Recycling & Composting FAQs

1. **Where is the waste that is generated on campus taken?**
   - Single stream recyclables are taken to the Prince George’s County Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) in Capitol Heights, MD for sorting. UMD does not separate this material on campus.
   - Compostable products are taken to the Prince George’s County Western Branch Composting Facility in Upper Marlboro, MD for processing.
   - Construction and demolition materials are taken to Sun Services’ Materials Recycling Facility in Beltsville, MD for separation and marketing to end-user manufacturers.
   - Solid waste is taken to the Annapolis Junction Transfer Station in Jessup, MD where it is consolidated and shipped to Virginia to be landfilled.
   
   All current partner disposal sites are subject to change.

2. **What service transports the different types of waste to its respective destination?**
   The University of Maryland handles all of its own material until it reaches the proper facility. Building Services removes waste from bins inside academic and administrative buildings, Residential Facilities services bins in resident halls, and Grounds Maintenance empties outdoor bins. All of this material is placed in dumpsters. Recycling & Solid Waste empties the dumpsters and transports the material to the appropriate site for further processing, sorting or landfilling.

3. **What are some of the ongoing costs associated with waste management on campus?**
   - Labor: 4 CDL trash and recycling drivers to empty dumpsters and transport compactors, 2 recycling personnel for specialty pick-ups and work orders, as well as Building Services, Residential Facilities and Grounds Maintenance staff to empty indoor and outdoor bins.
   - Truck maintenance/gas: Fix general wear and tear, repair faulty equipment, fuel trucks, etc.
   - Tipping fees: The University is charged per ton to dispose of its waste material.
   - Bags: Line bins and collect the three types of material (compost, recycle, and trash).
   - Signage: Replace damaged informational signage and continue educational campaign.
   - Dumpsters: Maintain current stock and purchase additional containers as needed.

4. **Nationally, what are the different collection methods for recycling?**
   - Single Stream: All standard recyclables (i.e. plastics, cardboard, aluminum, etc.) can be placed into one bin without any post-consumer sorting.
   - Duel Stream: Bottles and cans are separated from paper/fiber products.
   - Dirty MRF: All waste is sent to a facility that separates landfill materials from recyclables.

5. **Why does UMD have single stream recycling?**
   Single stream recycling involves less separation of materials. Therefore, single stream recycling has been proven to increase recycling participation and the volume of waste that is diverted from the landfill. It also avoids the cost of the additional infrastructure that would be necessary if containers were collected separately from fiber.

6. **Should I clean out my food/beverage container before recycling it?**
   A light rinse is preferred to avoid attracting vermin or fruit flies, but a small amount of contamination is acceptable through the single stream recycling process. Liquids should never be placed in the recycling bin!

7. **How much does UMD recycle?**
   In 2013, the campus disposed of 2,073 tons of single stream recycling. This number does not include non-traditional recyclables such as tires, batteries, construction and demolition, etc. Our recycling statistics have improved steadily on an annual basis. In 2013, our recycling rate was 55% compared to 35% in 2009. The total campus diversion from landfill rate for 2013 was 78% compared to 57% in 2009. These rates can continue to improve with positive behavior change.
8. **What’s the difference between a recycling rate and a diversion rate?**
The recycling rate includes standard or “household” recyclable items generated by **individuals**. A diversion rate assesses **institutional** recycling and includes all material captured from land clearing, construction projects, reuse or donation, etc. that does not make its way to the landfill.

9. **What are the biggest challenges to improve recycling on campus?**
Expanding collections for specialty items (i.e. ink cartridges, e-waste, plastic film, etc.) and improving overall participation in waste sorting.

10. **How much compost is generated on campus?**
In 2013, the University collected 647.3 tons of organic waste for compost. The majority of this volume is collected during the fall and spring semesters while students are on campus.

11. **Where can I find a compost bin?**
Organic material can be deposited in the post-consumer bins in each of the three dining halls, the Stamp Student Union and select Fraternities and Sororities. All of these sites are collecting pre- and post-consumer material together (food scraps and paper products).

12. **Why aren’t there more compost bins on campus?**
Ultimately, the biggest concern with expanding organics collection to more areas of campus is doing so while maintaining the purity of the stream. Adding extra compost bins would require a parallel, comprehensive educational effort to minimize contamination and amplify general campus awareness of proper waste sorting technique. Focus should be placed on improving the quality of the material captured in existing bins before increasing collection points on campus. A significant monetary investment would also be required in order to purchase additional resources such as equipment, bins, liners, signage, and so on to support the initiative.

13. **How is the composition or ratio of paper, vegetable and protein wastes in the campus organics stream managed to ensure successful composting of food waste?**
The Western Branch Compost Facility certifies that they keep the appropriate carbon-nitrogen ratio for proper biodegradation as they mix the organic matter together. The University is not involved with monitoring its compost stream in this regard. More information about our partner facility as well as the composting process can be found at [this link](#).

14. **What happens to the finished compost product?**
The compost that is made from the organics collected from campus is sold regionally at most lawn and garden retailers as a product called LeafGro. Currently, Terp Farm uses this product in its garden beds, standing as a great example of a closed-loop system.

15. **Can I recycle…**
   - **Credit/Gift cards?** No. Small plastic items such as lids, straws, creamer cups, credit cards, etc. will not be captured by the mechanized sorting process at the PG County MRF. Please place these materials in the trash/landfill bin.
   - **Styrofoam?** No. Even though polystyrene products are labeled with a #6 recycling symbol, they are not accepted in the campus recycling stream at this time. Please place all Styrofoam in the trash/landfill bin.
   - **Batteries?** Yes. There are specialty battery collection bins in most buildings on campus. Acceptable batteries include alkaline (AA, AAA, D-cell, C-cell, 9-volt, button cells), lithium, and nickel-cadmium. Lithium-ion batteries must be wrapped individually in a paper or plastic bag. The comprehensive list of brown battery bin locations can be found [here](#).

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