



Green Purchasing Policy & Guide

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Contents

<u>Green Purchasing Policy</u>	3
<u>What is a “green” product?</u>	4
<u>Preferred Product Certifications & Labeling</u>	5
<u>List of Preferred Attributes</u>	8
<u>Glossary</u>	9

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Green Purchasing Policy

As a signatory of the American College and Universities Climate Commitment (ACUPCC), and a participant in the Sustainability Tracking & Rating System (STARS) Program, Bard College is committed to becoming a carbon-neutral and sustainably-oriented institute, and has elected to adopt a policy for procuring products and services that reflect these goals.

This Green Purchasing Policy & Guide was created to outline Bard's procurement goals, and to serve as a reference document for Bard staff, faculty, and students to help navigate the wide market of available products and to select those products that are the most ecologically friendly and conforming to sustainability principles.

Policy Goals

- **Maintain High Social Justice and Sustainability Standards:** Procure products and services that meet the highest and most credible ethical, social and environmental standards without compromising quality, effectiveness, cost, or convenience.
- **Conserving Resources and Energy:** Procure products and services that meet the highest and most credible standards for conservation of energy, water, and natural resources without compromising quality, effectiveness, cost, or convenience
- **Waste & Greenhouse Gas Reduction:** Develop and maintain a supply chain and purchasing process through which waste and greenhouse gas emissions are first avoided or minimized, and where remaining waste can serve as feedstock/inputs for new product development.
- **Strengthen the Local Economy:** Support the local and regional economy by purchasing products and services from local vendors.

What is a “green” product?

In general, “green” products are those that comparatively have the least harmful impact on the environment and human health throughout the product’s lifetime, from materials sourcing and manufacturing, to consumer use and disposal.

Ideally, green products have:



- **Material Content** made from recycled, rapidly renewable, salvaged, repurposed, and/or nontoxic content.
- **Material Sourcing and Manufacturing Methods** that require minimal energy, water, and material inputs, and that use processes to reduce harmful environmental impacts (including waste and energy recovery, as well as local/regional sourcing to reduce transport).
- **High-Efficiency Ratings** such that operation or use consumes less energy and water inputs.
- **Minimal or No Waste Bi-products** from operation, reducing environmental and health impacts (e.g. uses renewable components and/or has non-toxic or non-harmful outputs).
- **Life Cycles** that allow for durability and longevity of use, and when disposed of, for material reuse, recycling, or biodegradation.
- **Socio-economic Impacts** from sourcing, manufacturing, use, and disposal that are minimized through commitments by firms to uphold fair trade and social and environmental justice.

Preferred Product Certifications & Labeling


Purchasing decisions through Bard should give preference to products that have earned one or more of the 3rd-party certifications described below. To earn a certification and the right to display its logo on product labeling, a company has demonstrated through reporting and 3rd-party review that their product has attributes (e.g. energy-efficient, non-toxic, biodegradable) and meets more rigorous environmental standards (e.g. forest management, fair trade, end-of-use take-back program) that make it more sustainably-oriented than comparable products on the market.

More information on these certifications, and lists of certified products, can be found by visiting the web-links provided below.




Appliances & Electronics

Name	Logo	Attributes	Summary
Energy Star		<i>Energy Efficiency</i>	<p>A joint program of the <i>U.S. Environmental Protection Agency</i> and <i>Department of Energy</i>. Energy Star products are more energy efficient than comparable models.</p> <p>More info: www.energystar.gov</p> <p>Find Products: www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=products.pr_find_es_products</p>
Water Sense		<i>Water Conservation</i>	<p>Products bearing the “WaterSense” label are generally <i>20% more water-efficient than similar products</i> and are <i>independently tested</i> to qualify for label.</p> <p>More info: www.epa.gov/watersense</p> <p>Find Products: www.epa.gov/watersense/product_search.html</p>

Computers, Displays, & Tablets

Name	Logo	Attributes	Summary
EPEAT		<i>Energy Efficiency</i> <i>Waste Reduction</i> <i>Life-cycle</i>	<p>EPEAT-registered electronic products must meet environmental criteria based on ANSI-approved public standards, which provide technical details for every criterion and specify how a manufacturer must demonstrate compliance.</p> <p>More info: www.epeat.net/</p> <p>Find Products: ww2.epeat.net/publicsearch.aspx</p>

Cleaning Products & Supplies
Flooring, Carpeting, & Tile
Indoor Furnishings
Paint & Coatings
Paper Products

Name	Logo	Attributes	Summary
Green Seal			<p>A non-profit organization founded in 1988 and ANSI-accredited, Green Seal promotes life cycle-based sustainability standards for products, services and companies and offer 3rd-party certification for those that meet the criteria in the standard</p> <p>More info: www.greenseal.org Find Products: www.greenseal.org/FindGreenSealProductsAndServices.aspx</p>
Ecologo		<p><i>Indoor Air Quality & Reduced Chemical Exposure</i></p>	<p>Originally founded 1988 by the Canadian government, but now recognized world-wide, EcoLogo products and services meet stringent standards of environmental leadership.</p> <p>More info: www.ecologo.org Find Products: www.ecologo.org/en/greenproducts/</p>
SCS			<p>Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), founded in 1984 with the mission to encourage more environmentally sustainable policy planning, product design, management systems and production operations by instituting a series of internationally recognized evaluation, certification and labeling programs.</p> <p>More info: www.scsglobalservices.com/ Find Products: www.scs-certified.com/products/</p>

List of Preferred Attributes

When none of the certifications/labels above are available for a specific product, or if choosing between similarly certified products, looking at product labeling and specification sheets (such as a Material Safety Data Sheet, or MSDS) for the following preferable attributes can help you in your selection process.

(**Italicized bold* terms are defined in the Glossary section)

<p><i>Accessible Design</i></p> <p><i>Barrier-free</i></p> <p><i>Biodegradable</i></p> <p><i>Carcinogen-free</i></p> <p><i>Chlorine-free</i></p> <p><i>Chlorofluorocarbon (CFC)- free</i></p> <p><i>Compostable</i></p> <p><i>Durable</i></p> <p><i>Energy efficient</i></p> <p><i>Ergonomic</i></p> <p><i>Fair Trade Certified</i></p> <p>Fragrance-free</p> <p>Gender-Neutral</p> <p>Genetically modified organism (GMO)-free</p> <p>Heavy metal-free (no mercury, lead, cadmium)</p> <p>Less hazardous</p> <p><i>Locally grown or manufactured</i></p> <p>Low or no <i>volatile organic compounds (VOC)</i></p> <p>Low toxicity</p> <p>Lower embodied energy</p> <p><i>Minority Business Enterprise</i></p> <p>Non-toxic</p> <p>Organic</p>	<p><i>Renewable materials</i></p> <p><i>Persistent, bioaccumulative toxin (PBT)- free</i></p> <p>Pre-owned</p> <p><i>Post-consumer</i></p> <p>Preservation and enhancement of local economy</p> <p>Recyclable</p> <p>Recycled post-consumer content</p> <p>Reduced <i>greenhouse gas emissions</i></p> <p>Reduced packaging</p> <p>Refurbished</p> <p>Resource efficiency</p> <p>Reusable</p> <p>Sweatshop-free</p> <p>Third party sustainability certification (i.e. “Green Seal”, “Fair Labor Association”, “FSC” & “BPI”)</p> <p>Union made</p> <p><i>Universal Design</i></p> <p>Upgradeable</p> <p>Used</p> <p><i>Water efficient</i></p> <p>Women’s Business Enterprise</p>
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Glossary

Accessible Design – see “Universal Design” below

Barrier-Free – see “Universal Design” below

Biodegradable – The ability of a substance to decompose in the natural environment into harmless raw materials. To be truly biodegradable, a substance or material should break down into carbon dioxide (a nutrient for plants), water, and naturally occurring minerals that also do not cause harm to the ecosystem. In terms of environmental benefits, a product should take months or years, and not centuries, to biodegrade.

Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) – Any of a group of compounds that contain carbon, chlorine, fluorine, and sometimes hydrogen and have been used as refrigerants, cleaning solvents, aerosol propellants and in the manufacture of plastic foams. CFCs are being phased out because they destroy the planet's stratospheric ozone protection layer.

Compostable – A product that can be placed into a composition of decaying biodegradable materials and eventually turn into a nutrient-rich material. It is synonymous with “biodegradable,” except it is limited to solid materials, and does not refer to liquids.

Durable – A product that remains useful and usable for a long time without noticeable deterioration in performance.

Energy-efficient – A product that is in the upper 25 percent of energy efficiency for all similar products or that is at least 10 percent more efficient than the minimum level meeting US federal government standards.

Ergonomic – designing the job, equipment, and workplace to fit the worker. Proper ergonomic design is necessary to prevent repetitive strain injuries, which can develop over time and can lead to long-term disability.

Fairtrade Labeling Organization – www.fairtrade.net.

Fair Labor Association – www.fairlabor.org

Fair Trade Certified – is a product certification system designed to allow people to identify products that meet agreed environmental, labor and developmental standards. Overseen by a standard-setting body, [FLO International](http://www.flo-international.org), and a certification body, [FLO-CERT](http://www.flo-cert.org), the system involves independent auditing of producers to ensure the agreed standards are met. Companies offering products that meet the Fairtrade standards may apply for licences to use the [Fairtrade Certification Mark](http://www.fairtrade.org) (or, in North America, the applicable [Fair Trade Certified Mark](http://www.fairtrade.org)) for those products.

FloorScore – is a program for testing and certifying hard floor services compliance with California’s indoor air quality emission requirements laid out in the California Section 01350

program. Scientific Certification Systems developed the program with the Resilient Floor Covering Institute (RFCI). US Green Building Council approved FloorScore Certification as an indicator for LEED Credit in November 2006. Website: <http://www.scs-certified.com/iaq/floorscore.html>

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) – FSC creates the standards for SmartWood and Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) (third-party certifying organizations) to certify forests and chain of custody forest products. Website: www.fsc.org

Greenhouse gases – Any of several dozen heat-trapping trace gases in the earth's atmosphere that absorb infrared radiation. The two major greenhouse gases are water vapor and carbon dioxide; lesser greenhouse gases include methane, ozone (O₃), CFCs, and nitrogen oxides.

LEED rating system – A self-assessment system developed by the US Green Building Council for rating the environmental preferability of new and existing commercial, institutional, and high-rise residential buildings. Website: www.usgbc.org

Life cycle cost – The amortized annual cost of a product or service, including capital costs, installation costs, operating costs, maintenance costs, and disposal costs discounted over the lifetime of the product or service. (Compare with Product Life cycle.)

Locally grown or manufactured – Manufactured or grown within 100 miles of Bard College.

Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) – Written or printed material about a product that includes information on the product's physical and chemical characteristics; physical and health hazards; exposure limits; whether the product contains carcinogenic ingredients above a certain threshold; precautions for safe handling and use; control measures; emergency and first aid procedures; the date of preparation of the MSDS or the last change to it; and the name, address, and telephone number of the manufacturer.

Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) – is a term used in the United States which is defined as a business that is at least 51% owned, operated and controlled on a daily basis by one or more (in combination) American citizens of the following ethnic minority classifications: African American, Asian, Hispanic American, Native American (including Alaskan Natives). MBE's can be self-identified, but are typically certified by a city, state or federal agency. The predominant certifier for minority businesses is the [National Minority Supplier Development Council](#) with its 35-40 regional affiliates.

Persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic compounds (PBTs) – Toxic chemicals that persist in the environment and increase in concentration through food chains as larger animals consume PBT-laden smaller animals. They transfer rather easily among air, water, and land, and span boundaries of programs, geography, and generations. As a result, PBTs pose risks to human health and ecosystems. They are associated with a range of adverse human health effects, including effects on the nervous system, reproductive and developmental problems, cancer, and

genetic impact. They include heavy metals and chemicals such as mercury, dioxins, and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls).

Post-consumer recycled content – Percentage of a product made from materials and by-products recovered or diverted from the solid waste stream after having completed their usefulness as consumer items and used in place of raw or virgin material.

Product life cycle – The totality of environmental impacts for a product, including raw material acquisition, manufacturing, distribution, use, maintenance, and ultimate disposal of the product. (Compare with Life cycle Cost.)

Recyclable product – A product that after its intended end use can be diverted from the solid waste stream for use as a raw material in the manufacture of another product.

Recovered materials – Waste materials and by-products that have been recovered or diverted from the solid waste stream.

Recycled materials – Material and byproducts that have been recovered or diverted from solid waste and have been utilized in place of raw or virgin material in manufacturing a product. It is derived from post-consumer recycled materials, manufacturing waste, industrial scrap, agricultural waste, and other waste material, but does not include material or byproducts generated from, and commonly reused within, an original manufacturing process.

Refurbished product – A product that has been completely disassembled and restored to its original working order while maximizing the reuse of its original materials.

Renewable materials – Materials made from plant-based feedstock capable of regenerating in less than 200 years such as trees and agricultural products. Rapidly renewable resources, such as grain-based feedstocks, regenerate in less than two years.

Sustainable – An action is said to be sustainable if it satisfies present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Universal Design – Universal design is a relatively new paradigm that emerged from "barrier-free" or "accessible design" and "assistive technology." Universal design strives to be a broad-spectrum solution that produces buildings, products and environments that are usable and effective for everyone, not just people with disabilities. For example, while built-up handles are a way to make utensils more usable for people with gripping limitations, some companies introduced larger, easy to grip and attractive handles as feature of mass-produced utensils, appealing to a wide range of consumers. As life expectancy rises and modern medicine has increased the survival rate of those with significant injuries, illnesses and birth defects, there is a growing interest in universal design. Additional examples include cabinets with pullout shelves, kitchen counters at several heights to accommodate different tasks and postures and low-floor buses that kneel and are equipped with ramps rather than lifts.

Upgradeable product – The ability to increase a product’s performance or features without replacing the product.

Virgin material – Any material occurring in its natural form. Virgin material is used in the form of raw material in the manufacture of new products.

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) – Chemicals that readily evaporate and contribute to the formation of air pollution when released into the atmosphere. Many VOCs are classified as toxic and carcinogenic.

Water efficient – A product that is in the upper 25 percent of water efficiency for all similar products or that is at least 10 percent more efficient than the minimum level meeting US federal government standards

Sample letter to Vendors requesting “green” products