

**Project:** Recycling Red Solo Cups

**Name:** Kathryn Ezeoha

**School:** Arts and Sciences

**Role:** Student

**Description:** I would like to start TerraCycling red solo cups (as well as other #6 rigid plastic cups) on campus in order to divert the hazardous chemicals that make up these cups from landfills. Implementing this program should be fairly easy because there are already other specialized waste programs, such as TerraCycle, on campus. The idea is for the Eco-Reps to add collection bins near the recycling, trash, and compost bins that are dedicated to all plastic #6 rigid plastic cups- targeting the infamous red solo cup. These bins would be located in the residence halls as well as themed houses and sororities/fraternities. In addition, there will be signs above the bins explaining what can and can't go into the bin as well as why we want to divert these cups from the landfill. The word will spread about this new program through fliers, social media posts, and word of mouth. Then, the cups would all be collected and sent to TerraCycle. In addition to the TerraCycle program, I would also like to encourage the usage of an alternative cup that is more eco- friendly- such as a compostable cup. These alternative cups ideally would be sold at Hodgdon Food-on-the-Run in replacement of the red cups that they currently sell. These cups would also be given to themed and sorority/fraternity houses as starter packs along with information on how to restock. This will encourage them to continue using these cups instead of solo cups. Currently, Stanford University is already doing this "eco-friendly cup starter pack" and has seen success with several fraternities- as stated in the Stanford Daily Op Ed. If this project is successful, then I would hope to expand the substitution of eco-friendly alternatives to other single-use dining ware sold at Hodgdon. <https://www.terracycle.com/en-US/brigades/solo-r-cup-brigade-r> <https://www.stanforddaily.com/2018/06/13/op-ed-lets-get-rid-of-red-solo-cups/>

**People Involved:** I would be the lead on this project, however I would need the help of the Eco-Reps as well as the Office of Sustainability to help me carry out my plan. The Eco-Reps would be involved by collecting the cups and the OOS would be involved by assisting in the TerraCycle partnership and shipping of the cups. I believe that Serena Monteiro is the Tufts Office of Sustainability intern currently in charge of sending Tufts' TerraCycle to the company, so she could be in charge of making sure that the solo cups get delivered. The delivery process is also an element that I am willing to help out with. As for permission for the project, it is possible that I would need to reach out to Tufts Office of Residential Life and Learning to make sure that it's ok to have these bins in residence halls and themed housing. As for the replacement cups, I would reach out to Tufts Dining to figure out what their current process of receiving their single-use dining ware is and see if there is any way to switch to a more eco-friendly provider. I would also have to reach out to the people currently living in themed and sorority/fraternity houses to see if they would be interested in receiving a free trial of eco-friendly cups and hopefully making the switch.

**Budget:** The TerraCycle program would be free of cost because the program is free. As for the eco-friendly cup alternative component of this project, the only cost would be the price of the eco-friendly cup. Based on Stanford's application of this program, they provided fraternities with 150 cups as a free starter pack, so this is the amount that I would provide the houses here with. Tufts has 18 sororities and fraternities and 16 Special interest Houses, adding up to 34 houses in total. So, if each house gets 150 free trial cups and the cups are sold in packs

of 50, we would have to order 102 packs of compostable cups. Each pack costs about \$10 on Amazon. This comes to roughly \$1,020. The cost may vary, however, if Tufts Dining (or whichever university affiliate pays for what's sold at Hodgdon) is not willing to pay the higher price for eco-friendly cups. In this case, the cups will either have to be sold at a higher price, or/and additional funds could be given to them to subsidize the cost difference until there is ultimately a complete switch to the eco-friendly alternative. The cost may also vary if there are unforeseen costs for the TerraCycle program.

**Timeline:** For the TerraCycle part of this project, I will begin by reaching out to Serena about what process she currently goes through to ensure that what's currently TerraCycled at Tufts gets sent and whether she would be willing to handle another TerraCycle program. I would also reach out to my fellow Eco- Reps to see if this is something that they would be willing to help make happen (which it currently seems that they are). Finally, I would go through the process necessary to set up another TerraCycle program on our campus- directions which are given on the company's website. This would be an ongoing project. As for the solo cup alternative component, the first steps I would make to accomplish this is to do more research on the eco-friendly alternatives for solo cups. I would also be interested in reaching out to the writers of the Stanford article on their current solo cup alternative program to find out about any updates on how the project is going now and whether it was successful or if there is something that they wish they did different. These two steps I can start working on now. The next bigger steps would be to reach out to Tufts Dining and see what the process might look like for providing single use dining ware alternatives at Hodgdon and then actually implementing the new cups. This may take a few weeks or a few months- I do not know enough to tell. I would also reach out to all the special interest houses to see if they would like to participate in the program. This would likely take a couple weeks. Buying the actual cups should take a week at max.

**Benefit to Tufts Community:** Generally, there are a lot of single use cups on college campuses due to party culture. The most popular of these cups is the red solo cup. Many people don't know that these cups are not recyclable and that they have to end up in the trash. The problem with solo cups, besides the fact that they can't be recycled, is that they are made up of #6 plastic, or polystyrene, the same hazardous chemicals that styrofoam cups are made up of. These chemicals have negative effects on both humans and animals. In addition, they take many decades to decompose. By TerraCycling these cups at Tufts, we are diverting a significant amount of hazardous chemicals from ending up in the landfill and instead allowing it to be turned into a new product. By using a compostable alternative we will have a smaller footprint and also create a culture on campus that steers away from solo cups and makes eco-friendly cups the norm.