The following resolution and roadmap outline the University of Miami’s commitment and current efforts to minimize non-essential, single-use plastics procured and used on campus. This original document was authored by Natalia Brown, 2019-2021 Student Government ECO Board Member, in collaboration with stakeholding student organizations and administrators. The resolution and roadmap were passed by the Student Government Senate during the Fall of 2020 with a vote of 41-3. Current progress reported on plastic waste reduction goals reflects updates from the previous semester’s ECO Board Head of Waste Reduction (Last revised: April 2021 by Natalia Brown).

**UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI**

**ROADMAP TO PLASTIC-FREE ‘CANES**

WHEREAS, climate change exacerbates the risks associated with hurricanes, storm surge and coastal flooding through sea level rise, salt water intrusion, toxic algal blooms and extreme heat waves;

WHEREAS, plastics pose a direct threat to the Earth’s climate—releasing excessive heat-trapping greenhouse gases of its production: fossil fuel extraction, refinement and cracking, processing, distribution, and waste management;

WHEREAS, projected expansion in the petrochemical and plastic industries represents a significant setback in the context of the United Nations IPCC Report’s upper-limit of 1.5°C in surface temperature increase;

WHEREAS, The Center for International Environmental Law has reported that greenhouse gas emissions from plastic may exceed 56 gigatons; representing 10-13 percent of the remaining carbon budget;

WHEREAS, the city of Miami’s native fauna and flora, essential waterways, local economy, and human well-being are directly impacted by plastic marine debris and pollution;

WHEREAS, the University of Miami has a long-standing commitment to inclusive engagement and high performance in addressing real-world problems with muti-discipliary, innovative solutions;

WHEREAS, the University of Miami acknowledges that contemporary individual and institutional practices are a direct exploitation of resources and disregard for local and global environmental health;

WHEREAS, the undergraduate student body supports a more aggressive administrative response to climate change that makes sustainable action more accessible and higher in priority;

WHEREAS, 97.63% of undergraduate students voted that they agree, “the University of Miami should offer more plastic-free, eco-friendly products,” in a survey distributed in November of 2019;

WHEREAS, the University of Miami recognizes an unparalleled opportunity to elevate health, well-being, sustainability, and productivity in alignment with the university’s mission and the demands of the present climate crisis;

WHEREAS, the University of Miami strives to be an exemplary university, offering a model for other institutions and their communities to integrate climate resilience and response strategies in the steadfast achievement of their mission;

WHEREAS, our peer institutions—including but not limited to Vanderbilt University, Boston University, New York University, and the University of California System—have made time-bound commitments to end institutional single-use plastic purchases;

This resolution serves to affirm the University of Miami’s vested commitment to global relevance and local stewardship in the context of climate change. The following provisions constitute a roadmap for elimination of non-essential single-use plastic procurement; engagement with external vendors to encourage the reduction of non-essential single-use plastics; and prioritization of investment in education and infrastructure to reduce plastic consumption on campus and in the greater Miami community.

**1. The University of Miami hereby commits to establishing a purchasing policy which, by August 1st, 2023 eliminates non-essential, non-compostable, single-use disposable plastics, according to the following targets.**

**Phase 1: Spring 2020 - Spring 2021**

Implementation of mandates on procurement of all polystyrene/Styrofoam products and packaging, plastic shopping bags, single-use plastic dry erase markers, and single-use plastic food-service-ware—including *at minimum* individually packaged condiments, bowls, plates, cups, straws, and stirrers.

**Current Status: IMPLEMENTED** - *minor modification for COVID-19 protocol.*

* The University requires vendors to comply with Coral Gables’ bans on [expanded polystyrene](https://www.coralgables.com/expandedpolystyrene) and [single-use plastic bags](https://www.coralgables.com/plasticbags).
* Departments are encouraged to purchase refillable dry erase markers (available in the office supply catalog). Encourage your professors, supervisors, and department chairs to make this a standard for their meeting rooms and classroom(s)!
* Straws have been transitioned to paper in retail dining locations.
* No straws are available in residential dining halls.
* Stirrers on campus are wood and covered in paper.
* With few exceptions, take-out containers, bowls, plates, and cups are made of backyard compostable materials (ex. plant fiber, bagasse).

**Phase 2: Spring 2021 - Spring 2022**

Implementation of mandates on procurement of single-use plastic utensils, lids and bases for take-out-ware, clear clamshell containers, poly-lined hot cups and bowls.

**Current Status: IN PROGRESS** - *minor modification for COVID-19 protocol.*

* Utensils continue to be cost prohibitive for procurement. UM Dining will continue to monitor feasibility .
* No lids are available in residential dining halls.
* Strain from hurricanes, pandemics, and supply chain inconsistencies may prohibit the University from procuring plastic-free products.

**Phase 3: Spring 2022 - Spring 2024**

Implementation of regulations on procurement of single-use plastic bottled beverages.

**Current Status:** The university’s current pouring rights and vending agreement require the sale of bottled beverages on campus.

* [Hydration stations](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1ir_AmdkLgZhyrpftdGsy9NuPjj4&usp=sharing) are available for students to reuse and refill their own water bottles throughout University grounds.
* Plastic-free, aluminum canned and bottled water are available at The Market at the UC Food Court and the Village Market at the University Village.
* Permanent To-Go Container Option in Dining Halls (*In response to the Senate passed legislation, Action #222047, Financial Affairs – Auxiliary Services in collaboration with UM Dining, Chartwells is committed to prioritizing and working towards a reduction in single use plastic.)*

*Accessibility will remain at the forefront of efforts to phase-out single-use plastic. Implemented policies should minimize disposable products while still accommodating all students, staff, and visitors; recognizing a diversity of physical needs, dietary restrictions, and financial security. In no situation should a “ban” on a plastic item supersede the health and safety needs of an individual.*

*While great advances have been made to develop biodegradable and compostable plastics, these products require an industrial composter for degradation. Because no industrial composter is available for the appropriate waste management, biodegradable and compostable plastics currently are not an effective long-term solution. As the accessibility of such infrastructure changes over the long-term, ASTM-certified industrially compostable products may be considered for university procurement.*

**2. The University of Miami commits to maintaining close watch over new plastic-free alternatives for future procurement decision-making and purchasing policy revisions in order to continuously elevate waste reduction efforts in alignment with the aforementioned intentions.**

Due to limitations of currently accessible alternatives, and other barriers to end of life-cycle treatment, the following single-use plastic items are tentatively excluded from the above restrictions:

1. Dining and Food Services: pre-packaged consumer products\* (chip bags, granola bars, toiletries, etc.), food-service gloves.
2. Facilities and Operations: plastic trash and recycling bags, plastic packaging from incoming shipments.
3. Medical and Lab Supply: single-use plastics used in academic settings without alternatives and single-use plastics necessary for health or safety purposes (e.g. medical plastics, PPE, emergency services materials).

**Current Status: IN PROGRESS**

* UM Dining is actively monitoring feasibility of implementing alternatives for plastic-free beverages and utensils.
* UHealth Supply Chain commits to working with its group purchasing organization, Vizient, distributors and suppliers to identify safe and affordable alternatives to single-use disposable plastics for operations following the COVID-19 pandemic.

*\*Accessibility will remain at the forefront of food-service operations when minimizing pre-packaged and plastic-wrapped consumer products. In locations where fresh, local, and/or unpackaged food or water is unavailable, food security and accessibility are paramount. While these items are a major source of plastic waste on campus, The University of Miami recognizes a need for infrastructure shift to ensure that food options are accessible to all before pre-packaged plastic-wrapped retail items are limited.*

**3. The University of Miami will prioritize active engagement with partnering or visiting businesses, vendors, organizations, and individuals to establish a transparent standard for reduction in plastic procurement. This may include but is not limited to; incoming and outgoing shipping/packaging materials, food-service-ware from national brands with established locations on campus, office management and supply procurement within departments, food-service-ware from the Well-Canes Farmers’ Market and food trucks/carts, as well as externally-organized and student-run events hosted at the Student Center Complex.**

**Current Status: IN PROGRESS**

* Contractually national retail brands—like Panda Express, Subway and Starbucks—have their own purchasing standards which may not always agree with our campus standards. While they have come a long way in moving away from single-use plastics, some items (such as beverage lids) cannot be eliminated by a campus mandate.
* Dining and Business Services are committed to working with the Well-Canes’ Market operator and local food trucks towards more sustainable food-service.
* Purchasing and Supply Chain administrators provide guidelines to vendors regarding University policy to limit single-use plastic disposables for catered events.

**4. The University of Miami will hereby commit to further investment in education, resources, and infrastructure to assist in the Plastic-Free Campus transition over the long-term. Minimal plastic procurement and wastage will be integrated in the campus culture’s focus on wellbeing and community health.**

This includes but is not be limited to:

1. Increasing education on waste reduction and the University of Miami’s commitment to plastic-free alternatives for all incoming and current students during orientation, staff and faculty through job training, and, when possible, on-campus contractors and community members through signage and general campus culture.

**Current Status: IN PROGRESS**

* The Plastic Free Canes’ campaign educated and engaged over 500 UM students and staff via in-person events, plastic-free product pilots, an educational marketing campaign, and community outreach for a campus survey during the Fall of 2019.
* One of the five pillars of a sustainable lifestyle that Student Government ECO Board promotes through [marketing](https://www.instagram.com/umiamiecoagency/?hl=ms) campaigns, educational outreach, and year-long green event [sponsorship](https://sg.miami.edu/branches-and-agencies/agencies/eco-agency/eco-sponsorship/index.html) is choosing reusable instead of disposable products.

1. Expanding resources and infrastructure for composting; reuse, repair and swapping opportunities; washing and sanitation of reusable products; refill stations for bulk products; and general waste reduction practices. *This may include but is not limited to: water refill ‘hydration stations’ accessible in every building, dispensers for sodas in place of the sale of pre-bottled beverages, bulk household product dispensers in residential colleges, bulk and package free snack options, sale of reusable personal hygiene products, incentives for BYO programs, and a reusable take-out-ware exchange program.*

**Current Status: IN PROGRESS**

* Reuse, repair, and swapping initiatives launched by students and staff include: surplus warehouse reuse and resale of used items; Green Move Out in partnership with Goodwill at the end of each Spring semester; Trade It In initiative in the Tech store to reduce electronic waste; and the ReUse store for small office supplies from campus departments.
* Washington and sanitation of reusable products is essential to avoid the use and disposal of single-use products. More analysis is needed to determine the economic feasibility of expanding this type of accessibility on campus.

1. Adjusting procurement guidelines to encourage investment in durable and useful products across campus departments, including promotional and giveaway items.

**Current Status: IN PROGRESS**

* Where feasible, Purchasing and Supply Chain administrators have committed to work with campus departments to identify options for durable and useful products to be used in promotions or giveaways.
* The Student Government ECO Board Sustainable Purchasing Committee curated this [vendor guide](https://docs.google.com/document/u/2/d/1wJUemsw3SiBwvBTp6Dc4KgRydv4rYI3Q1CcQGhPhC70/mobilebasic) for sustainable alternatives to most common purchases.

**Contact** [**greenu@miami.edu**](mailto:greenu@miami.edu) **to submit your comments in response to the Roadmap to Plastic Free 'Canes. Submissions are managed by members of the Student Government ECO Board. We welcome suggestions for future initiatives or concerns about current plastic procurement or waste management practices.**