

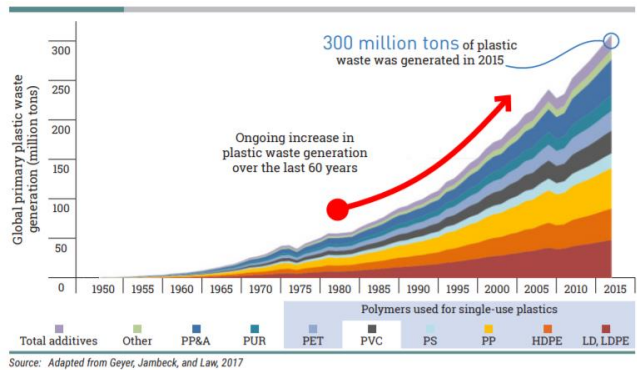
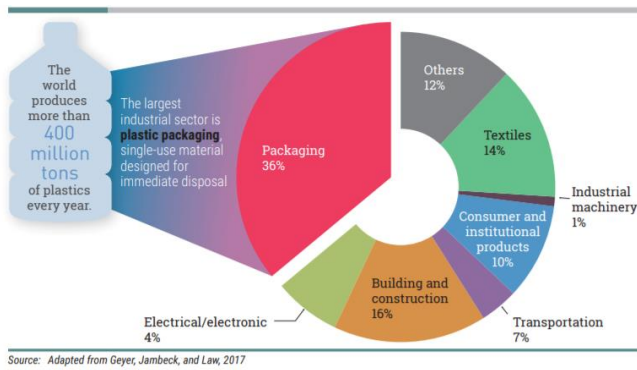


Proposal for Compostable Bags at the C-Store

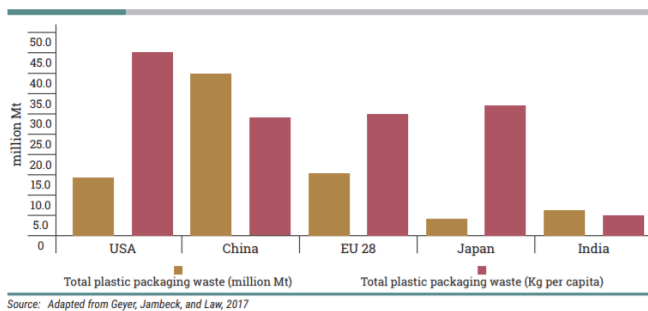
In an effort to continually reduce Principia College’s ecological impacts, including making every effort to eliminate single-use plastic, the Center for Sustainability proposes to partner with the College Store to transition away from plastic carry bags.

Rationale

Environmental Impacts: According to the UN Environment Programme¹, plastic production has more than tripled since the 1990s, with more than half the world’s plastic made after 2003. Much of the plastic we produce is designed to be thrown away after being used only once. About 150 million tons of plastic—much of it non-degradable—is floating in our oceans.



The USA leads the world in total plastic packaging waste *per capita* (per person), despite ongoing commitments by progressive companies and cities (and individuals) to eliminate it. Principia College is well-placed to join the movement to eliminate single-use plastic. Dining Services, including the College Store, has already made huge strides in this direction, including declining sales of single-use water bottles, purchasing in bulk to reduce packaging waste, and eliminating Styrofoam.



Let’s take the next logical step! We all know that soft plastics end up in the trash, bound for the landfill. Or they mistakenly end up in a recycling bin, where they entangle and compromise commercial sorting equipment. Reusing the bags is encouraged, but there is no effective incentive to do so on campus.

Plastic bags are perceived as free, but they have a real cost to the environment, and ultimately to consumers.

Established Composting Infrastructure: Fortunately, composting is integrated throughout the campus. Dining Services and Piasa Pub have successfully adopted compostable single-use products. The College Store can do the same by replacing the single use plastic bags with BPI Certified [compostable BioBags](#). These green bags hold up to 12 pounds in weight, are made in the USA and are clearly labeled as compostable (Figure 1).

¹ [UNEP. 2018. Single-Use Plastics: A Roadmap for Sustainability](#)



[Compostable & Biodegradable Plastic 7 Gallon Shopping Bag
www.goodstartpackaging.com](http://www.goodstartpackaging.com)

We believe that it is important to focus on our shared environment. Using compostable shopping bags can yield major environmental benefits. These eco-friendly bags may be used like ordinary shopping bags in which you can take your groceries home safely, and then use as a trash bag for compostable waste.

Figure 1. Compostable & Biodegradable Plastic 7 Gallon Shopping Bag. Goodstart Packaging.

Reflection of Current Events: Many countries, states, and cities either ban or tax single use plastic bags. For example, in [Chicago](#) the number of plastic and paper bags used for groceries dropped 42% in the first month after city officials imposed a \$0.07 cent bag fee. We think it would be a great idea to charge for the BioBag at the College Store, partly to reinforce the message that the bags are not free, partly to discourage use, and partly to build revenue for a re-purchase as BioBag inventory gets low.

Plan of Action

The Center for Sustainability will purchase the first 4 cases (500 each) of BioBags, and assist with a seamless transition.

- The cost is \$68.57 (per case) plus shipping, or approximately 16 cents per BioBag (price+s/h).
- We suggest charging 15 cents per bag.
- Cashiers can be trained to ask customers if they would like to have a bag, and that the bag has a price.
- The Center can provide signage, such as a sign at each register, communicating the bag fee, why it's occurring, and urging customers to reuse the bag and/or compost it in a yellow campus bin.

We like that the bags are manufactured in the USA (San Leandro, CA) where regulations are strict (relative to some other manufacturing countries) about the use of energy and water, fair wages, and exclusion of toxins. Domestic production also reduces transport miles and associated emissions. Since Principia already has the infrastructure to compost in nearly every dorm and academic building – and the bags are clearly marked as compostable – proper disposal is available.

While any fee disproportionately affects lower-income customers, we are confident, based on other studies, that the fee will not be an obstacle but will rather serve as an incentive for the customer to save money (and resources) by bringing their own bag(s) to the Store, as needed.

Intended Result

The goal is that our campus community will realize the cost of single-use bags, even if just the financial cost (since 15 cents does not factor all of the externalities, like pollution or emissions). Since not everyone consciously strives to reduce their ecological impact, this is an opportunity for customers will expand their understanding of this issue – and hopefully change their behavior in regards to the use of plastic bags when shopping off-campus.

Continual Progress, and Celebrating Success

The Store will track the use of BioBags vs former use of plastic bags. The Center's "compost intern" (student employee) and EcoHeads will be asked to record observations of when BioBags are (and aren't) properly disposed of in compost (vs recycling or landfill) bins. No single-use bag is truly sustainable, but if we work together, we can make small changes for the better! And these will translate into other positive actions throughout Principia's supply chain ... and consumer behavior.