



Anti-Made for Waste Coffee Cup Initiative

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❖ *What problem will be addressed in the face of this proposal?*

➤ *Popular usage of disposable coffee cup waste on the Western Washington University Campus is a problem that affects the student community environmentally, socially, psychologically, locally, and economically. If we can address the behavioral consumption habits of choosing to buy disposable cups and replace it with more reusable-cup friendly policies then Western can eventually become less wasteful, and more of an eco-friendly university.*

❖ *What are the core basics of this initiative and what will it be implementing in its policy?*

➤ *This proposal will restructure the menus of five on-campus locations that sell cafe beverages in disposable cups, excluding Starbucks near Artzen Hall for its own independent business sovereignty, by lowering all prices by \$0.25. The menu change will reflect new prices for reusable cup users and if the consumers are not in possession of a reusable cup, will be able to purchase the disposable cups, lids, and straws for \$0.25. This effectively separates the charge of the beverage and the disposable materials in a way that consumers are faced with a choice to “buy” waste or bring a reusable container. Rewarding those who do, and incentivizing those who don’t to do so.*

➤ *For example: A latte can be purchased for \$3.00 and Cup/Lid/Straw \$0.25, instead of a latte for \$3.25*

❖ *Why is this beneficial to the seller?*

➤ *Lower cost of production. Even though there is a perceived drop in price it will not be a loss to seller. Sellers will, with the implementation of this proposal, reduce their costs of production with the reduction of the need of disposable products, thereby reducing their overall cost to do business (AVC).*

- No loss of profit. Reusable cup users will be paying for all items of production except the disposable objects which the price will reflect. Those using disposable items will be paying for those items resulting in zero profit loss.
- Boost of image. By implementing this sustainable policy sellers can successfully say to their clients and customers about their priorities and boosting imagery for the company.
- Increased demand and low reactivity. By lowering the cost of the cafe beverages there will be not only an increase of reusable cup users, but also an increase in cafe beverage sales due to the perceived discount. Also, as coffee being a highly desirable and inelastic product, the reactivity of the public to this will be low. Consumers depend on their purchase of coffee and price changes will not affect their demand for the product.

❖ **Why is this beneficial to the consumer?**

- Rewarding sustainable habits. By bringing their reusable container they are not paying the extra cost of production (i.e. disposable cup, lid, straw). So buyers then receive a perceived reward “discount” for not using disposable materials, thereby lessening Western’s waste stream.
- Direct Action from Students with Self-Benefit. The buyer can also feel good about lessening their impact on the environment as well by not contributing to the waste stream, not using disposable materials, and developing sustainable long term habits that can migrate off campus.

❖ **How does this benefit Western as a campus?**

- Reduces waste stream and cost of disposal for WWU. The reduction of the waste stream from campus will result in the decreased cost of disposal that Western have to pay.
- A more sustainable WWU and future. Western also will become more eco-friendly as it shows to take action to initiatives that promote sustainable habits with students. Supporting policies, such as this, leaves positive legacy effects for future prospective students to enjoy as well as local members of the community. This will look good for Westerns image to show that they are a campus that takes the lead in environmentally friendly initiatives.

❖ **What about buyers who cannot afford to buy a reusable cup? What if bringing their own reusable mug is not convenient for the buyer?**

- Coffee already is pretty expensive and if a buyer buys a cup every single day for an entire quarter, or just every other business day, that cost adds up to more than what a really good reusable container will be. Along with the \$0.25 reduction, the coffee will cost them less over time. There are also so many ways you can buy cheap reusable containers (thrift stores, relatives, large superstore chains,) and

they do not have to be coffee cup shaped. If the buyer opts out to just not buy or use a reusable cup at all then they won't be affected that much. The \$0.25 will be covering the cost of materials for the seller and the price, after the levy, will be the same prices they are currently. So therefore, they can keep opting to use disposable materials but it will seem more expensive to them as will the choice to waste will be borne onto them as well.

❖ ***How is this a sustainable initiative?***

- *Sustainability can have many different meanings. It could mean that we are meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It could mean that we are creating a resiliency structure or we are focusing on the social justice of the situation. Sustainability with this project is complex because a simple problem like this is connected to so many aspects of our environment.*
- *Socially: There is a behavioral change within consumption culture where consumers, with the levy, are given a choice to use disposable wasteful items or choose to bring a reusable cup and be rewarded for doing so. Rewarded not just monetarily, but mentally through feeling like they are taking action in helping their environment. All they have to do is buy some coffee! We are sowing seeds of sustainable habits within coffee buyers, overall creating an awareness of consumer choices and how impactful they can be. When students create within themselves a sustainable habit of bringing their reusable cup this will not be limited to only Western. They will take this habit off campus to coffee shops locally or further affecting other environments and communities on a much more broader scale.*

❖ ***The cups are already compostable? Why should we support something like this if there is already a solution to the problem?***

- *Compostable cups are great but it is a band-aid solution to a real problem which is the habit of wasting in general. We, not only as a community, but as a campus that has pledged to support environmentally friendly policies, need to be aware of our waste problem. We need to tackle the root of the problem which is the act of disposing and not what the material the disposables are made of. For example, if cups could be made to be completely dissolved after a certain period of time it would seem great, but it does not change the habit of wasting. The habit will not be altered, only be made less environmentally impactful, versus off campus where materials of waste are more damaging. If WWU wants to be sustainable then we need to enact initiatives that sustain environmentally friendly behavior and not sustain non-ecofriendly waste habits.*

- *We live in a finite world full of finite resources. The compostable cup is, of course, compostable, but resources had to be extracted, energy expended, carbon emitted in transportation and production, and in the end who pays the real hidden cost for such a system? A system that creates a cup ready to be used, for an average of 12 minutes, and then thrown away, in the multi-millions. When thinking about how the compostable cups are made of materials that are fully plant based we need to ask ourselves questions. Where would the plant material come from, how much land would be needed to grow it, or how much food production would it displace? How about the damage that this cultivation inflicts, causing soil erosion, and often requiring heavy doses of pesticides and fertilizers?*
- *This project helps break the illusion that resources are infinite and that we will be able to have disposable, or compostable cups, forever. By creating a push, and incentivizing, using reusable containers we are lowering the demand from said system above. Coffee will become more environmentally friendly when we take away the habit and illusion of infinite resources to be infinitely wasted and forgotten.*

❖ ***Are we alone in this matter of disposable vs. reusable coffee cups? Here are some case studies that have done the same type of initiative.***

- *The elimination and push towards creating anti-waste habits, similar to this same policy, has been a hot topic in the past year or so. We are very much aboard a ship with dozens upon dozens of other locations who have tried this with their urban-systems, succeeding upon implementation. Here are a few case studies where similar initiatives like this have been generated, all of which have been a huge success.*
- *Ireland: Not coffee cups but we are in the same ballpark in trying to get waste eliminated. Ireland, which introduced a bag tax of about 19 cents in 2002, saw an even more dramatic decrease: consumers there used 94 percent fewer disposable bags in the first year of the program, and they continued to keep their consumption under 10 percent of former usage five years later. (Morales, 2019)*
- *Maryland: Consumers are much more motivated to avoid a fine than to take advantage of a reimbursement, according to numerous behavioral economics studies. The bag tax in Montgomery County, Maryland, provides a good illustration. Before the County implemented its five-cent charge on disposable grocery bags, many stores offered a five cent bonus to customers who brought their own shopping bags. These stores saw almost no increase in reusable bags: 82 percent of customers used disposable bags in bonus stores, compared to 84 percent in stores offering no bonus. Once the 5-cent tax on disposable bags kicked in, however, use of disposables plummeted, and only 39 percent of customers used*

the taxed bags. It's the same five cents, but when it's a tax and not a refund, it carries a lot more weight with consumers. (Morales, 2019)

- *UK: In the UK, Starbucks was the first chain to start taxing customers 5 pence for every disposable cup they use (the government wants to increase the tax to 25 pence). And customers who bring their reusable mugs get an automatic 25 pence discount on their hot beverage.*
- *University of Winchester: In the academic year 2015-16, the University used almost 200,000 disposable cups which are not fully recyclable. Since November 2016, almost 55,000 non-recyclable disposable cups have been saved as a result of the initiative, which saw a 25p surcharge added to the price of hot and cold drinks purchased on campus in a disposable cup. The campaign has been hugely successful, resulting in sales of drinks in reusable cups soaring from three in every 100 drinks to 30 in every 100 drinks. Since this academic year began in September 2017, almost 33 percent of drinks' sales have been in reusable cups. With the 25 pence surcharge on drinks prompting staff and students to buy drinks in a reusable cup and reject a disposable cup. The UW recycling rate is now at 64 percent. They have been recognized globally for this initiative and the success that its created.*
- *Berkeley, CA: Berkeley has become the first city in the US to impose a city-wide fee of 25 cents on café-goers who do not bring their own reusable cup. The Berkeley City Council voted unanimously for the Disposable-Free Dining measure, which will take effect in January 2020. They were also the first city to implement curbside recycling so pioneering environmental initiatives are their thing.*



