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Addressing the upcoming changes in UT's recycling program

The University of Tampa takes steps in addressing the flaws in their recycling program as they prepare to change single-stream recycling collection companies in spring 2023.

With arms stuffed with overflowing brown paper bags of sorted recycled materials, UT environmental studies sophomores Leah Stretch and Chloe McCurry manually carry their surplus of recycling half a mile through campus to the closest recycling center from Straz Hall. As of fall 2022, there are only two active drop off dumpsters on campus; one located between McKay Hall and the Macdonald Kelce Library while the other is in between Austin Hall and the Dickey Health and Wellness Center.

Around campus, the signs that advertise recycling as an option are in black and white located next to plain black trash cans, which are only placed outdoors. Other recycling cans in the area typically come in blue, green, or even tan containers to differentiate and advocate for reusable waste.

“Students walk past them without knowing and they end up throwing away their recycling,” recycling club secretary, Christian Soria, said.

The most recent statement published on [UT's website](#) in February 2018 shared that in the prior three years, UT recycled 500,000 pounds of paper and transitioned to recyclable carry-out containers in Ultimate Dining in Vaughn Center.

“The goal of our recycling program is to revert some of that general waste back into our recycling stream and then have it make new product where it doesn't go into the landfill,” said Martin Sorrentino, UT's facilities maintenance energy manager.

According to Sorrentino, faculty members are able to individually request a tan colored standard recycling bin for their office from housekeeping on a case-by-case basis. Not all faculty are aware of the request needed to recycle, yet do so independently.

For instance, according to the office of career services student-employees, staff assistant Becky Nero-Wall collects non-sensitive recyclable waste from the office and personally takes it home to dispose of.

“A lot of faculty members or students take it upon themselves to take their recycling to one of the single-stream bins. It's great that we have a culture we can rely on to do that, but we do realize we could improve upon that and have much more convenient locations for paper and the single-stream material,” Sorrentino said.

Within the two entities of the recycling program, UT has a contract with *Recycling Services of Florida* for their cardboard. On the other side, UT currently has a contract with *Waste Management* for their single-stream recycling. Single-stream recycling is put into one container and sent to the service for sorting.

Waste Management is currently charging UT a \$500 fee for every plastic bag or contaminant found within their waste according to *Recycling Services of Florida*: Clearwater's general manager, Larry Betta. UT plans on switching their single-stream recycling program over to *Recycling Services of Florida* effective in March 2023.

The lack of student body knowledge enforced by UT can be attributed to the amount of fines *Waste Management* was placing onto the recycling program.

“It was ungodly what UT was paying in a monthly bill for single-stream [recycling]. That's why UT chose us to take over because our prices are a lot cheaper,” Betta said. “You're going to get a lot of the same service, if not better, for a lot less.”

Recycling Services of Florida honors, “the dedication to find innovative and viable solutions to continue to improve your ability to recycle more products,” according to their [website](#).

UT has an estimated 50 to 75 paper-only recycling bins, intended for sensitive documents solely, which are more expensive because they are required to be shredded, according to Sorrentino. He hopes that with the upcoming change in services, UT has more convenient options for throwing away their non-classified paper documents.

UT has also shown initiative in removing their construction waste by maintaining their LEED certifications upon new architecture, such as for the Ferman Center For The Arts or the Technology Building. LEED holds schools accountable in regards to construction waste by requiring specification on, “whether materials will be separated or comingled,” as well as, “where the material will be taken and how the recycling facility will process the material.”

The student body has also shown initiative in progressing towards a recycle-friendly campus. During Earth Week in April 2021, UT's recycling club was founded. Their [mission](#) is to “change

the recycling game [at UT],” through sustainable events and cultivating a knowledgeable campus.

“We live in Florida so we want there to be a nice environment and community here at UT,” Soria said. “Making the recycling bins more well-known and honestly changing how they look, and making it more noticeable that it’s a recycling bin is something we want to change on campus.”

The systematic changes for UT’s recycling program seemingly promise an adjustment in our on-campus waste resources.

“UT’s recycling program is very innovative and it fits the high standards that UT sets,” Sorrentino said. “We have some really good outlooks and goals in mind that are all definitely doable. The timing is right.”