

Joshua Shavel
Muhlenberg College
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FSC Certified Paper PROPOSAL Muhlenberg College

Quote

“Each ton of office paper consumes 24 trees.”
– *Vanderbilt University Sustainability Department*

Sustainability at Muhlenberg College

Through the Office of Campus Sustainability, Muhlenberg College has committed to sustainable practices, and has already put in place solar panels, community gardens and a water bottle initiative to reduce plastic use. The Purchasing Department has also committed to Sustainable Purchase practices, and among the list of Preferred Environmental Attributes is the following: “Made from raw materials obtained in a sustainable, environmentally sound manner.”

Proposal

Muhlenberg College currently seeks to purchase paper with a minimum of 30% post consumer waste, which already helps limit the environmental impact of its paper purchases. There are more sustainable choices available, however.

The Forest Stewardship Council was formed in 1993 to certify forest management programs that are sustainable, and today has 180,000 hectares of land that is being conserved through sustainable forest practices.¹

FSC certified paper comes from forests that are managed by planting new trees to replace the harvested ones, so the forest maintains its ability to absorb carbon and keeps its biodiversity. FSC forests are managed by Community Based Forest Management programs, in which the participants are local people, mostly in developing countries, who rely on the forest to make a living. FSC certified paper not only helps mitigate climate change, but also provides employment opportunities to those communities that suffer the most from climate change.²

Approximately 11% of the wood that comes from forests is used for paper manufacturing, and about a million tons of paper are used every day, and this rate of use is steadily increasing.³ Deforestation is a major threat that contributes to climate change and loss of biodiversity. FSC certified forests do not allow more trees to be harvested than the forest can replace, so the forest provides a livelihood to communities while at the same time it remains intact. Further, in many cases, forests used for paper production help keep the forest from being converted to other less sustainable uses like clear cutting for agriculture or logging.

Quote

*“The Forest Stewardship Council certification system provides internationally-recognized standards in responsible forestry. In order to obtain certification, a product’s entire supply chain must meet the FSC-certification process which serves the best interests of people, wildlife and the environment.”*⁴
 – **Vanderbilt University Green Printing Guide**

FSC 100%, Mix and Recycled

A variety of choices, but all certified

FSC certified papers come in a range, from 100% content from sustainably managed forests, up to 100% recycled paper. 100% recycled paper does not necessarily mean the original paper source is from CBFM forests, but it is certified to actually contain 100% recycled materials.

While 100% recycled paper does seem to be the most environmentally conscious choice, this is not always the case. 100% recycled paper can be more coarse, and so is not always the first choice for paper users due to its appearance. Additionally, these papers need to be treated with chemicals in order to be reused.⁵

Further, part of a commitment to Sustainability has to do with social justice, as the Muhlenberg Sustainability Mission Statement says: “We recognize that the notion of sustainability integrates economic growth and development with environmental protection and social justice, and we operate under that guiding principle.” FSC certified papers not only help keep forests from being degraded, but also provide a livelihood for people from developing countries, many who are indigenous.

For these reasons, Muhlenberg should consider buying FSC certified mixed paper. These papers still contain recycled paper, but also help support CBFM programs that protect forests and help the college to make a positive contribution to global citizenship.

The FSC list of certified copy papers ranging from 100% from certified forests to 10% mix to 100% recycled can be found on the FSC-Certified Paper link on the following page: <https://us.fsc.org/en-us/market/paper-printing>.⁶ While some of these papers can cost approximately 20% more, many are comparable in price to standard copy paper.⁷

Joining forces with other colleges and universities

Other colleges and universities have already made this commitment to the environment and fellow citizens. Stanford University researched papers for its sustainability efforts and recommends FSC papers that are made with renewable energy: https://web.stanford.edu/group/fms/fingate/staff/buypaying/policy_notes/sustainable_purchase.html#resource.⁸

Vanderbilt University’s Sustainability and Environmental Management Office also recommends FSC certified paper as part of its commitment to sustainability: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/sustainability/what-we-do/printing/>.⁹



Source: Forests for All Forever

<https://blogapac.fsc.org/2017/09/06/five-things-you-need-to-know-about-fsc-recycled/>

Muhlenberg's Commitment

In the continuing effort to increase Muhlenberg College's Sustainability efforts, the following objectives are proposed:

1. At the end of the current paper contract, request bids for FSC certified mix paper products.
2. Consider additional FSC products including manila folders, tissues, and toilet paper.
3. Publicize move to Forest Stewardship Council products using Vanderbilt and Stanford University statements as a guide.
4. Measurable indicators of success will be replacing current copy paper purchases with 100% FSC certified paper purchases.

- ¹ Forest Stewardship Council, “Choose FSC Certified Wood and Paper,” accessed November 24, 2019, <https://fsc.org/en/page/about-us>.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Vanderbilt University, “Green Printing,” accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/sustainability/what-we-do/printing/>
- ⁵ Kelley Imaging, “What is the best environmentally friendly copy paper?” accessed November 24, 2019. <http://blog.kelleyimaging.com/what-is-the-best-environmentally-friendly-copy-paper>.
- ⁶ Forest Stewardship Council, “Paper and Printing,” accessed November 24, 2019, <https://us.fsc.org/en-us/market/paper-printing>.
- ⁷ Mother Nature Network, “What is FSC-Certified Paper?” accessed November 24, 2019. <https://www.mnn.com/money/green-workplace/stories/what-is-fsc-certified-paper>.
- ⁸ Stanford University. “Policy Notes: Responsible Purchasing.” Accessed November 24, 2019. https://web.stanford.edu/group/fms/fingate/staff/buypaying/policy_notes/sustainable_purchase.html#resource,
- ⁹ Vanderbilt University. “Green Printing.” Accessed November 25, 2019. <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/sustainability/what-we-do/printing/>.

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