Campus Purchasing

Long-Term Vision

CU will institute an environmentally responsible purchasing (ERP) program that stimulates the purchase of cost-competitive products and services. Purchases in an institutionalized ERP program would have a reduced effect on human and environmental health compared to competing products or services that serve the same purpose. ERP principals take a number of factors into account when evaluating products, including raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse options, operation, maintenance, and disposal of product or service.

Individual Goals

1. Educate the campus community about Environmentally Responsible Purchasing (ERP) programs and policies.

2. Train the campus purchasers to apply an environmentally-responsible purchasing framework in purchasing requests and decisions.

3. Recommend and implement standards for top ERP opportunities with the Campus Environmental Council ERP taskforce.

4. Incorporate sustainable food options into UMC Food Services and Housing Dining Services

Backgrounds, Needs and Trends

America's universities spend nearly $200 billion on goods and services annually. With such massive purchasing power, the nation's universities can exert a tremendous amount of influence on the markets for goods and services. As the flagship campus of the University of Colorado system and the state's largest university, CU-Boulder is in a unique position to use its millions of dollars in annual purchases to set an example by supporting the "green purchasing" habits, rather than inadvertently paying for harmful products and services.

Green purchasing is a concept that encourages the use of products that minimize adverse environmental and health impacts while taking both the long- and short-term costs associated with the full life cycle of the product into consideration. The life cycle includes extraction, production, manufacturing, distribution, operation, maintenance, and disposal. Many "green" products are competitively priced with their less environmentally-friendly counterparts, are of comparable quality, and have one or more of the following attributes:

- high post-consumer content
- low embodied energy
- recyclable within CU's existing operation
- non-toxic
- energy efficient
- durable and/or repairable
- produced in an environmentally-sustainable manner

In an effort to help institutions incorporate green purchasing into their daily practices, the Environmental Protection Agency issued five guiding principals of environmentally responsible purchasing. These principals serve as an easy-to-follow baseline for virtually any type of purchasing on any scale:

- Include environmental considerations as part of the normal purchasing process.
- Emphasize pollution prevention early in the purchasing process.
- Examine multiple environmental attributes throughout a product's or service's life cycle.
- Compare relevant environmental impacts when selecting products and services.
- Collect and base purchasing decisions on accurate and meaningful information about environmental performance.

On the CU-Boulder campus, there are a number of targeted areas where ERP would prove to be an effective tool in reducing the university's overall environmental footprint. These targeted areas fall into two subcategories: products and services.

Products applicable to ERP standards:

- Building construction and maintenance
- Electricity
- Furniture
- Landscaping
- Pest management
- Vehicle fleets
- Cafeteria supplies

- Office supplies
- Cleaning products
- Paint
- Computers
- Printing
- Copiers
- Copy paper products
- Custodial paper products

Contracted services applicable to ERP standards:

- Soft drink vending
- Automotive waste disposal
- Campus mailing list purchases
- Food service supplies
- Construction and remodeling
- Concessions

Numerous examples of environmentally responsible purchasing exist around the country. An EPA survey of 90 colleges and universities in 1992, found 44 percent had active procurement programs for recycled products. California's system of higher education for instance, purchases over $5.9 million in recycled products annually.

Middlebury College in Vermont has established a program that includes ERP practices while fostering local economic growth by using locally-grown, sustainably-harvested wood in new buildings and furniture—much of the wood comes from the college's own forests.

Occidental College in California initiated a comprehensive food-purchasing program. Virtually all the produce options at all dining facilities across campus are local and organic. Additionally, many university events, including all administrative functions are catered with all-organic produce. Meanwhile, Yale supports one fully local, organic dining hall on their campus.

Bates College, Ball State University, The University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and the University of Vermont are a few examples of universities that use recycled paper in campus operations. Several of these intuitions also take chlorine use and post-consumer content into account when soliciting bids from paper providers. Here in Colorado, when CU was required to comply with state legislation mandating recycled paper use, we boosted purchasing to the highest levels in the state. Over 60 percent of CU's total annual paper purchases contained recycled fiber. In 1997 however, HB 1140 expired and state agencies like CU were no longer required to buy recycled or report their annual purchases. As a result, there has been a decline in the recycled paper purchased by CU. The campus printing initiative's use of recycled paper has reversed that trend.

There are a number of national and international initiatives advancing ERP. Most notably:

- The 2000 EPA Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Program publication on "State and Local Government Pioneers: How State and Local Governments are Implementing EPP Practices" is an excellent directory of best institutional practices and strategies.
- The Commission for Environmental Cooperation's "Environmental Purchasing Policies 101" compiles policies and programs in existence and documents effective components.
- The North American Green Purchasing Initiative's Eco-S.A.T. is a green purchasing self-assessment tool designed to evaluate organization's ERP initiatives and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Product certification programs, such as GreenSeal, Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council, are prevalent and reliable. www.eco-labels.org is a good source to verify environmental labels.

Another area of activity by America's universities is in food services. The University of Colorado has a great opportunity with our food services using and purchasing sustainable foods to improve health, reduce environmental impacts, and to educate students. The EPA says that agriculture is responsible for 70% of the pollution to the country's rivers and streams caused by chemicals, erosion, and animal waste runoff. Organic farming may be one of the last ways to keep both ecosystems and rural communities healthy and alive.

Sustainable Foods are defined as locally produced, organic grown and/or purchased from fair trade markets. Sustainable food is when food is grown and produced using the most efficient and environmentally sound practices possible to reduce pollution, erosion, emissions, and the use of harmful chemicals. See the attached sustainable food primer for more information.

The 2004 Whole Foods Market® Organic Foods Trend Tracker survey found more than a quarter of Americans (27 percent) are eating more organic products than they did one year ago. Reasons cited for buying organic foods were they are better for the environment (58 percent), better for their health (54 percent), and better for supporting small and local farmers (57 percent). In addition, 32 percent believe organic products taste better, while 42 percent believe organic foods are of better quality.

As national trends continue to favor sustainable, organic and locally-produced foods, it is only natural that colleges and universities—CU included—begin to evaluate the practicality of bringing such options onto campus. By instating a purchasing program that favors local and organic produce, CU can help buttress the local economy, while ensuring that we are responsible for as little pollution from pesticides and fertilizers as possible. Perhaps more importantly, as more Americans change their eating habits, incorporating organic and local food options into campus food service keeps money spent on food by faculty, staff and students on campus. Not only does providing sustainable food on

campus make environmental and social sense, but it can be a wise fiscal choice as well. To fill this need, Piazanos Grab-n-Go dining service in the Cheyenne Arapahoe resident hall, featuring 100% natural products and organic products with many vegetarian and vegan options, opened in Spring 2006. This is a step in the right direction for CU's purchasing habits.

Current Programs and Accomplishments

ERP Taskforce

A subcommittee on environmentally responsible purchasing was re-established in 2004 as part of Campus Environmental Council. The mission of the ERP subcommittee is to identify top green purchasing opportunities and help implement green purchasing strategies. Those product categories are as follow:

- Building maintenance & construction
- Furniture
- Copy paper
- Computers & electronics
- Office supplies
- Custodial paper products
- Cleaning products
- Food service products
- Concessions & vending

Each category will be assessed by the ERP taskforce on the basis of contact timing and campus need. Research into the first of these product categories is well underway and is showing that any recommendations will help to reinforce current standard practices.

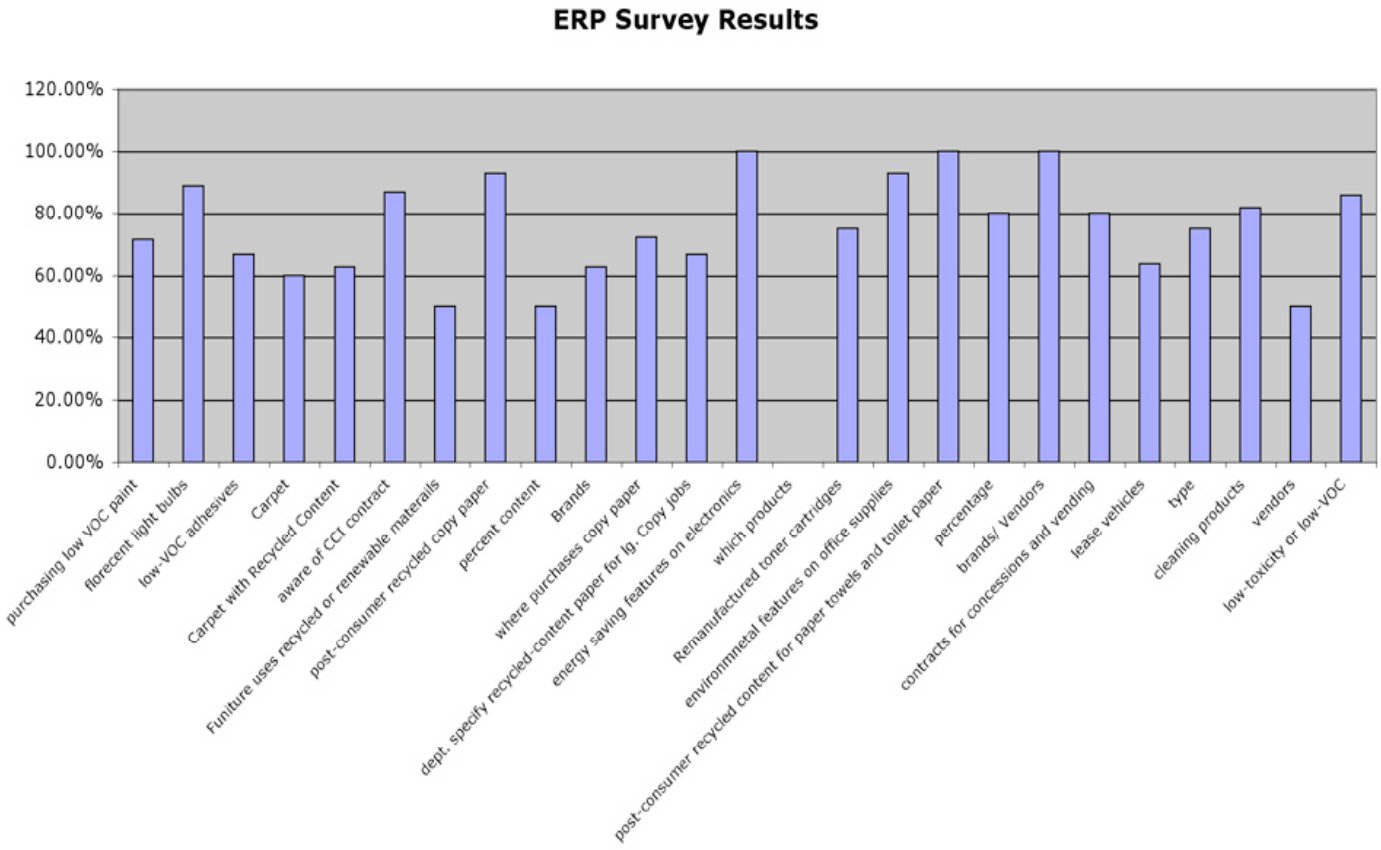
ERP Work by the CU Environmental Center

CU's Green Products Guide is updated regularly, with easy access web link information. The Green Products Guide is produced by the Environmental Center and can be found on the Center's website.

The Environmental Center sponsored an ERP vendor fair in 2005. This was successful in sharing currently available products and services available for institutional purchasers and making links between consumers and industry representatives.

ERP Survey

The fall 2005 survey assessing what ERP products and services departments are currently purchasing and where the gaps are was very successful. Currently, most departments are purchasing post-consumer recycled content custodial and fine paper products. Departments are also regularly purchasing low VOC paint and cleaning supplies, florescent light bulbs, carpet made with recycled content, energy saving features on electronics and remanufactured toner cartridges.



The results of the survey are not comprehensive but provide a representative snapshot of campus procurement activities. The survey results help to reinforce the top ERP opportunities. The majority of departments are following ERP policies within their individual purchasing without a formalized campus-wide policy. With these trends, our goal will be to implement the current ERP practices as a campus-wide initiative. For a look at the fall 2005 survey questionnaire visit http://ecenter.colorado.edu/survey/.

Additional ERP Programs and Departmental Accomplishments:

- Housing is using VOC free paint products, recycled furniture and recycled wood doors

- Campus Printing Initiative uses 100% recycled paper, which has helped to drive the cost down for all departments. The continuation of the pay-as-you-print initiative has reduced copy paper waste
- Campus stationary is 25% post-consumer recycled content
- UMC Food Services offers a fair trade, organic coffee option
- The CU Bookstore offers a variety of recycled products
- UCSU and Housing have prohibited the posting of deep-dyed, "astrobright" papers. This policy has greatly increased the recyclability of paper at CU
- UCSU has passed legislation requiring the use of recycled paper products by all student fee-funded departments
- Facilities Management has conducted a thorough evaluation of all cleaning products in use. Cleaners are approved if they meet established criteria for environmental and health issues
- The Environmental Center has started a sustainable foods campaign geared at educating campus consumers about the impacts of food production and assisting with research needs for dining units

Action Steps CU Can Take to Achieve Goals

The following action steps for ERP are geared toward campus-wide, institutional implementation, which reinforce the individual departmental purchasing activities. Educational efforts will also help to advance comprehensive efforts.

- Continue to research ERP programs of other universities and state agencies, document viable case studies
- Educate the campus community
    - Maintain an in-depth directory of products, services and campus procedures in print and web-based versions of the Green Products Guide
    - Continue to distribute the Green Products Guide to campus departments
    - Educate the campus community via the Department Eco-Advocate program, which will include monthly bulletins, and an office certification program featuring a short ERP presentation/ training for faculty/ staff
    - Produce and distribute product-specific information sheets with current information on price, quality and availability for campus purchasers
    - Hold regular ERP vendor fairs
    - Student education opportunities can include consumer education materials; discounts and incentives for purchasing green products, web resources on commonly purchased products by students (i.e., computers, paper, food, residential living supplies, etc.)

- Train the campus community to apply environmentally-responsible purchasing techniques

    - Include ERP information in employee and student orientation
    - Inform vendors of the importance of environmentally preferable products and the desire of the university to have more selection of these items
    - Formulate an ERP checklist for departmental procurement agents to use with standard procurement requisition processes (i.e., RFI, RFB, Documented Quotes). This checklist can be voluntarily used during a pilot period and then evaluated for potential required use
    - Conduct ERP purchasing trainings for A Card holders and other departmental purchasing agents. This could be in conjunction with the utilization of the ERP checklist

- Target Specific Products

    - Complete the process for making recommendations and establishing procedures for standardizing the procurement of the 10 ERP "best opportunity" categories
    - Research potential usage and current usage of product, its environmental impact, availability, industry trends, price comparison and quality
    - Research which vendor contracts could be revised to include environmentally responsible specifications
    - Establishment in budget for a green products specialist in the Procurement Service Center to focus on screening contracts and potential applications for ERP
    - Institutionalize an environmental metrics system, develop a list of preferred environmental criteria
    - Identify products that meet the criteria
    - Encourage purchasing of products from the list
    - Test products or use pilot programs to evaluate

- Institutionalize a standardized ERP program

    - Research ERP programs of other universities and state agencies, document viable case studies
    - Inform campus suppliers of environmental improvements needed through a request for information (RFI) document.
    - Identify applications for ERP with Procurement Service Center
    - Apply ERP to contract and RFP language
    - Gather administrative support
    - Educate community
    - Adopt reporting requirements and conduct procurement surveys, which allow the campus to track progress and identify areas for improvement for specific product categories
    - Establish measurable goals of program

- Assign responsibilities for upholding program
- Continue outreach to purchasers, vendors and other campus groups

- Incorporate sustainable food options (i.e., local, seasonal, organic, fair trade) into UMC Food Services and Housing Dining Services
  - Identify, prioritize and pilot key products (i.e., bananas, coffee, lettuce/ spinach, meat, dairy) based on cost-competitiveness, environmental impact and availability
  - Target a percentage of all campus food to meet sustainable options
  - Investigate availability of sustainable food products in existing food service contracts and suppliers
  - Hold a Harvest Celebration event on campus with organic, locally grown foods at beginning of Fall semester
  - Research "Farm to Fork" programs at other schools. Put together a feasibility study of a "Farm to Fork" program for CU-Boulder
  - Expand and collaborate with the organic, permaculture garden on campus

Metrics and Assessment

Metrics	Measurement Methods
Educate Campus Community	Green Product Guides and ERP checklist distributed to A-Card holders and purchase requisioners Continue annual survey by product category for assessment of departmental purchasing habits
Train purchasers	Utilization of ERP checklist with purchase requisitions, Hold training sessions;
Institutionalize ERP practices	Documented increase in volume of ERP products purchased; ERP products available through traditional procurement avenues for comparable price; majority of products purchased should conform to ERP standards where applicable
Incorporate sustainable foods	Annual increases in volume of organic and local products purchased

Further Planning and Research Needs

- Research commonly purchased products and services.
- Research which vendor contracts could be revised to include environmentally responsible specifications.
- Research price, quality and availability of environmentally preferable alternatives.
- Create a policy directive, which recommends and/or requires the purchase of ERP products and services.
- Survey the levels to which existing campus suppliers offer products and services with ERP features.
- If an ERP checklist is utilized prior to purchase voluntarily by department purchasers and is successful, what steps would be taken to require purchasers to utilize this tool?
- Research most effective means of introducing "green training" for staff, students, procurement officials and students.

Challenges

- While replacing some purchasing habits with environmentally responsible choices is often cost-competitive (or even money-saving), other shifts in purchasing may incur additional costs. Is it possible to apply savings in one arena to increased expenses in another?
- Another hurdle is overcoming old "norms" regarding a number of products used. For example: the effectiveness of non-toxic cleaning agents or the quality and durability of recycled paper.
- Educating and mobilizing the campus community to systematically change many purchasing habits will require a great deal of organization and outreach.
- The University will need to work closely with outside service entities to ensure the services they provide are in line with our ERP policies (such as making sure vending machines are energy efficient and dispense recyclable packaging). These outside contractors may not be highly receptive to ERP ideals.
- Purchasing procedures such as the Acquisition Card have decentralized purchasing. This shift has caused difficulty in the institution of campus-wide procurement policies for environmentally responsible products and services. However, it has created an enormous level of convenience for campus purchasers.
- Food challenges include:
    - For sustainable food products that would result in a price increase, what level of increase is acceptable if any? The 2003 student survey shows a

willingness to pay for organic options. In Housing, there are set meal equivalencies; prices would need to stay in line with established Housing ME's
- The academic year does not coincide with the regional growing season creating difficulty with reliance on consistent local suppliers
- The cost of organics can be higher, especially given an apparent lack of competition amongst distributors

Social Impacts

Environmentally responsible purchasing reduces waste, energy needs and provides for a healthier campus. Cleaners, in particular, cause direct health effects on students, faculty and staff due to their hazardous toxicity levels. Many departments on campus have been switching to low or no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and natural cleaning products, which are better for the environment and reduce social health risks. The ERP taskforce currently is working with Facilities Management to test the effectiveness of green cleaning products against current product used, noticing the trend that many departments are switching to green products. Those departments include, but are not limited to: Housing and Dining Services, Facilities Management, the UMC and many UCSU cost centers.

Links to Other Blueprint Topics

Climate: All purchases that use electricity—from light bulbs to computers—have the potential to reduce energy use. Green building will work to integrate sustainably-harvested lumber, non-toxic materials and other green products into new projects and remodels. The university can utilize electric vehicles and alternative fuels to reduce pollution, while ensuring that routine maintenance of these vehicles doesn't produce unnecessary amounts of chemical waste.

Literacy: Increasing environmental literacy will raise awareness and interest in utilizing green products and services whenever possible. Many of the concerted activities in literacy apply to consumer education efforts.

Healthy Campus: The impacts of green purchasing go hand-in-hand with maintaining a healthy campus. Using non-toxic cleaners and paints, applying techniques of integrated pest management and maintaining healthy indoor air quality all relate back to purchasing habits.

Water: By purchasing low-flow faucets, toilets and appliances the university can dramatically cut water usage. Retrofitting laboratories with more efficient water systems will save millions of gallons annually. Additionally, purchasing state-of-the art software and watering devices will lessen demand. Implementing xericscaping methods will further reduce the water requirements of campus grounds.

Waste and Recycling: Obviously, ERP favors products that are easily recyclable over those that are not. Additionally, green products typically come in green packaging, decreasing waste and further increasing recycling potential. Another goal of ERP is to acquire products with a longer useable life, thus decreasing total garbage output.

References

Keniry, J. *Ecodemia*, National Wildlife Federation, 1995.

Eagan, D. and J. Keniry, *Green Investment, Green Return*, National Wildlife Federation, 1998.

Michigan Tech Environmental Sustainability Committee:
http://www.esc.mtu.edu/WhatTheESCDoes/greenPurchasing/Default.htm

National Wildlife Federation, Campus Ecology Division
http://www.nwf.org/campusecology/dspGreeningProjects.cfm?iii=

Western Regional Pollution Prevention Network
http://www.westp2net.org/janitorial/jp4.htm

US EPA http://www.epa/gov/oppt/epp/index.html

European Union EPA http://www.epe.be/workboks/gpurchasing/index.html

http://www.newdream.org/procure/