

Starting Your Campaign – Planning Your Strategy

A Toolkit & Guide to Action for Student Activists

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So you want to start a PVC-free schools campaign on your campus. Where do you start?

Form a Campaign Organizing Committee

Ideally you already belong to a group on campus (i.e. an environmental or social justice group) that will be coordinating the campaign. We recommend pulling together an organizing committee within the group to plan, coordinate, and lead the campaign. You can invite leaders from other allied organizations on campus to join the coordinating committee and be part of the campaign leadership team.

What Are Your Goals?

You're never going to get what you want without knowing what it is and how to ask for it. Sure we all want a toxic-free future and social justice, but how do we work towards it? How will we get there?

In our organizing and campaigning, we always like to identify short-term goals (in this case goals you and your group want to achieve in the next few months) and long-term goals (in this case goals you and your group hope to achieve by the end of the year or the following year). Goals should be measurable and achievable. In some cases our long-term goals will be goals we want to achieve in one year, and long-term goals are those we'd like to achieve in 3-5 years.

We strongly recommend holding a brainstorming meeting with your campaign organizing committee and key allies to brainstorm and identify these goals – that way everyone is on the same page and bought into the campaign.

Here are some suggested short-term and long-term goals you and your group can start from.

Short-Term Goals (By the End Of the Semester):

- Launch a campaign;
- Hold a screening of Blue Vinyl on campus that draws at least 100 students;

- Get 20 organizations on campus to endorse the campaign;
- Set up a meeting with the Director of Procurement and University President or Vice President;

Long-Term Goals (One Year From Now):

- Get 1,000 students to sign petitions for a PVC-free procurement policy;
- Get the Student and Faculty Senates to endorse your campaign;
- University adopts a PVC-free procurement (purchasing) policy;
- University agrees to divest from companies manufacturing PVC chemicals (i.e. Dow Chemical);

Research to Inform Your Strategy

In planning your campaign, it's helpful to do some basic research to inform your goals, targets, and overall campaign strategy. Your group can divvy up some of these research questions among volunteers so that one person isn't doing all the research, and even form a research committee!

Here's some questions you're going to want to figure out:

- How much money does the school spend on average every year in procurement (purchasing school/office supplies)?
- How much money does the school spend on average every year building and renovating buildings?
- Does your school have any green/sustainable procurement policies you can build on (i.e. to purchase chlorine-free and recycled paper, less toxic cleaning products, etc.)?
- Does your school have other environmental policies you can leverage (i.e. building LEED certified buildings)?
- Is the school investing in any major new building projects in the next few years (i.e. new dorms, academic buildings, stadium, etc.)?

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- Does your University hold investments in PVC chemical manufacturers (i.e. Dow Chemical)?

Power Mapping

So now you know what you want, and your group is conducting research to inform your strategy, but who can give you what you want? How will you achieve your goals?

Questions you and your group wants to research:

- Who has the power and influence to get the school to adopt a PVC-free procurement policy (assuming that's your goal)?
- Who has influence over those decision-makers?
- Who do you have the most power over?

In most cases at Universities, the main decision-maker in this case is the director of Procurement/purchasing, however as students you don't have much direct influence over that person. However you likely do have more influence over the University President, who would likely be your campaign "target."

Who Can Help Influence the Decision-Makers?

You and your campaign team want to think about who has influence over the decision-maker? Here's some things you want to think about:

- Is this decision-maker concerned about the environment?
- Do we know if this person has any friends in the environmental movement you know?
- Are there any "green" influential alumni you could talk to?
- He/she on the board of a local non-profit?
- Does the decision-maker regularly attend a religious institution?
- Are there any friends/family members you may know?

