

Case Study: Ending Pouring Rights at the University of British Columbia

Background: The University of British Columbia (UBC) is the third largest university in Canada. Beginning in 2016, the UBC Food and Nutrition committee (see below) [developed](#) the [UBC Healthy Beverage Initiative](#) (HBI) to advance the university's commitments to the [Okanagan Charter: An International Charter for Health Promoting University and Colleges](#) and the [UBC Action Framework for a Nutritionally Sound Campus](#) (later replaced by the [UBC Wellbeing Strategic Framework](#)). The committee identified priorities for the HBI through focus groups and a formal survey with campus stakeholders. University leadership approved the HBI in the spring of 2018. Until that point, UBC had a pouring rights contract with Coca-Cola that specified which beverages would be sold and promoted on campus.

Initiative Leaders: The UBC Food and Nutrition committee includes representatives from campus food and beverage providers, health and sustainability officials, faculty, staff, and students.

Initiative Priorities: Encourage water consumption through increased access to safe drinking water, promote healthier beverage choices within the community, and modify the environment to support healthier beverage consumption.

Strategies and Tactics:

- Develop a [tiered “traffic light” beverage classification system](#) (pictured).
- Modify UBC's contract with Coca-Cola when it came up for renewal in 2018. Per the new contract, UBC has no obligations to market any “red” beverages anywhere on campus, can remove “red” beverages from campus retail locations, and can align all vending locations with the HBI.
- Launch a marketing [campaign](#) to promote the consumption of tap water.
- Pilot the removal of “red” beverages from a residence dining hall and [evaluate](#) the impact on revenue and consumer acceptability.

Outcome: The removal of “red” beverages from the pilot dining location did not result in significant revenue loss or increased purchases of “red” beverages from alternative venues. The majority of students surveyed were unaware of the change months after implementation. According to one of the initiative leaders, with UBC now in its fourth year of the modified contract with Coca-Cola, all three campus dining halls have removed red beverages. UBC is in the process of transitioning all vending machines to be aligned with the HBI.



Lessons Learned:

One of the initiative leaders shared the following reflections:

- Formal university commitments to promoting health like signing the Okanagan Charter can pave the way for a healthy beverage initiative.
- Connect with faculty who study the health effects of sugary drinks to help you make the case, and enlist campus sustainability officers to help promote the co-benefits of tap water.
- If improving nutrition is stakeholders' primary goal, the beverage vendor may be perfectly willing to shift their product mix to accommodate nutrition guidelines.

For more information, please contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at policy@cspinet.org.

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