Resolution in Support of a Sustainable Beverage System

WHEREAS, the University of Vermont has made a commitment to climate neutrality by the year 2020 as a signatory member of the American College and University President’s Climate Commitment (ACUPCC) and asserts in its Common Ground Mission to be “at the forefront of change” and “forward-looking in addressing important community and societal needs,”

WHEREAS, the University of Vermont aspires in its Common Ground Mission to “unite against all forms of injustice” and to “reject bigotry, oppression, degradation, and harassment,” of which human rights violations and unlivable wages are forms,

WHEREAS, the University's beverage contract with the Coca-Cola Company has offered little opportunity for the implementation of sustainability-related change on campus due to in part: its 10 year duration, a lack of formal student involvement, and the risk of the University incurring fines in the event of a 10 percent drop in Coca Cola sales on campus,

WHEREAS, the University currently sells approximately 1,037,000 single-use beverage bottles per year in vending machines and in retail areas, a large majority of which are made from PET plastic, a non-biodegradable material known to require an exorbitant amount of oil to produce, and for its potential to

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leach chemicals harmful to human health into beverages.

WHEREAS, the Vermont State Legislature recently passed legislation ending the provision of bottled water in state buildings.

WHEREAS, there has been a growing campaign over several years to discontinue the sale and distribution of bottled water on UVM's campus involving several organizations including VSTEP and SGA, in addition to a campaign to encourage the use of reusable water bottles and consumption of tap water by VSTEP, SGA, the Eco-Reps, Inter Residence Association, and the Office of Sustainability, garnering significant and quantifiable support from the UVM community in the form of SGA resolutions, petitions, surveys, and a water taste test.

WHEREAS, UVM has ample access to safe and clean municipal tap water, usable as drinking water and as a base for flavored beverages in fountain form, which carries a dramatically lower carbon footprint than beverages packaged and shipped to campus in disposable bottles.

WHEREAS, the University is held by its beverage contract to an 80:20 ratio of Coca-Cola products to alternative companies' products, including local companies' beverage products.

WHEREAS, patronizing local beverage companies reduces transportation emissions, supports the local economy, and builds University relations with the surrounding community.

WHEREAS, UVM is noticeably absent as a national leader of sustainability in higher education in addressing sustainability in its beverage system, while an increasing number of institutions across the U.S. are joining in a global movement to protect water resources from corporate privatization and reduce their carbon footprint, including the seven universities to date which have discontinued the sale and distribution of bottled water.

WHEREAS, the University of Vermont is in a rare and opportune moment to become the first public University to take real action against the privatization and shipment of water for beverages, which would reduce social, ecological and economic costs associated with the production, shipment, storage, and handling and disposition of bottled beverages.

WHEREAS, making a commitment to creating a sustainable beverage system would garner positive attention for the University, while forging a path for students across the nation working for similar ends.

BE IT RESOLVED, that the student body of the University of Vermont strongly urges the University to take advantage of the opportunity presented by the approaching expiration of the current Beverage Contract to implement a beverage system that is significantly more sustainable and:

-become the first public university to formally discontinue the sale and distribution of bottled water,

-discontinue distribution of pre-bottled beverages that can be sold in post-mix or fountain dispenser form,

-reduce the number of beverages sold in single-use containers by 20 percent each year over the next five years,

-negotiate that any new beverage contract remain in effect for less than five years,
-reduce total vending machine count on campus by at least 50 percent over the next three years,

-increase the ratio of locally- to - non-locally owned, sourced and produced beverages by at least 30 percent over the next five years\textsuperscript{19}, and

-strive to ensure that non-local beverages offered on campus consist of organically-produced ingredients\textsuperscript{20}.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the student body recognizes the need for beverage infrastructure updates in order to implement the above changes successfully, and as such recommends that the University:

-increase the number of water bottle refill stations across campus to ensure there is at least one in each building, thus providing a well-marked source of chilled, palatable drinking water\textsuperscript{21}, and ensure that the location of all water refill stations is well-known and accessible,

-encourage the use of reusable water bottles through the distribution of a reusable bottle to each incoming student to the University,

-continue to incentivize the use of reusable vessels for other beverages including coffee and tea by increasing advertisement of refill discounts at all retail locations, and

-establish a reusable cup program modeled after Dining Services\textquoteright; reusable container program and in the interim period increase the number of campus dining locations that utilize dine-in cups and the total number of these cups utilized in each location, in addition to supplying fully compostable paper cups across campus for those without a reusable bottle or cup.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the student body calls for any beverage products featured at the University to be procured from companies, corporations, or businesses clear of offenses to, as deemed by a third party, non-biased review:

-fair trade and livable wages\textsuperscript{22},

-universally just and humane treatment of employees\textsuperscript{23}, and

-respect by beverage company of local people residing near all points of operation\textsuperscript{24},

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the student body recognizes the challenges of satisfying each of the previous requests, and so requests that the University establish before the end of the Spring 2011 semester a Beverage Contract Task Force\textsuperscript{25}, including members of the student body appointed by the SGA, to be informed and consulted throughout the contract negotiating process.

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] Our Common Ground statement (From the Office of the President)
http://www.uvm.edu/~president/\text{Page=miscellaneous/commonground.html}
\item[2.] Current Coke Contract (2002-2012) Section 11.4 D, "If Package Beverage Volume Declines" under Section 11, "Remedies and Termination" states: "Any action of the part of the University or its Concessionaire that changes the availability of Company packaged Beverages, such as, but not limited to a reduction in cold vault
\end{itemize}
space, vending machines or reduction in SKU's or reduction or elimination of warm retail display space, where such action causes a decline in Company packaged Beverage volume in excess of ten percent (10%) for more than one hundred twenty (120) days as compared to the sales during the same period occurring twelve (12) months earlier places the University at risk of facing a reduction of its Sponsorship Fees, as well as other available remedies as agreed upon at the time of the Contract negotiation (Current Coke Contract, p. 14).

3. According to the University of Vermont Energy Management Office, in 2003 the University had installed 80 soda machines across campus, together consuming roughly 161,527 kWh of energy per year and emitting 176,000 pounds of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. http://www.uvm.edu/energy/?Page=projects/projects.html#vending

4. Taken from 2010 sales data provided to UVM Recycling Office from Coca Cola Bottling Company of Northern New England

5. According to the Pacific Institute, annual production of PET plastic bottles for consumption in the U.S. requires more than 17 million barrels of oil. http://www.pacinst.org/topics/water_and_sustainability/bottled_water/bottled_water_and_energy.html

6. The production of polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic currently entails the use of chemicals including antimony, a contaminant known by international scientific and health agencies to pose acute and chronic health effects in humans and regulates in US tap water by the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Peer-reviewed scientific studies have detected levels of this and other chemical compounds to have leached into the water in at least nine different brands of bottled water sold within the U.S. Westerhoff, Paul, Panpaj Prapaipong, Everett Shock, and Alice Hillaireau. "Antimony leaching from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic used for bottled drinking water." Water Research. 42.3 (2008): 551-556. Print.


12. Drinking Water at UVM, a survey on the UVM campus compiled in 2010 by UVM students in Toxics Policy and the Public, found 70% of respondents to be in favor of eliminating the sale of bottled water. Figures available through Office of Sustainability website.

13. In December of 2010, the UVM Eco-Reps performed a Blind Water Taste Test in the Davis Center, for which 99 individuals from the University community were surveyed for their preference of tap or bottled water, resulting in a 68 percent preference for tap water. Results available at: http://www.uvm.edu/~scoreps/?Page=actions.html


16. To date, the following U.S. universities have successfully discontinued the sale and distribution of bottled water on campus: Washington University in St. Louis, Seattle University, University of Portland, Depauw University, Belmont University, Oberlin College, Brown University, and Johns Hopkins University. Visit the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) for more information. http://www.aashe.org/resources/bottled-water-elimination-and-reduction#campus

17. Currently, the University covers all costs associated with collecting and transporting plastic bottles from campus to the CSWD Materials Recycling Facility located in Williston Vermont.

18. A large and continually growing number of universities have implemented partial bans on disposable bottled beverages, in dining halls and specific departments/zones on campus. Students from a plethora of public and private universities are currently working towards achieving full bans on plastic disposable water bottles and other disposable beverage products. (AASHE) http://www.aashe.org/resources/bottled-water-elimination-and-reduction#campus

19. The definition for “local” should be adapted from University Dining Services’ current definition for local foods.

20. Organic, as defined by the European Commission to the European Union, should include all aspects of an ingredient’s production – from the integrity of its genes, to the agricultural practices by which it is grown. While it is true that many small producers cannot afford an official organic certificate, all producers considered organic must be complicit with these standards. See overview of Council Regulation (EC) No. 834/2007 of 28 June 2007 on organic production and labeling of organic products and repealing at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy/legislation_en

21. It is recommended that the University model this map after a similar Water Refill Station Map compiled by Washington University in St. Louis staff following their successful campaign to discontinue the sale and distribution of bottled water on campus. (Available by request).

22. There are multiple agencies that have presented definitions of “fair trade” and “livable wages.” We understand that these qualifications may be somewhat subjective, and also that for small businesses it is not always economically possible to be certified by an outside institution as a means of validating their commitment to these practices. Our recommendation then would be to seek third-party reviews which evaluate companies based upon the principles outlined by fair trade certifying organizations, such as Fair Trade USA http://www.transfairusa.org/.


24. “All points of operation” include areas of resource extraction, treatment, synthetic materials manufacturing, final production, and any stages in between for an independent company or corporation and including its subsidiary brands and companies. This evidence should come from a non-biased third party reviewer.