

# **UCLA Student Research Team Helps Facilities Management Assess Sustainable Cleaning Products**

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In 2017, California passed the Right to Know Act, which mandated that cleaning products must disclose all of their ingredients, establishing California as the national leader in green cleaning. As a leading institute in sustainability, UCLA can use sustainable purchasing to have a significant role in the future of this industry. The chemicals, packaging, storage and transportation associated with cleaning products that UCLA purchases can set the standard for several other institutions.

To carry on this effort, the 2018 Sustainability Action Research (SAR) Sustainable Purchasing team analyzed the sustainability of cleaning chemicals used by UCLA Facilities Management and researched several alternatives. The team's goal was to recommend the purchase of cleaning products that maximized sustainability, efficiency and value. These recommendations present an opportunity to reduce harmful toxins that students, faculty, and staff could be exposed to, and reduce the environmental impact of UCLA's large purchasing power.

Functioning like a small city, UCLA instigates enormous economic impact in what it chooses to purchase. This purchasing power is important because even the smallest aspects of a large budget can add up to millions of dollars each year. Purchasing can have a large impact on sustainability, especially at UCLA, demonstrated by the 2016 SAR Housing Team who implemented a [Green Office Catalog](#) for procuring environmentally preferred office products.

The Sustainable Purchasing team, along with stakeholders in Facilities Management and Custodial Services, first met with various cleaning chemical vendors and distributors, receiving sales pitches for several product lines from different companies: Ecolab, Veritiv, 3M, Diversey, Waxie, and Royal. After narrowing down the prospective products, the team evaluated chemicals from Waxie, Waxie Bioactive, and 3M. They established a comprehensive grading criteria including: ecolabels, toxicity, chemical reactivity, environmental impact, packaging, dilution, ease of use, and more.

Additionally, the Sustainable Purchasing team conducted face-to-face interviews with a focus group of custodial staff members who had tested one of the environmentally conscious chemical lines. They were asked about the effectiveness and ease of use of the chemicals, as well as their experience transitioning to new products in the past. The

staff provided invaluable feedback about the effectiveness of the products and how they compared to the currently used product line. They were generally very happy with the line of products tested, and were comfortable with the idea of switching to them permanently.



The 2018 SAR Sustainable Purchasing Team

While evaluating the effectiveness and sustainability of green cleaning products purchased by UCLA may seem like a straightforward task, many aspects - including cleaning effectiveness of proposed chemicals and space availability - will need to be considered to ensure a successful transition. If done properly, the benefits to UCLA could be substantial. The state of New York claims that green cleaning [“reduces chemical consumption and the number of cleaning chemicals needed”](#) and can also [“increase the sense of facility ownership by all stakeholders”](#).

As the effects of environmental pollution progress, UCLA can be at the forefront of sustainable purchasing that protects the environment and its workers. With the help of the Sustainable Purchasing team and the implementation of green cleaning products, UCLA has the potential to make a positive impact on the environment and the health of its community.