

Executive Summary

Our world faces a major problem in dealing with garbage. Garbage is for one, a predicament of management, intensified in Los Angeles, whose population is expected to increase by 360,000 people by 2030, and in which over 9.4 million tons of solid waste is generated every single year. Waste contributes to local and global pollution, to global warming, and to the perpetuation of inequity, as the consequences of our massive consumption and irresponsible disposal are going to continue to be felt by the poorest and marginalized. The issue of waste disposal is crucial and unavoidable.

With an estimated foot-traffic of 60,000 people per day, the University of California Los Angeles generates huge amounts of waste. While a greater percentage of this is now recycled, all too much of it goes into landfills, of which almost *none* of it belongs. Available landfill space will continue to decrease, causing tipping fees and disposal costs to increase as we are forced to transport our waste farther away; this is in fact the situation that Los Angeles must currently address because Puente Hills, our local landfill site, will close in 2013. These variables manifest themselves in one major challenge: establishing new methods for handling the massive amounts of solid waste.

Our action research identifies what types of materials are most prevalent in trash cans on campus, using Ackerman Union specifically to evaluate how much waste is recyclable, compostable, or actual garbage. Garbage herein is defined as what can only be disposed of in a landfill; all other materials may otherwise be recycled back into the market or into the Earth, through recycling and composting facilities respectively. Our findings are strong and clear: the smallest amount of trash-can-waste is real garbage, making up only about 3% to 5% of an average trash can. Instead, a larger amount of the material is recyclable, about 12%, and the majority is on average 64% to 83% of compostable material.

To appropriately dispose of the waste generated on-campus daily, the ability to recycle and compost must be made to the community, including the food vendor businesses and the community at large. Costs are imperative to consider. Tipping fees and disposal costs differ for different types of waste and so cost-analyses generated account for the differences in costs. Also accounted for are the

anticipated price increases for landfill garbage starting in 2013 and the four-year subsidy that is given for composting services. Overall findings from these cost-analyses reveal that the implementation of composting on campus will save money for Associated Students of UCLA and the entire University. This will be true for the near future and long-term, showing that the establishment of composting and the expansion of recycling on-campus are more sustainable for the University.

Thousands of pounds of waste could be diverted from the Los Angeles landfill by installing biodegradable waste bins in both eatery kitchen areas and in public eating spaces. UCLA must act without more delay, especially as further student research will contribute to efficiently handling the mechanics and to the social assimilation of the program.