

Top Action Items for a Sustainable U

Economic vitality, environmental impact, and social well-being are the three basic tenants of sustainability. President Levin is deeply committed to Yale being a global leader on campus sustainability, and his engagement has put Yale on the map.

Today's economic crisis presents a true challenge to the Yale community. Of necessity, each department has been asked to scale back budgets by 7.5% per year for two years. Emphasis on efficiency, streamlining, and teamwork can turn this into an opportunity, however. Considered choices now may save us from more painful choices later. This document outlines small- and medium-sized changes that will help the university to save money, lower its environmental impact, and foster teamwork and community.

Personal Choices

You can make a big difference to the budget and the impact of your office with these simple choices.

Think before you ink

- Print only when necessary.
- Make double-sided printing and copying the default setting on your computer or copier.
- When possible, print two pages per sheet for drafts.

Think before you drink... and eat

- Use re-usable cups, bowls, and flatware.
- When possible, drink filtered or tap water rather than bottled water.
- If eating out, choose a walkable locale.
- If taking out, try to bring your own container and/or canvas bag.

Power down

- Turn off lights in any empty rooms.
- Set your computer to hibernate after five minutes of inactivity.
- Turn your computer off at the end of each day (if you must leave it on – turn off the monitor).
- Plug desk-side electronics such as printers, cell-phone chargers, and scanners into a powerstrip that can be turned off at night.

Take work home with you

- Rather than having a desktop computer and a laptop, use a laptop with a docking station. This means less maintenance and you won't have to leave your desktop unit on for remote desktop.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

- Plan your purchasing. Rather than placing multiple small orders for supplies, try to consolidate so that fewer deliveries are required.

- Try not to over-buy office and event supplies. Surplus tends to lead to waste.
- Always look for the “green” and “recycled” symbols on paper and plastic supplies. As often as not, those items will be priced competitively with non-green items, and you’ll be supporting environmentally sensitive businesses.
- When hosting smaller events, offer carafes of water, larger bottles of juice and soda, and communal bowls of things like chips – this will mean less packaging and lower cost per person.
- When hosting larger events, consider buying “reusable” service items such as whole fruit, individually packaged granola bars, and yogurts.
- Make sure that receptacles for paper and plastic recycling are convenient and conspicuous in your office and at your events.

Get some fresh air, spend time with a friend

- If you live nearby, walk or ride your bike to work. You’ll get exercise as well as save on gas.
- If you live further afield, consider using public transportation or a carpooling. – you can use train time to read or work and carpool time to get to know your colleagues or listen to podcasts.

Office Choices

Beyond personal habits, there are any number of office protocols that will help save money and reduce impacts including: Your department can be a sustainability leader following some of the basic guidelines:

- Help your department determine where energy is being leaked – suggest motion sensors for infrequently used spaces and low-energy bulbs for all lighting by sending an email to energyconservation@yale.edu (make sure to dispose of CFL light bulbs properly by requesting a pickup from the Office of Environmental Health and Safety – they should not go in the trash).
- When buying printers, choose higher-end duplex printers and copiers that can be shared between offices instead of less sturdy units for individual desks. You’ll save on supplies and energy.
- Help your department shift from bottled to filtered water. Individual water bottles are more expensive than local filtered water, the plastic they use is wasteful, and their shipping has a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions.
- Work with your IT department to establish smart buying protocols for computers, including energy-efficient monitors and laptops with docking stations instead of desktop computers.