

Reducing Paper Use at St. Mary's College of Maryland



ENST 450: Applied Sustainability Practicum

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Introduction

Paper is ubiquitous. Paper towels, toilet paper, flyers, receipts, the list continues ad nauseam. St. Mary's currently purchases Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper which is a good first step. However, there is room for improvement upon purchasing and paper use. There is no centralized control of purchases for the college, but Physical Plant, the major supplier, purchased 4400 reams of bright white, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified paper in FY14 (Table 1). This does not include the paper purchased by individual departments or the library.

Table 1. Number of cases of paper used by each department purchased from Physical plant (Case= 10 reams).

Office/building	# of cases	Office/building	# of cases
Goodpaster	86	Bookstore	20
Montgomery	60	Philosophy	20
Shaefer	52	Res Life	17
Kent	50	Student Activities	16
Business	44	Cobb House	16
Admissions	32	Whitehouse	10
Athletics	28	Glendening	10
Financial Aid	26	Office of Information Technology	9
Advancement	26	Health	9
HR	21	Public Safety	5
Registrar office	2	International Education	5
VPBR	1		
Total= 428			



Figure 1. FSC certified papers are those produced from sustainably grown and managed forests. This is a start, but they do not contain any recycled content. (1)



Figure 2. Paper starts its life as a tree. This tree is ground and processed into pulp and eventually paper via a water and energy intensive process. After this virgin paper has served its purpose, it is either recycled or thrown away. If it is thrown away, the lifecycle ends at the landfill or incinerator and is a source of carbon dioxide. If it is recycled it is turned back into pulp then paper once more. (2).

Goal: Reduce paper use at St. Mary's via signage as well as suggesting changes in procurement practices to greener options.

Strategies to Reduce Paper

Institute Printing Flyer Reminders

- Eye-catching flyers that will make people think before they print. Several examples are shown in figure 3.
- Rather than printing, students could ask their professors to fully utilize Blackboard (BB), which is an online submissions and grading platform. If students urge professors to utilize BB to its fullest potential we can decrease paper significantly.

Suggest Paper and Printer Procurements

- Schools with green procurement plans have instituted 30% post-consumer content paper, which reduces carbon emissions by reducing the amount of virgin paper used and increasing demand for recycled paper.
- Currently, students are only able to print single-sided on the printers available in the library and in Goodpaster Hall. When the printers are available for replacement, duplex printers should be considered in order to decrease the amount of paper used per print.

Print Smart, Save Trees (and Money)

1. Decrease the document's margins!
Page layout → Margins → Moderate
2. Make sure you're printing the right thing the first time.
3. Alternatively, ask professors to accept assignments via Blackboard.

I am not a virgin.

I am 100% post-consumer waste.
I am not processed with any chlorine.
I saved 1 tree, 27 gallons of water, 55,000 BTUs of energy, 6 pounds of solid waste and 10 pounds of greenhouse gases just by a designer choosing me.

Figure 3. Possible flyer examples to put next to computers and around campus. Signs will be printed on previously used paper! will also attempt to implement a system of maintenance of sign replacement. Institutionalizing a system of maintenance is key to making a project meaningful and lasting.(3,4).

Future Directions

Future directions could target institutional changes such as paperless pay-stubs. This practice has saved Boston University 3000lbs of paper and \$5,000 annually (5)

Another big paper sink is junk mail. Typically large institutions receive tens or hundreds of items of junk mail per week. If the school aimed to get every department off of junk mailing lists, they could decrease the amount of paper recycled, thus decreasing recycling pick up costs. There are easy ways of getting off of junk mail lists (6).

- Change the type of paper purchased
- Proved duplex printers for student use.
- Encourage professors to decrease paper by using Blackboard
- Decrease junk mail by removing the school/teachers from mail-lists
- Switch the college over to a paperless pay-stubs



Figure 4. Certain labels to look for when purchasing paper include recycled fiber, post-consumer content, and eco friendly. (7, 8)

Conclusion

By providing appropriate printers and encouraging duplex printing, purchasing paper with post consumer content and encouraging the use of Blackboard as an electronic submission platform St. Mary's could significantly decrease the green house gas emissions and overall carbon footprint of the school.

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