Supporting Organics Recycling by Purchasing Local Compost

Given the large green space maintained by most college campuses, a landscaping maintenance and procurement policy geared toward reducing the campus's environmental impact can yield substantial results for the campus and the community. The use of locally-produced soil amendments on campus fields, gardens and lawns supports local composting infrastructure by creating a strong market demand for these products.

Composting organic materials such as food scraps, yard trimmings, wood waste, and paper products can benefit the university, the local community, and the global environment. Composting these materials not only reduces greenhouse gas emissions by avoiding landfill emissions, but it also decreases fertilizer and pesticide use, improves soil structure, reduces irrigation needs, decreases the effects of high salinity, increases soil productivity, limits erosion, and helps store carbon in our soils.[i] In the landfill, these organic materials also contribute to the generation of leachate, which threatens local groundwater and public health.

The environmental and social benefits of composting have economic value as well in terms of reduced greenhouse gas emissions, reduced human and ecological toxicity, and reduced eutrophication (excess nutrients in waterways). [ii]

The following landscaping policy, adopted by Duke University[iii], gives preference to locally produced compost as well as other landscape practices that reduce the university's environmental impact:

> Supporting low maintenance and environmentally sensitive landscapes minimizes the unnecessary use of fertilizers and water resources, therefore reducing the University's impact on the natural environment.
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> Procurement activity may include:
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> - Employ sustainable landscape management techniques for design, construction and maintenance. These techniques include, but are not limited to, integrated pest management, grasscycling, drip irrigation, composting, and procurement and use of mulch and compost that give preference to those produced from regionally generated plant debris and/or food waste programs.
> - Minimize waste by selecting plants that are appropriate to the microclimate, species that can grow to their natural size in the space allotted them. Place preference on native and drought-tolerant plants that require no or minimal watering once established.
> - Limit amount of impervious surfaces by procuring permeable substitutes

Similarly, a university or college can adopt the following statement in support of local composting infrastructure:

> *University* adopts the following policy statement to support organics recycling in our local community: