

Case Study:

Ending Pouring Rights at Humboldt State University

Background: Humboldt State University (HSU) is located in Arcata, CA. After organizing a conference series in the winter of 2016 about strategies to move the campus toward its zero-waste goal, HSU student Tessa learned that the school had a pouring rights contract with PepsiCo that was due to expire on June 30, 2017. Tessa and other like-minded HSU advocates soon connected with San Francisco State University students who had successfully [organized](#) to [prevent](#) their campus from entering into a pouring rights contract, and they were inspired to take action.

Lead Advocates: Tessa and 3-5 core student advocates campaigned actively from March to May of 2017.

Advocates' Primary Goal: End the pouring rights contract between HSU and PepsiCo.

Strategies and Tactics:

- Develop a [brochure](#) that frames the issue in terms of social justice, academic integrity, sustainability, and the restriction of student choice.
- Ask sympathetic faculty for permission to present to their classes.
- Collect thousands of student signatures plus contact information on a [petition](#) and open an email account to keep them informed about actions and meetings.
- Persuade the [university senate](#) and [student government](#) to pass resolutions of support.
- Organize a [town hall](#) meeting with the university president and vice president at which an impressive showing of students voiced support for ending the contract.
- The flurry of campaign activity led [local news](#) to cover the campaign.

Outcome: In response to the overwhelming campus community opposition to pouring rights, HSU leadership issued their official decision not to renew the PepsiCo contract in June 2017. In anticipation of the end of the term, leadership convened a task force that included affected departments and student representatives. The task force ultimately decided to replace the Pepsi contract with [one-year agreements](#) with the University Center (UC) to be the exclusive beverage provider and operator of vending machines. It was anticipated that ending PepsiCo's exclusivity and increasing the variety of beverage offerings would increase beverage sales and offset the loss of revenue from the PepsiCo contract. Because of staff turnover and the pandemic, we do not know the impact of the change on beverage sales on campus.

Lessons Learned:

According to Tessa's reflections in 2021:

- Educating the campus community about the harms of pouring rights was a necessary step toward victory.
- Insist that multiple students be included in meetings where decisions are made about contract renewal.
- The town hall was a powerful way to demonstrate support from a large group of students and that the core advocates were not just making decisions unilaterally.

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

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