

UterUs: Changing the Perception of Menstrual Health on College Campuses

by

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Project Description

Purpose:

UterUs is a menstrual awareness organization that partners with menstrual product companies to empower menstruators to explore more sustainable, less expensive alternatives to common period products while educating them on reproductive and menstrual health. Our goal is to increase environmental consciousness by providing free reusable menstrual products and ensuring the accessibility of these products to all menstruators in our community.

Hypothesis:

Plastic menstrual products pose an increasing environmental risk and can expose the female genitalia to toxic chemicals. Reusable menstrual products such as menstrual cups or period underwear provide a safe alternative because they are often made from medical-grade reusable materials.

Problem Statement:

In a single lifetime, one menstruator will go through anywhere between 5,000 - 15,000 pads and tampons leading to at least 125kg to 150kg of plastic waste. Now multiply this number by 800 million menstruators and that is over 1 billion kg of waste in our landfills, beach shores, and sewer systems. On top of this waste, individuals spend anywhere between \$60-\$300 each month on non-reusable period products, for 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 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 menstruators identify as women. Each of these products is disposed of after one use, accumulating a large amount of plastic waste in our environment.

Larger Role:

Plastic waste releases toxic chemicals as it degrades and pollutes our water sources causing danger to our natural habitats. 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.

Methodology:

UterUs is organized so ECU students can sign up to receive a free menstrual cup that lasts for 10 years. We provide students with a chance to try sustainable period products and for every cup given to a student, one is donated back to our community, including places such as homeless shelters, clinics, and schools. UterUs also aims to teach comprehensive classes on

reproductive health and give instruction on the proper use of products donated.

Previous results:

During Spring 2021, a \$400 grant purchased 80 menstrual cups from DotCup, allowing us to distribute 40 cups on campus and 40 to Joy's Soup Kitchen. In Spring 2022, a \$2300 URCA grant allowed UterUs to buy 375 June Cups which are now being donated to students and community members. With another URCA grant, UterUs would be able to purchase non-invasive reusable period panties for younger menstruators and people who are not able to use a cup.