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Abstract

Production and consumption associated with the textile industry exhausts water and fossil fuel resources, and significantly contributes to global waste burden. Studies have shown that U.S. college students produce millions of tons of solid waste every year, much of which could have been diverted. This project describes the benefits of second-hand markets as a tool to achieve waste diversion and sustainability, and proposes a campus thrift store at the University of Richmond (UR). Supporting literature, previous successful reuse initiatives at UR, and a review of best thrift store practices at other universities are provided as justification for the proposal. The project concludes that a thrift store on UR's campus would be simple to implement and have a considerable positive impact on the campus community and the planet as a whole.

Global Waste Dilemma and Diversion Hierarchy

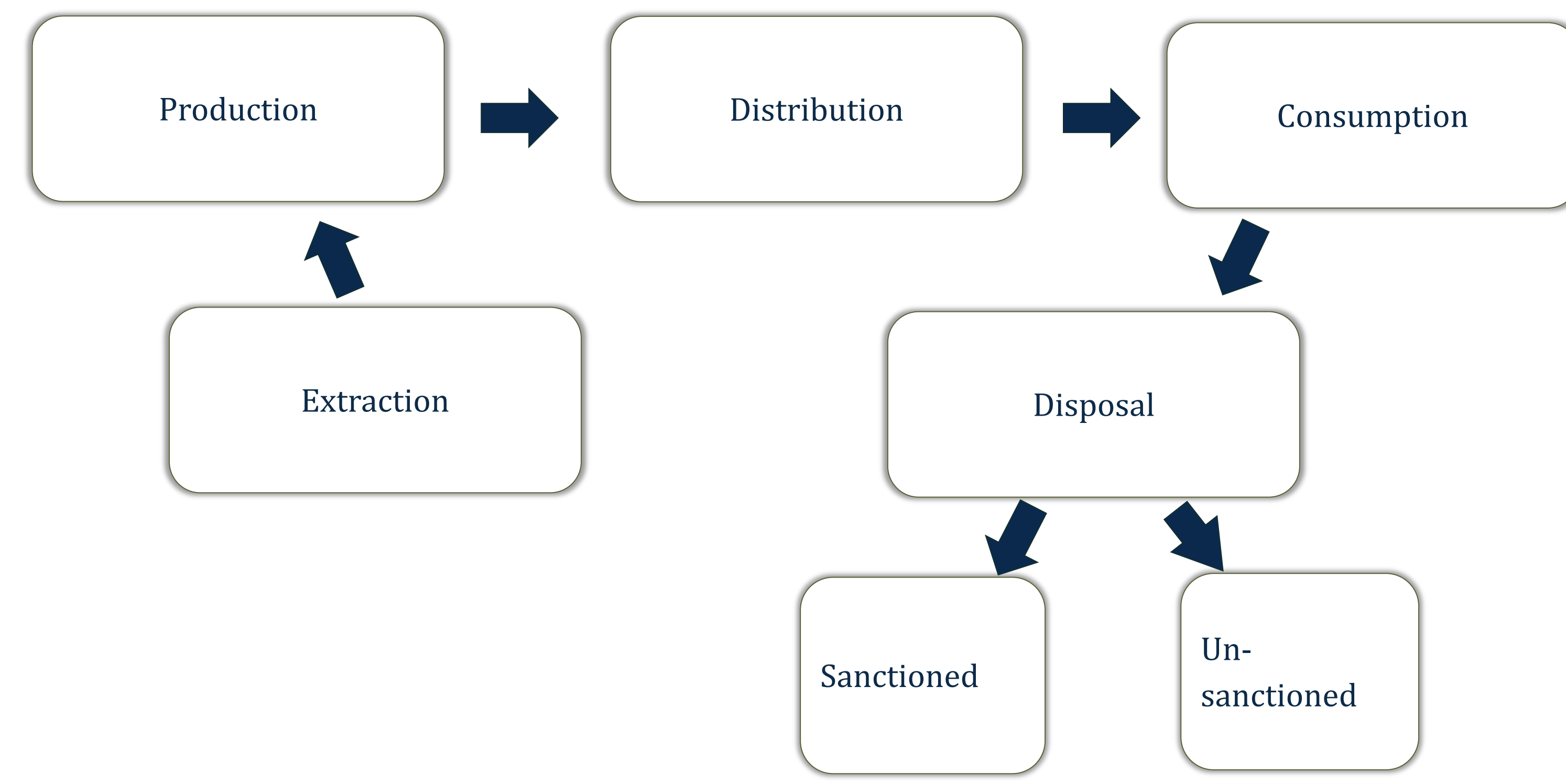


Figure 1: This figure represents the waste dilemma, which stems from the fact that the human economy is fundamentally grounded in the conversion of natural resources into waste. Natural resources are extracted, made into products, distributed, consumed and then eventually disposed. Disposal can either be sanctioned (entering the formal waste collection system) or unsanctioned (not entering the formal waste collection system).

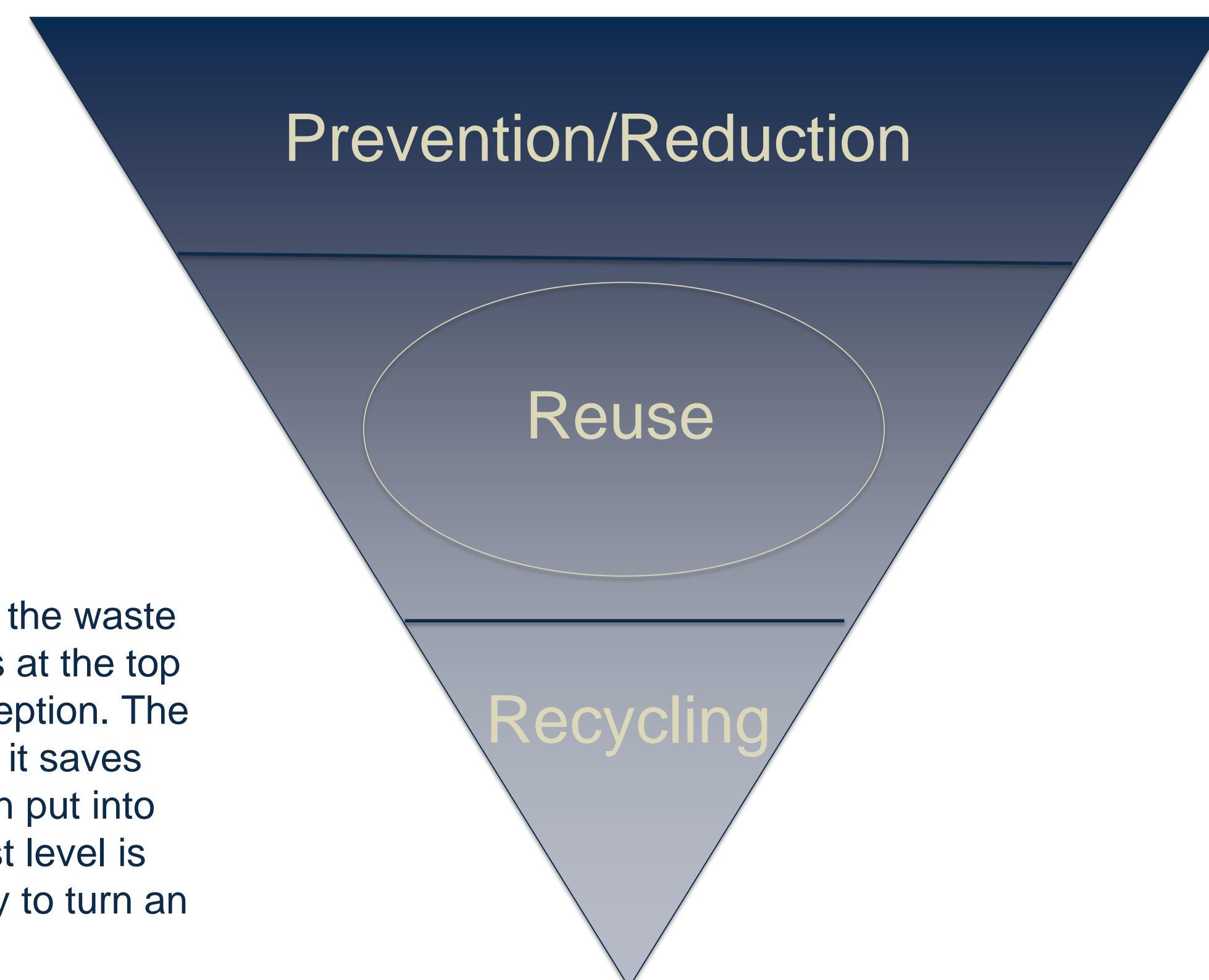


Figure 2: This figure represents the waste diversion hierarchy. Reduction is at the top because it stops waste at its inception. The second level is reusing because it saves the energy that has already been put into making a product. Finally the last level is recycling because it uses energy to turn an old product into something new.



Figure 3: Donation station in Keller Hall
Photo by: Ashley J.



Figure 4: Sustainability interns at clothing swap. Photo by Cassandra C.

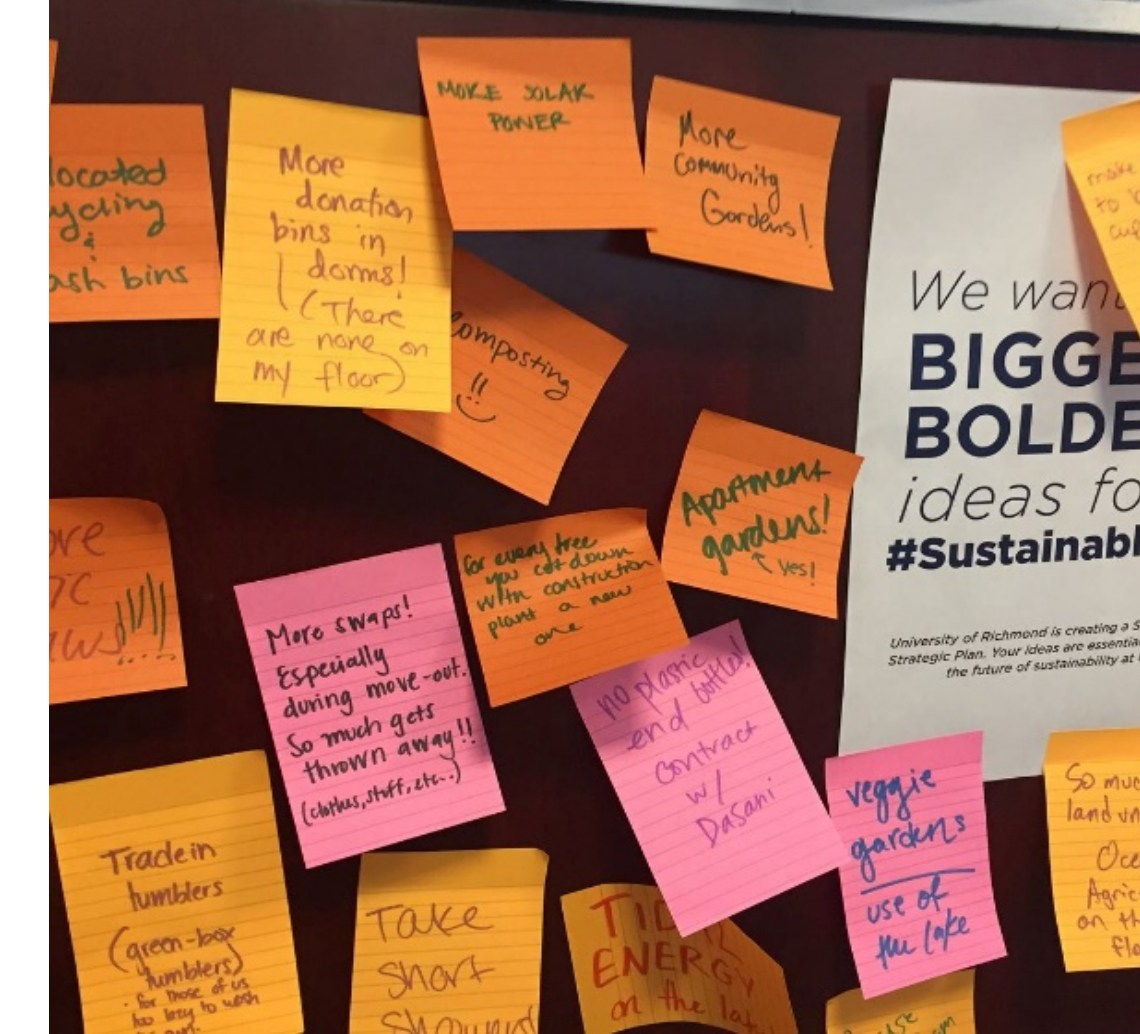


Figure 5: Students post comments for Sustainability ideas. Photo by Cassandra C.

Proposal Overview

A campus thrift store is a simple yet innovative business model that addresses the University of Richmond's goal of sustaining environmental, human, and financial resources (University of Richmond, 2017), as well as the goal of 75% waste diversion by 2025 (Office of Sustainability-UR, 2018). The proposed store has potential to create big changes, and will bolster UR's presence as a burgeoning leader in sustainability.

Location

- The initial store should require no more than 500 square feet of physical space.
- Existing locations that can be easily altered and/or are already under consideration for renovations are recommended.
- Three prime location options include the basement of Keller Hall, a location in Gray Court, or the Tyler Haynes Commons.

Operations

- All thrift store staff will be paid employees. Hourly wage rates will vary based on role responsibilities.
- The store will accept donations of clothing, home goods, and electronics from both faculty and staff to be sold at prices ranging from \$0-\$10.
- The store will start by being open for one to two days a week for a limited amount of hours with potential for expansion later.
- Store staff will host educational events and activities in order to foster waste consciousness on campus.

Funding

- Store will be a joint initiative sponsored by the Office of Sustainability and another office, such as the Office of Residence life or Student Development.
- The store will be funded by a share of each office's budget, as well as by generated store revenue.
- Based on other college thrift stores, startup costs are expected to be minimal (Bennett, 2010).

Major Justifications

Triple Bottom Line

This triple bottom line, often referred to as "people, planet, profit," identifies three pillars of sustainability that have been set as a global sustainability standard (Elkington, 1997). A thrift store addresses all three pillars and will work towards sustainability on local and global scales.

Environmental Quality

- Lessens the waste management burden (ie: quantity of waste sent to landfills), the amount natural resources used for production, as well as the University's carbon footprint.
- Combats the fast fashion (Pruit & Yan, 2017) ideology of rapid cheap clothing turnover, which promotes a throwaway, heavy consumerism culture (Haug & Busch, 2016).

Social Equity

- Affordable and accessible to students.
- Reduces demand for unethical labor proliferated by fast fashion (Haug & Busch, 2016) and new landfills, which are disproportionately placed in marginalized communities (McGurty, 1997).
- Informal education tool to promote the environmental literacy of the student body.
- Promotes campus engagement.

Economic Prosperity

- Circular economy: promotes economic growth that minimizes environmental burden (Ghisellini et al., 2015).
- Clean revenue: revenue generated without being associated with the environmental damages of traditional production and consumption (Figure 1).
- Revenue funds can be directed towards a variety of uses.

Student Support

- The University's previous initiatives such as University of Richmond Office Supply Exchange (UROSE), the Big Yard Sale, Donation Stations and clothing swaps have been successful (Figure 3 and 4).
- Students have also taken initiatives to start their own clothing swaps, and are aware of sustainability issues on campus (Figure 5).
- Opportunity for business majors gain skills and experience in business management.
- College aged shoppers are becoming more environmentally and socially conscious (Clark, 2017).
- The social stigma of second-hand shopping has been nearly eradicated and replaced with a movement towards second-hand clothing as both fashionable and sustainable (Ferraro, Sands & Brace-Govan, 2016).

Best Practices at Other Schools

This project highlighted campus thrift stores at five universities, UC Berkeley, Smith University, Clark University, Middlebury College, and DePauw University. Successful practices included:

- Student management: either paid workers or volunteers
- Store stock of clothing, household items, and electronics donated by students and staff/faculty
- Item prices under \$10
- Funds used for charity and/or store management
- Store hosted workshops and events to promote waste diversion and sustainability

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