

Smart Sourcing: Supporting Sustainable Distribution of UCLA Promotional Products

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As the final buzzer lets out thousands of fans from a UCLA basketball game, trash cans overflow with plastic packaging and purposeless products hit the ground. While advertising UCLA's name at various on campus events, programs, and initiatives is vital to the growth of our community, those on campus who value sustainability see potential to reduce the environmental impact of UCLA freebies and giveaways. The recipients of these freebies, or "promotional products," in many cases, don't want, need, or value these items, destining them to the garbage. Therefore, this call to action to reduce our negative impact outlines the necessity for responsible sourcing within UCLA's purchasing group jurisdictions, rather than through consumer engagement.

Given the magnitude of different departments, student groups, and other entities within UCLA that source promotional products, we hold the potential to significantly influence the promotional product supply chain. There are about 300 of these departments which purchase various promotional products for their respective needs. UCLA Trademarks and Licensing is dedicated to improving its supply chain impact in terms of ethical and sustainable measures so it is imperative that UCLA's purchasing groups support this initiative. Our group of six UCLA students, dubbed "The Sustainable Purchasing Team," are working within the Sustainability Action Research program to analyze UCLA's relationship with the promotional product industry. Our team used comprehensive surveys to communicate with and better understand suppliers, purchasers, and their respective sustainability initiatives. With this information, we are working to better educate UCLA's purchasing groups to encourage more sustainable purchasing

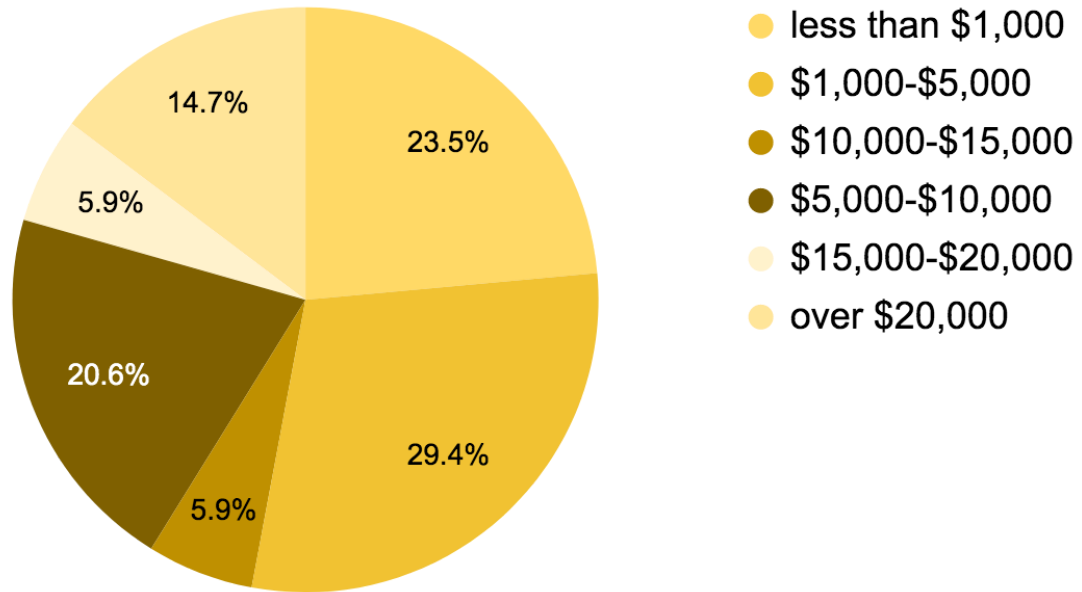
decisions. This project comes at a time of great transition within UCLA as the university works to meet its sustainability goals and set the standard for others to follow.

The word “sustainability” holds slightly different meanings and connotations to each individual, thus a uniform, succinct definition remains elusive. Dictionaries define sustainability as the ability to be maintained, but terms of sustainable production and products are unspecified. Therefore, our team’s first task was to elucidate and parameterize what exactly sustainability means in regards to promotional products and licensees. Through extensive research, we developed metrics that encompass the various facets of corporate sustainability. For example: waste management, water, and energy use, resource sourcing, employee relations, work conditions, third-party certifications, and supply chain transparency are all categories in which products and licensees will be assessed. UCLA Trademarks and Licensing values the approved vendors who are making exceptional efforts in these categories.

We sent out two different surveys to evaluate our licensees and departments to better understand each party’s efforts in sustainability. The department survey attempted to gauge the department’s importance of sustainability and if they would be willing to spend slightly more for a sustainable option. Not only was our survey a way to see how open they were to move towards more sustainable purchases, but also a method to accommodate any additional needs they might have for our promotional products. As for our licensees, we got down to the nitty-gritty, asking questions such as “Does your company perform Life Cycle Assessments for its products?”, and “How does your company limit the amount of packaging sent to landfill?”. It’s important for us to see just how much or how little both departments and licensees are doing in an effort to move towards a greener more environmentally safe future. As we continue on, we

hope to inspire both our departments and licensees on the importance of holding the entire UCLA community more accountable for our actions and encourage reducing one's ecological footprint.

Count of Approximately how much do you spend per year on promotional products?



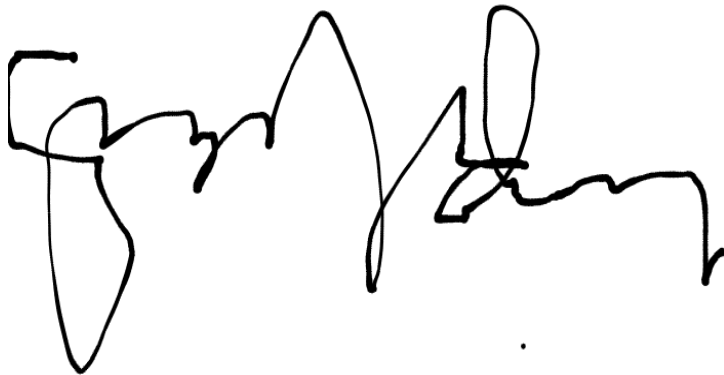
As shown above, UCLA holds significant purchasing power when it comes to promotional products. Additionally, 63% of surveyed departments are willing to switch to a similar, more sustainably produced promotional product and are willing to spend up to 30% more on said product. By promoting more sustainable options, we can direct this capital to support companies and production practices that value environmental stewardship and fit the desired price point of the departments.

A highly interesting piece of information we received was a response stating “once we know better, we can do better.” Most department staff do not have the time for sustainability research and they need guidance on which vendor is both affordable and sustainable. With this

response, we assume that some departments would consider to be more sustainably conscious if they had more information on suppliers.

Based on licensee survey responses, we found that sustainability and ethicality influence their procurement of materials and resources because sustainability is important to their companies. Some companies even have an employed position entirely dedicated to finding the most sustainable and ethical materials for production.

The UCLA administration has expressed its desire to source sustainably. The next step is thoroughly evaluate the sustainable initiatives of licensed suppliers and create recommendations. UCLA Trademarks and Licensing will continue to evaluate the sustainable initiatives of licensees to encourage more accountable supply chains.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia Holmes', with a small dot below the signature.

Cynthia Holmes

Director of UCLA Trademarks and Licensing