

UCI SUSTAINABILITY NEWS



Message from VPCI

CREATING A CULTURE OF REDUCING WASTAGE AT NUS TOGETHER

I am pleased to share the UCI Sustainability News, an update of the collective efforts and progress we are making toward our [Campus Sustainability Roadmap 2030](#). Sustainability at UCI is a shared journey. Through close collaboration among faculty, administration, and student groups, we are strengthening our campus operations while fostering a culture of partnership and shared responsibility across our community. This article features the efforts under the “Dematerialise” pillar of the Roadmap to reduce waste.



Ridge View Residential College (RVRC) students found that disposables were a major component of the NUS waste stream in a waste composition study.

COLLECTIVE ACTION TO CURB RISING WASTE

Modern conveniences shape many everyday choices on campus - takeaway disposables, food waste from buffets, and the disposal of unwanted items down hostel rubbish chutes. As a result, campus waste increased steadily from 3,426 tonnes in FY2022 to 5,069 tonnes in FY2024.

Campus waste composition studies conducted between FY2022 and FY2024 showed that takeaway disposables (13%) and food waste (29%) together account for almost half of all waste disposed. Imagine 67 buses filled with takeaway disposables – that’s how much we throw away in a year!

UCI has a three-pronged strategy to tackle the growing waste problem.

- 1 Place well-designed recycling touchpoints across campus to nudge sorting behaviour
- 2 Make reuse choices more attractive with the redesign of reward schemes and amenities
- 3 Shape culture norms on reducing wastage for long-term behaviour change

This strategy brings environmental action to the forefront, making it easier for people to adopt greener habits as everyday choices.

DESIGN DEFEND DECARBONISE **DEMATERIALISE** DIALOGUE



Resource Sorting Station at Valour House.

1. MAKING RESOURCE SORTING EASIER TO GET RIGHT

Since January 2026, UCI has completed the rollout of **15 Resource Sorting Stations** across all hostels. Each station is data-enabled to track the collection of key recyclables: PET-1 bottles, HDPE-2 containers, metal cans, glass containers, and cardboard/paper, in segregated streams.

To promote careful sorting and divert recyclables from general waste, **113 Recycle Right bins** have been placed across campus, particularly in high footfall areas. NUS implements a successful single-stream recycling system to minimise contamination and ensure collection is accepted for recycling.

For more details, refer to the [Campus Sorting Guide](#) on NUS recycling practices and commitment to **responsible end-of-life management**.



Choosing reusables instead of single-use cups can reduce environmental impact.

2. ACTIVATING REUSE NORMS THROUGH INCENTIVES & AMENITIES REDESIGN

Beyond recycling, UCI has worked with dining tenants to make it more attractive to **Bring Your Own (BYO)** tumblers for takeaway drinks in canteens and food courts, using a combination of incentives (\$0.30) and disincentives (\$0.20). Since its launch in August 2025, the **reuse rate** - measured by dine-in and BYO transactions as a proportion of total drink purchases - has **consistently averaged over 70%**. This indicates that reuse habits are taking root.

People often ask, “Does washing reusable cups negate its environmental benefits?” or “Are reusables really better for the environment?” Life cycle assessments (LCA) show that reusable drinkware has a lower environmental impact over its lifespan than disposables, even after accounting for washing. This is because the one-time material and manufacturing impacts are spread across many uses, unlike single-use cups.

The BYO campaign has expanded to include fruit juice stalls and will be implemented **campus-wide by end of the year**. Diners are also encouraged to ask for reusable cups for dine-in meals. To promote healthier choices, **more ambient water coolers** will be placed at canteen and food court entrances.

3. BUILDING A CAMPUS CULTURE OF WASTE REDUCTION

Infrastructure cues and reward schemes are important, but culture and social norms ultimately drive behaviour. Take catered events as an example. When buffets are over-ordered, informal redistribution mechanisms such as Telegram groups mobilising individuals to finish leftovers are often used to avoid wastage. While well-intentioned, precise ordering and controlling portions are a better choice to lower costs, minimise waste and encourage thoughtful consumption as a daily habit.

The Central Procurement Office and UCI will encourage departments to consider **right-sizing catering by default, shifting focus toward prevention** rather than relying on post-event redistribution to manage surplus food.

In a campus survey of 1,932 staff and students, **80% of respondents strongly agreed that staff should model sustainable practices** on campus. Our daily choices, both as individuals and in leadership roles, influence what is seen as normal and acceptable. Over time, these choices define what it means to be a sustainable university.



Commit to zero food wastage by right-sizing catering orders.

COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS:



FUNDING: NUS SAVE SUSTAINABILITY FUND

GOT A GREEN IDEA? LET'S MAKE IT HAPPEN

Disposable takeaway fees are channelled to the NUS SAVE Sustainability Fund to support student-led sustainability projects that create meaningful impact on campus and beyond. Applications open twice a year, during the Summer and Winter windows. Keep an eye out for the Summer call for applications soon!



INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

28 FEB 2026 | 9 AM - 11 AM

MEETING POINT: RIFLE RANGE NATURE PARK
VISITOR PAVILLION LEVEL 1

COME SAVE OUR FOREST TODAY!

EVENT SPOTLIGHT: PROTECT OUR BUKIT TIMAH NATURE RESERVE

Be part of NUS SAVE's Invasive Species Management (ISM) effort and help restore the balance of our forests! Learn how to identify and remove invasive plants while making a real impact to SAVE Singapore's primary rainforest. Let's protect our forests together!

What to Bring?

- Water Bottle
- Umbrella / Raincoat (in the event of rain)
- Reusable gloves (optional, if you have them)



Do fill up the [indemnity form](#) before attending the session.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT: GREEN LABS INITIATIVE

Laboratory buildings account for over 50% of campus energy consumption, making lab efficiency central to our decarbonisation efforts.

The **Green Labs Initiative** supports faculties and research teams in running safe, efficient, and future-ready labs through practical measures such as optimising equipment use, improving ventilation efficiency, and promoting sustainable procurement, without compromising research quality or safety.

A dedicated **Green Labs resource webpage** with guidelines and best practices is currently under development and is expected to launch in Q3 2026. In the meantime, interested faculties may reach out to attend Green Labs engagement sessions in May and September.



SHAPING OUR CAMPUS TOGETHER