

Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Sustainability
Executive Summary of Report: *Getting to 75% Diversion and Striving for Zero Waste*

Background

The University of California's Policy on Sustainable Practices calls for a 75% diversion of waste from landfills by June 2012, and reaching zero waste by 2020. UC Berkeley adopted these goals into its 2009 Sustainability Plan.

The UC Berkeley diversion rate for municipal solid waste over the last decade has steadily improved from 33% to 41%. The campus overall diversion rate fluctuates based on the amount of construction demolition material in the waste stream in a given year. Recognizing that the campus cannot consistently meet 75% diversion without permanently reducing the amount of solid waste going to the landfill, and that the campus is not on a trajectory to reach zero waste by the set dates, the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Sustainability (CACs) hired student Kimberly Lam to work with the Office of Sustainability and Campus Recycling and Refuse Services (CRRS) to review current waste disposal practices and identify the challenges and opportunities available to the campus to meet these targets.

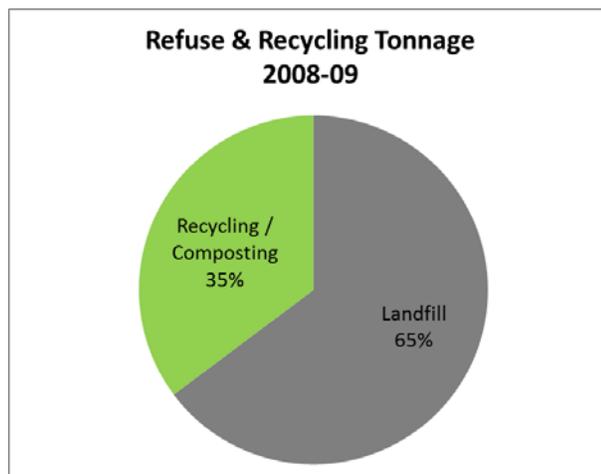
Getting to 75% Diversion

The research studied a scenario for reaching the 75% diversion rate for municipal solid waste that examined a strategy that increased recycling and composting. This scenario was selected for examination because: 1) it aligns with current campus trends; 2) it expands on established and pilot programs; 3) it relies on current technology and readily available market services.

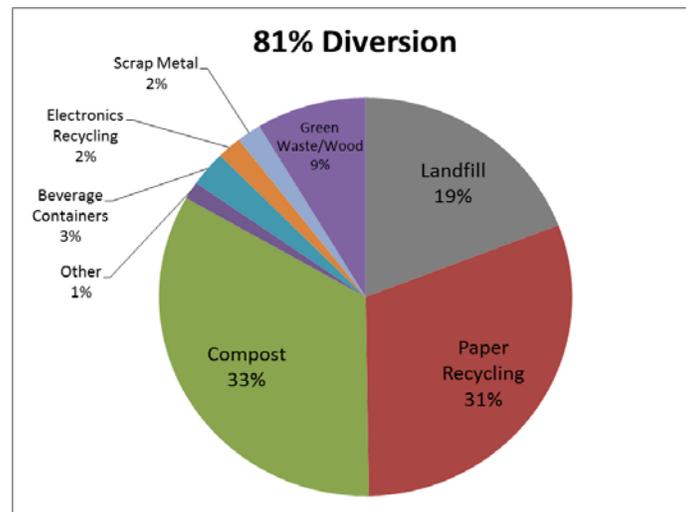
Through evaluation of existing programs, recorded waste diversion trends, and waste audits, this research found that the campus could potentially meet the 75% diversion goal by:

- **Expanding food and paper towel composting to more campus buildings, targeting those with the highest volumes of compostable materials.** Currently Cal Dining provides a full composting program for food related waste as do several third-party food vendors. Additionally composting is being provided in 8 buildings with planned expansion to 15 buildings by June 2012.
- **Ensure better performance of existing paper and bottle & can recycling programs. This requires enhanced education efforts.**

In 2008-2009 the campus produced about 10,500 tons of waste? material. Of the total only about 3,700 tons were diverted from the landfill, leading to a 35% diversion rate.



Four basic waste audits, conducted in Mulford, Barrows, University and Sutardja Dai Halls, revealed that an **average** of about 23% of material currently going to the landfill could be recycled as mixed paper, about 4% can be recycled as bottles & cans, and about 45% can be composted. **This would result in an 81% diversion rate of material from the landfill.** Although these waste audits are not comprehensive, the resulting data is consistent with EPA findings for municipal waste streams.



Strategies for Zero Waste – Additional Challenges

The campus would need to adopt additional strategies to go from 75% diversion to zero waste. Some methods to deal with the remaining materials that are not currently easy to recycle or compost such as plastics #3-7, laboratory materials, and furniture, include:

- Improving green purchasing practices to consider product life-cycle, packaging, and transportation and thereby reduce purchases of materials that cannot be diverted.
- Developing take-back programs with vendors, such as the one that currently is in place for carpet.
- Finding new sources for re-purposing plastics, wood, etc.
- Enhancing reuse and repair systems, recycling more, and using less.

Next Steps

All UC Campuses are tasked with preparing and submitting Zero Waste Plans and a funding strategy to the UC Office of the President by July 2012. The UC Berkeley plan could further analyze the findings from this research, explore additional scenarios, identify funding and operational needs, and chart a path to reach 75% diversion and zero waste.

CACS Recommendation

Reducing waste is an issue of importance to the campus community. Accordingly, **CACS recommends that the campus takes the necessary steps to meet the 75% diversion goal as soon as possible but no later than 2015, and reach zero waste by 2020.**