

Case Study: Ending Pouring Rights at University of California San Francisco

Background: University of California-San Francisco (UCSF) offers graduate and professional degree programs but differs from other UC schools in that it does not offer undergraduate programs or have sports teams. UCSF also houses [SugarScience](#), a research team focused on raising public awareness about the impact of sugar consumption on health. In 2015, the campus had multiple vendors that stocked cafeterias in each of UCSF's three hospitals, vending machines, and retail venues with sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). Though UCSF did not have an exclusive pouring rights contract, there are lessons to be learned from this case study for anyone seeking a healthier beverage environment on campus.

Lead Advocates: Tired of seeing poor results from existing wellness initiatives that focused on individual behavior change, a team of UCSF faculty and staff came together to propose environmental changes to improve student and employee health.

Advocates' Primary Goal: Establish a [healthy beverage initiative](#) by ending the sale and service of SSBs in every UCSF hospital and campus venue.

Strategies and Tactics:

- Decide to [advocate](#) against the sale of SSBs, but not to prohibit people from consuming them on campus. Making this explicit helped assuage concerns about preserving personal choice.
- Make a presentation to senior leadership of the university health system to pitch the proposal.
- Engage the campus community by presenting at departmental meetings, distributing educational handouts, and gathering feedback.
- Compile faculty, staff, and student feedback into a report and present it to senior leadership.

Outcome: UCSF senior [leadership](#) accepted much of the proposal but decided that participation by food vendors and food service operators must be voluntary. The wellness team presented the voluntary initiative to vendors, including the rationale and a list of over 200 healthy alternative beverage options. The team offered assistance to vendors throughout implementation and conducted random compliance checks to hold vendors accountable. Ultimately, the effort was [successful](#) in eliminating all sales and service of SSBs in UCSF hospital and campus venues. The wellness team implemented a [public education campaign](#) to address stakeholder questions about the sales ban. Additionally, a [study](#) of 214 university employees found a significant 49% decrease in average daily SSB intake up to one year following the removal of SSBs.

Lessons Learned:

- Leadership of a university hospital may be quicker to see the connection between SSBs and the health of students and staff than leadership of the university at large.
- Engaging the community in a round of feedback before big changes are made can help make everyone feel like this initiative is *theirs*, not something being imposed upon them.
- To help increase buy-in, develop messaging to respond to common lines of pushback, such as how an SSB ban could restrict freedom of choice.
- For additional lessons from the UCSF experience, SugarScience created an [implementation guide](#) and [toolkit](#) for other organizations.

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

April 2022