

Project Description

Purpose:

UterUs is a female-led menstrual awareness organization, who has partnered with a reusable menstrual cup company, DotCup, which together aims to empower menstruators to explore safer, more environmentally sustainable, and less expensive alternatives to common period products while engaging in open and honest conversations about periods. Our goals include increasing environmental consciousness by making the switch to reusable menstrual products and ensuring accessibility to these products to all menstruators in our community. UterUs aims to improve the way women perceive change within their cycles each month while educating users on reproductive health and management.

Hypothesis:

Plastic menstrual products not only pose an increasing risk within the environment they also expose menstruators to unethical pink taxes that target women and cause potential toxic dangers to the female genitalia. Reusable menstrual products provide a safe alternative to plastic waste while also containing zero toxic chemicals and reducing irritation. Environmentally safe products can include but are not limited to, cloth pads, menstrual cups, menstrual disks, and period panties.

Problem Statement:

In a single lifetime, one menstruator will go through anywhere between 5,000 - 15,000 pads and tampons throughout his/her lifetime and accumulate at least 125kg to 150kg of plastic waste in consequence of a period. Now multiply this number by 800 million menstruators and that is over 1 billion kg of waste, over half of which ends up in our landfills, beach shores, and sewer systems. In a 2018 study of the trash found on American public beaches, it was found that for every 100m of beach cleaned, there were 4 pads and at least 1 tampon applicator on shores. Most of these products contain small amounts of toxic material which can cause infection and exposure to harmful carcinogens to users. Not to mention this will cost most individuals anywhere between \$60-\$300 each month on period products for the next 30-40 years.

Significance:

At ECU, there is a population of 16,331 females. With an average use of 5 pads and 20 tampons for every one cycle, this accumulates a usage of 979,860 pads and 3,919,440 tampons every year. These statistics do not take into account the entire menstruating population of ECU, as not all menstruate are women. Each of these products is disposed of after one use, accumulating a large amount of plastic and cotton waste in landfills, and potentially in our rivers and streams.

Your role in a larger project:

UterUs aims to educate our community on the truths surrounding menstrual waste and ways to not only keep ourselves safe but our shared environment as well. Plastic waste releases toxic chemicals as they degrade and pollute our water sources causing danger to our natural habitats.

Methodology:

UterUs has set up a system that allows ECU students to sign up to receive free DotCups to try every semester. With an ongoing partnership with DotCup, not only do we allow students on campus a chance to try different methods of sustainable period products but for every DotCup given to a student on campus, one is donated back to local community centers and/or shelters such as the Boys and Girls Club, the Coastal Women's Shelter, homeless shelters, schools, etc.

Previous results:

During Spring 2021 UterUs embarked on our first mission to introduce reusable menstrual products to our community. We received a \$400 grant from the Honors College to begin our first purchase of menstrual cups from the sustainable menstrual company, DotCup. We were able to reach our first target goal of 40 DotCups distributed on campus while also getting the opportunity to donate 40 cups back to Joy's Soup Kitchen. Though UterUs had a successful semester we hope to continue our journey to reaching as many menstruators as possible next spring.

!!Budget breakdown!!- USE CHART AND EXAMPLE BELOW

When completing the following budget information questions, please refer to the full instructions (link at top of page) and the chart information below.

\$1500 max. per investigator, \$2000 max. per project, with Undergraduate Assistantships between \$500-1000 each person. Honors College students may apply for additional funds of up to \$500. However, an Assistantship will not be higher than \$1000. PLEASE REFER TO THE CHART BELOW..

of PI:Honors?Assistantship max:Total allowed:

1No\$1000\$1500

1Yes\$1000\$2000

2No\$1000/PI \$2000

2Yes\$1000/PI \$2500

EXAMPLE: If I am the only PI (first column of chart # of PI-1) and I am not an Honor's student (second column of chart Honors?- No) I am only eligible for a total of \$1500 (last column of chart). Up to \$1000 of that \$1500 can be requested in the form of an assistantship (third column).

Total budget request:*

This is to be calculated using the chart above and should not exceed the Total Allowed column (4th column) for the number of PI on the project and their Honors status.

- **\$2300 - 2 honors investigators**

Total assistantship amount requested:*

*(If you are requesting an assistantship, this will be \$500-\$1000 PER investigator.)

- **No Assistantship Requested**

Total other expenses requested (supplies, equipment, etc.):*

Total Budget Requested - Total Assistantship = Total Other Expenses

*(If you are only requesting an assistantship, please input "\$0")

- **\$2300-\$0= \$2300 ; no assistantship requested**

Other expenses details*

Provide an estimated itemization of the project expenses for the "Total Other Expenses" listed directly above. DO NOT include justification for an assistantship (formerly known as a stipend). If you are only requesting an assistantship, please input N/A. (Approximately 150 words or 1500 characters with spaces max.)

Budget Justification:

- Semester Supply of DotCup Menstrual Cups -
 - \$18.00/ea (100 cups) = \$1800
- Educational/Community Donation Tabling Events -
 - Personalized Table Cover - \$30
 - Printed UterUs Informational Poster - \$15
 - Business Cards - \$25

Total: \$2,230

Justification of Budget:

The budget model prepared is based off of recent research and previous budget calculations discussed with DotCup. DotCups normal retail price for 1 menstrual cup is \$34 per unit, yet for bulk orders DotCup offers a campus sustainability discount to customize donated materials. Therefore, each DotCup will be bought at a discounted price of approximately \$18 per menstrual cup to be distributed on campus along with an equal amount offered free to donate back to the community. For each distribution period UterUs will host a tabling event on campus

where DotCups will be distributed for free to students and also receive a comprehensive educational piece on how to use, clean, and handle the cup. An additional tabling event will be conducted for the distribution of donated cups in the community. During these tabling events students and community residents will have a chance to ask questions about the cup and receive additional educational pieces on important women's health issues. The budget for these tabling events have been established above including printing costs for posters and business cards per the Office Depot website and a UterUs personalized cover to be used throughout UterUs's time on campus as a future university sustainable organization. Leah Beth Warren will be in charge of all finances through DotCup as UterUs' head treasurer.