

## **Project Title**

Switching Campus to Sustainable T-Shirt Purchasing

## **Person who proposed it**

Marie Bouffard

## **Decision**

Fully Funded

## **Budget**

\$1,870

## **Project explanation**

The fashion industry accounts for about 10% of global carbon emissions, nearly 20% of wastewater (source 1) and is notorious for exploitative labor practices (source 2). UVM purchases approximately 14,000 promotional t-shirts each academic year, almost entirely for giveaways to students. These purchases are currently only based on the criteria of cost and shirt design. This proposal is to have a student intern investigate how to move these purchases to a more sustainable t-shirt product. The internship responsibilities will include defining what makes a sustainable shirt, with key attributes including source material (ex: organic cotton and/or recycled materials), manufacture process (ex: chemicals and dyes), distribution (ex: shipping vs local), and worker rights (ex: living wage, good working conditions).

Initial research shows that a sustainable t-shirt will cost 65% to 160% more than what we are currently purchasing. This research project intern would need to talk to major purchasers on campus to gauge their ability to move to a more expensive but more sustainable product.

Most of the current purchases are with small, local t-shirt printers. One Burlington company currently produces 75% of UVM's promotional t-shirts. The intern would meet with existing vendors to see how they can support this endeavor and research new vendors that are a good fit for the defined sustainability and social characteristics. The end goal would be to put in place tiered pricing contracts with vendors for different volumes. These would be publicized and communicated directly to the major campus buyers, shifting most campus t-shirt purchases to a sustainable product.

The UVM Bookstore and UVM Athletics will also be encouraged to move to sustainable clothing. Our intern would meet with these departments to learn about their current clothing purchasing and how they could switch to purchasing sustainable t-shirts. Currently, the Bookstore is selling a limited amount of sustainable clothing but showed openness to increasing their buying in this area, especially if there is student demand, which the intern could work to quantify in a survey. The Bookstore also assists departments in buying promotional t-shirts and would support any guidelines that come out of this project. Athletics operates under a five-year contract with Nike for their team uniforms and will have a limited ability to change their buying choices.

Successfully moving to more sustainable t-shirts would be highly visible to students. If we can purchase

shirts with an obvious eco label on them, then students would see our commitment to sustainability when they receive these shirts from campus departments. This includes every first year who receives a t-shirt for Convocation, making this one of UVM's first impressions and something that will have touched our full undergraduate campus in four years.

Source 1: <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200310-sustainable-fashion-how-to-buy-clothes-good-for-the-climate>

Source 2: <https://www.hrw.org/topic/womens-rights/labor-rights-garment-industry>

### **Budget table**

<b>This Money will Supply</b>	<b>Requested funds</b>	<b>Justification</b>
Student internship wages	\$1,620	\$18.00/hr for graduate student working 6 hours/week over the 15-week spring semester.
T-shirt art set up fees	\$250	Small fund to cover art set-up costs to encourage departments to switch to new sustainable vendors. Covers 5-10 conversions.