



Universal Menstrual Hygiene Product Access

Introduced:

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Proposal

Menstrual hygiene products should be provided for all menstruating individuals in all academic, residential, and student center buildings. Because menstruation is a natural bodily process affecting over half the population, we believe that menstrual hygiene products should be regarded as fundamental necessities to the hygiene of our academic and social environment, as ubiquitous as toilet paper and soap dispensers.

History

In September, the Undergraduate Council of Students at Brown University took the responsibility of providing weekly maintained tampons and sanitary napkins to all campus restrooms, in the hopes that the university administration would choose to institutionalize the program.¹ Previous initiatives to provide free menstrual products at schools have met with great success.² On June 21, 2016, New York City passed legislation to guarantee access to menstrual hygiene products at all its public schools, correctional facilities, and shelters.³ The University of Minnesota has been providing free menstrual hygiene products in bathrooms for the past ten years, the University of Nebraska at Lincoln began stocking restrooms with menstrual hygiene products in September 2015, and Columbia University announced in March 2016 that it would begin providing free tampons in its

¹ Nguyen, Viet. "UCS Release: 9/6/2016." *The Brown University Undergraduate Council of Students*. Google Docs, 6 Sep. 2016. Accessed 6 Nov. 2016.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ox78v9BCL870E0P_HtwRzhGI-mVVjcsqoCCBgCMSAU0/edit

² Weiss-Wolf, Jennifer and Burns, Dasha. "Why Feminine Hygiene Products Should be Free in Schools." *Newsweek*. Newsweek LLC, 20 Apr 2016. Accessed 18 Oct. 2016.

<http://www.newsweek.com/let-girls-learn-michelle-obama-tampons-pads-education-450244>

³ "Menstrual Equity": Free Tampons for New York City Schools and Jails." *BBC*. BBC, 22 Jun 2016. Accessed 18 Oct. 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-36597949>

health center.⁴ In line with countries worldwide that have taken progressive steps in abolishing the “tampon tax,” it is time strides forward are made at Duke University to ensure menstrual equity. Duke University has the unique opportunity to serve as an international leader in Menstrual Hygiene Management by becoming one of the first US universities to permanently provide universal menstrual hygiene product access in all buildings. This initiative will demonstrate Duke University’s commitment to public health, gender equality, and class equity.

Reasons

Poor access to menstrual products reduces menstruating individuals’ productivity and educational attainment. The cost of menstrual products disproportionately affects poor women and trans men. Low-income and homeless menstruating people in the United States often struggle to maintain cleanliness during their periods because they cannot afford menstrual products.⁵

In the Duke Lobby Shop, the price of pads available as of October 20, 2015 range from \$3.39 for a pack of 10 to \$4.49 for a pack of 8. The cheapest tampons available are \$3.79 for 8 tampons, with the most expensive being offered at \$4.49 for a pack of 8. A pack of 20 pantliners costs \$1.89. If a student menstruates every 28 days and needs 10 pads per cycle, they would have to spend between \$43.59 and \$72.16 on pads per year if they buy products only at Duke. If they use tampons and pantliners, assuming they need 20 tampons and 5 pantliners per cycle, they would have to spend between \$127.89 and \$150.39 per year. These costs are unaffordable for many students and place an unequal financial burden on students who menstruate.

The goal of this project is to have free menstrual hygiene products, specifically pads and tampons, available in all restrooms in all buildings for all menstruating individuals. Because many transgender men menstruate, these products should be available in men’s and gender-inclusive restrooms in addition to women’s restrooms.

In providing tampons and pads, Duke University will make it easier for menstruating persons to manage their periods and focus on their academic and extracurricular obligations.

⁴ New, Jake. “If Condoms Are Free, Why Aren’t Tampons?” *Inside Higher Ed*. 11 Mar. 2016. Accessed 6 Nov. 2016. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/03/11/students-demand-free-tampons-campus>

⁵ De Bode, Lisa. “Hygiene and Heartache: Homeless Women’s Daily Struggle to Keep Clean.” *Al Jazeera America*. Al Jazeera America, LLC. 13 Jan. 2015. Accessed 6 Nov. 2016. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/1/13/-scared-to-walk-thestreet.html>

Timeline

The administration will be rolling out a program in the new few weeks to permanently have menstrual hygiene products available in the Bryan Center, led by Facilities Vice President John J. Noonan and Dr. Leslye Korenegay. Free dispensers have been installed in all bathrooms in the Bryan Center.

After the cost of this permanent installment in the Bryan Center has been assessed, the next steps will be working and lobbying to have these hygiene products expanded to other buildings. An acceptable timeline would be to anticipate the expansion of this program to at least 2-3 buildings per semester, until menstrual hygiene products are available universally.

Marketing:

We are currently looking at ways to publicize the new installment in the Bryan Center, including via the DSG blast and Facebook infographics and the official Duke Student Government Facebook page. Progress. Period. will also publicize the hygiene products once they come available.

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