

POURING RIGHTS

A TOOLKIT FOR
ADVOCATES



CENTER FOR
Science in the
Public Interest

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

For more than 50 years, CSPI has been an influential force in the fight for a better food system. We are committed to partnering with communities, organizations, and individuals as they explore and enact innovative policies at the institutional, local, state, and federal level that advance a just and equitable food environment. CSPI leverages our unique expertise to support passing policies that increase access to nutritious food, support healthy food and beverage choices, and ensure a healthy diet for those that experience the greatest health disparities.

A crucial part of this work is helping to build the capacity of academic partners, community-based organizations, coalitions, governmental institutions, and other key stakeholders around the country. To this end, we have developed policy toolkits for CSPI's priority issue areas, including the one you have here. These toolkits are living documents designed to support your advocacy, whether you're a seasoned pro looking for the latest research or are brand new to this issue and trying to figure out where to begin. We've structured this toolkit as a roadmap to guide your campaign, with academic research, case studies, model policies, messaging guidance, and other resources you may need. Included throughout are links to additional resources, developed by CSPI and by our partners, for your deeper learning. We also invite you to explore CSPI's [Resource Hub](#) and [Resource Library](#) for more tools that you may find useful.

ABOUT POURING RIGHTS

Eating a healthy diet—one that is rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and low in saturated fat, salt, and added sugar—is linked to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, and other health conditions.¹ Time spent in college may be a critical period for young adults to establish eating habits that impact short- and long-term health.² For most people, eating healthfully requires a supportive environment in which the healthy choice is the easy choice.³ Colleges and universities play an essential role in shaping the daily food environment for students, faculty, and staff. These institutions provide most of the food and beverages for students living on campus, and university food venues are often the most convenient options for non-residential students, faculty, and staff to eat at while on campus. Yet, instead of providing a healthy food and beverage environment, many universities have opted to sell their campus community to the highest bidder, contracting with beverage companies to promote the sale of unhealthy beverages.



What are pouring rights contracts?

“Pouring rights” contracts give a beverage company (primarily The Coca-Cola Company or PepsiCo) exclusive rights to sell and market beverages in an institutional setting, such as a university. Through these multi-year, multi-million dollar contracts, universities sell exclusive access to their own campus community, allowing beverage companies to push sugary drinks on students, faculty, staff, and campus visitors and promote those products with on-campus advertising in exchange for funds.

Pouring rights contracts typically...

- Give Coca-Cola or PepsiCo the **exclusive rights to sell and market beverages** on campus in exchange for certain agreed-upon fees;
- Include **annual payments** from the company to the university such as royalties, sponsorship for athletics, clubs, or scholarships, and others;
- Incentivize the university to maximize sales, through the following mechanisms:⁴
 - **Commissions:** the university receives a percentage commission on product sales.
 - **Rebates:** the university receives a dollar amount per case or gallon of product purchased from the company.
 - **Volume incentives:** the university receives a cash payment, rebate, or other financial benefit triggered once some minimum amount of product is sold.
 - **Volume minimums:** the university is required to purchase or sell a minimum amount of product to avert a penalty, or the university is penalized if sales volume decreases.
- Establish **marketing and co-branding** opportunities;⁵
- Donate athletics, dining, and recycling equipment (**branded with company logo**);
- Make Coke or Pepsi the **“Official Soft Drink”** of the university and/or university athletics;
- Establish campus **brand ambassadors** whose jobs are to market sugary drinks to their peers.⁶





What's at stake?

This toolkit focuses on pouring rights at *public* universities for two reasons. First, freedom of information laws make it easier for advocates to obtain contracts from public colleges and universities, enabling more targeted and effective advocacy.

Second, promoting sugary drinks is in conflict with public colleges' and universities' inherent responsibility to serve the public good. Universities enter into pouring rights contracts at the expense of human health and planetary health, often contradicting their own commitments. This is hardly surprising, given that contracts are typically arranged through campus procurement, corporate relations, athletics, and dining departments, without consulting health or sustainability experts, students, or faculty.

Pouring rights contracts in effect make universities corporate partners in the sale of sugary drinks and of beverages in single-use containers, despite their negative health and environmental [impacts](#). Instead of making the healthy choice the easy choice, universities with pouring rights contracts are creating campus food environments that put their communities' health at risk and interfere with sustainability efforts.

What's the path forward?

Mounting pressure from students, faculty, and other stakeholders suggests that opposition to pouring rights contracts is not just a trend but a concerted movement for change. Some universities have taken steps to improve their beverage environments, including ending or amending their pouring rights contracts. Some campus community members want a healthier beverage environment on campus; others want to hold Big Soda accountable for human rights and environmental impacts in their supply chain, while still others want public education to be free from corporate sponsorship. Every voice should be at the table when decisions are made about pouring rights.

This toolkit was created to support student-led advocacy to end or amend university pouring rights contracts and create a healthier campus beverage environment. While the primary audience is current students, these resources can be adapted for any campus stakeholder who wants to advocate for change. We are proud to include many original resources that CSPI created as well as links to excellent resources created by partner organizations.

MAKE THE CASE

The resources in this section provide evidence and carefully crafted messages for advocates to use when making the case for reforming pouring rights on campus.

The Case for Ending or Amending Pouring Rights Contracts at Public Universities

When a pouring rights contract expires, it presents an opportunity to improve the beverage environment on campus. This two-pager discusses which goals can be addressed by amending the contract upon renewal and which can be addressed by ending it altogether.

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Health on Campus

Health authorities recommend limiting consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages because they are linked to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes and heart disease—in part by increasing the risk of weight gain—and they contribute to dental cavities. This fact sheet summarizes the strongest evidence on health risks associated with sugar-sweetened beverages.

Customizable Talking Points on Pouring Rights Contracts for Student Advocates

These talking points provide responses to questions you are likely to encounter as you work to broaden support for your campaign and win over decision-makers. This tool is intended to be downloaded as a Word document so you can customize it with information about your university's contract.

Customizable Pouring Rights PowerPoint Presentation and Script

This presentation is designed to give you the tools to communicate to students, faculty, staff, and administrators about the negative impacts of pouring rights contracts and some of the possible solutions. Adapt the slides and script for your campaign and get permission to speak to classes, the student government, the faculty senate, school administrators, and other stakeholders.



REIMAGINE THE STATUS QUO

The resources in this section will help advocates demonstrate the alternatives to pouring rights contracts that promote sugary drinks. Below you will find model beverage contract language and case studies from universities that have made a change.

Principles and Language for a Healthier Campus Beverage Contract

This resource recommends changes and additions to typical provisions found in pouring rights contracts with the goal of creating a contract that supports a healthier beverage environment on campus.

Case Study: Ending Pouring Rights at the University of Vermont

This case study explores lessons learned from the successful campaign to simultaneously end sales of bottled water and exclusive pouring rights at the University of Vermont in 2012.

Case Study: Ending Pouring Rights at Humboldt State University

This case study explores lessons learned from the successful campaign to end Humboldt State University's pouring rights contract with PepsiCo in 2017.

Case Study: Healthy Beverage Initiative at the University of British Columbia

This case study explores lessons learned from an ongoing initiative to reduce consumption of sugary drinks and encourage tap water consumption at the University of British Columbia. One of the initiative's key achievements was to modify the university's pouring rights contract with Coca-Cola to align beverage service on campus with nutrition guidelines.

Case Study: Ending Sales of Sugary Drinks at University of California San Francisco

The University of California San Francisco (UCSF) did not have an exclusive pouring rights contract when stakeholders successfully ended sales of sugary drinks in all hospital and campus venues. However, the tactics and lessons learned can apply to a pouring rights campaign, or anyone seeking to create a healthier beverage environment on campus.





ORGANIZE AND ADVOCATE

[Real Food Challenge Campaign and Organizing Resources](#)

These resources were created by one of our partner organizations, Real Food Generation. They were developed with another campaign (the Real Food Campus Commitment) in mind, but they are directly applicable to campus pouring rights advocacy and organizing. We encourage you to explore them and adapt them as needed for your campaign. Resources include: Strategic Campaign Planning, Campaign Strategy Worksheet, Coalition-Building Guide, Grassroots Fundraising Guide, Guide to Powermapping, Media & Messaging, Spectrum of Allies, The Organizing Cycle, Leadership, Storytelling for Organizing, Meetings for Organizing, Events for Organizing, and Research Actions.

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

Below are links to examples of materials used in real campaigns: one ongoing (UC Berkeley) and one successful (Humboldt State University).

UC BERKELEY

[Pour Out Pepsi Report](#)

[Pour Out Pepsi Social Media Guide](#)

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

[Brochure](#)

[Student government resolution](#)

[University senate resolution](#)

[Petition](#)

About CSPI and Contact Information

The Center for Science in the Public Interest envisions a healthy population with reduced impact and burden of preventable diseases and an equitable food system that makes healthy, sustainable food accessible to all. CSPI values independence, scientific rigor, and transparency.

If you have any general questions related to this toolkit or university pouring rights, please contact us at policy@cspinet.org.

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4. Greenthal E, et al. Incentives and Penalties Tied to Sales Volume in Contracts between Beverage Companies and Public Universities in the United States. *J Am Coll Health*. 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2022.2076098>
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