Linear Consumption Economy. We equip students with the resources and tools necessary to holistically understand the Global Waste Crisis and lead solutions on their campuses. Collectively, we can build a world beyond waste.

Post-Landfill Action Network

PLAN's framework provides accountability while still allowing for flexibility with timelines. Additionally, PLAN provides resources to assist in implementation, and offers continuous guidance as the ban begins to go into effect. Through the Post Landfill Action Network, UTD could become a leader for other schools pursuing a framework developed by nationally established framework pollution experts.

PLAN proposes a 4-step approach to phasing out Single-Use plastics:

1. **Develop a Plastic-Free or Zero-Waste Task Force** including students, staff, faculty from appropriate departments, and administration, which will develop a roadmap to a plastics free campus.
2. **Immediately eliminate all non-essential, non-compostable, single-use disposable plastics** with readily available alternatives (see Appendix B for a list of suggested items and term definitions)
3. **Establish a procurement and/or purchasing policy** that provides the framework for the long-term elimination of all non-essential, non-compostable, single-use disposable plastics – encompassing both items provided by the institution and those provided by contracted food vendors.
4. **Implement campus-wide systems that facilitates the proper collection and management** of the non-disposable products from step 3.

Accessibility: It is essential that the introduction of any plastic reduction policy at UT Dallas include exceptions for auxiliary aids. The Office of Accessibility should be included on the Plastic Free Task Force and in all conversations with stakeholders for the execution of the policy. Plastic alternatives, such as plastic straws and plastic bags, should be offered at all distribution locations, such as dining locations. These should be offered upon request with no stigma attached.

WHICH PLASTICS?

Single-use disposables such as

- shopping bags
- utensils, bowls, to-go containers, cups
- straws
- plastic water bottles
- beverages in plastic bottles

Who has officially signed the Pledge?

The University of California System
 Cerritos Community College
 Emory University
 Colby Sawyer College
 Marshall University

The College of the Atlantic
 Eckerd College
 SUNY ESF
 Sterling College
 Durham Technical Community College

#break free from plastic

THE PLEDGE

In 2018, PLAN created the [Break Free From Plastic Campus Pledge](#), the most comprehensive single-use plastic elimination policy that colleges and universities can commit to today.

UTD's Sustainability Committee has drafted a version of the Pledge for UTD and is asking President Benson to sign it.

CAMPUS SUPPORT

The Initiative to phase out single-use plastics on campus has received letters of support and/or solutions from all four university-wide governing bodies:

- Faculty senate
- Staff Council
- Student Government
- Graduate Student Assembly

OPPORTUNITY

The University of Texas at Dallas could be the first university in the UT System, and in the state of Texas, to sign on to the Post Landfill Action Network's Break Free From Plastic Pledge.

Join Us

UTD Plastic Free Student
Group @utd_plasticfree



Environmental Conservation
Organization (ECO) at UTD
@ecoutd

Student Government Green
Initiative

[Website](#)

Stay connected!

SIGN THE PETITION!

More than 1300 UTD community members have signed the petition to phase out single-use plastic on UTD campus

[SIGN HERE](#)

SIGN UP FOR A COLLABORATIVE ART PROJECT

We are looking for student volunteers to participate in a plastic collection / art project to promote the single-use plastic phase out initiative.

[SIGN UP HERE](#)



WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO? [Source](#)

- Say 'no' to straws and plastic lids
- Bring your own reusable shopping and produce bags to the grocery store
- Bring your own containers for leftovers at restaurants and dining halls
- Get a reusable (e.g., stainless steel) water bottle and carry it everywhere you go
- Opt for beverages in aluminum cans rather than plastic bottles
- Buy package-free products, e.g., soap, shampoo
- Compost

Useful links

- [UTD Office of Sustainability](#)
- [Post-Landfill Action Network](#)
- [United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)