

# Menstrual Equity for \$22 a month:

How one health sciences  
library brought free menstrual  
products to an entire  
university

*Donna Baluchi*  
*Spencer S Eccles Health Sciences Library*  
*University of Utah*



# OBVIOUS MENSTRUATION FACTS

Statistically, about **one-third of people in the world** currently menstruate

Those that menstruate can be surprised by their **period starting unexpectedly**

There is **shame and stigma** surrounding the topic of menstruation

Period products are **prohibitively expensive** and taxed as a luxury

# WHY MAKE MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS FREELY AVAILABLE?



If you offer toilet paper for free, soap for free, and paper towels for free,

but only have an old, often empty, vending machine that charges users 50 cents to gain access to menstrual products,

you are telling anyone who menstruates that their health and hygiene is either unworthy of collective care or should be punished using capital

# HOW WE DID IT

June 2019 - Discovered a small surplus in one department's operating costs. Wrote a quick proposal for menstrual products to be purchased for six library bathrooms.

July 2019 - Informed LGBT Resource Center and other EDI campus groups of our two gender neutral bathrooms and free menstrual products

November 2019 - Office of Diversity partnered with facilities to provide free menstrual products in all bathrooms on campus, meeting with us to discuss rollout, logistics and any problems we encountered.

January 2020 to April 2021 - only about half of campus bathrooms have menstrual products due to COVID-19 closures (potential completion August 2021)

# Was it *really* only \$22 a month?

- Initial June 2019 purchase - 1000 tampons: \$100, 250 pads with wings: \$30, 6 baskets: \$60 = **\$190**
- August 2019 purchase - 900 liners: \$50, 576 pads: \$54 = **\$104**
- January 2020 purchase - 900 liners: \$50, 576 pads: \$54 = **\$104**
- May 2020 purchase - 1000 tampons: \$100, 600 lines: \$30, 384 pads: \$40 = **\$170**

The \$22 was originally calculated before the January 2020 purchase. As of May 2021, the average is now \$23.

*Between June 2019 and March 2021 we had about 250,000 patrons pass through our library.*

# ADVOCACY DISCUSSION POINTS

- **It's so inexpensive:** "For less than what I paid for lunch, we could provide a month's worth of hygiene and healthcare for vulnerable patrons. No one is going to take them all to build a tampon fort - if they're taking them, they need them."
- **Consider public health:** "This is a public health concern - without proper access to menstrual products, at worst patrons (and some employees) are at risk of infection and at best will have to miss class / work / meetings, etc."
- **Gender equality and reproductive health:** "Not providing menstrual products is a subtle form of discrimination, and effects the health and bodily autonomy of patrons who are menstruating. Imagine having to carry around toilet paper everywhere, and imagine if you ran out and needed some."
- **Truly be equitable:** "Yes, it should be in ALL bathrooms, even gendered ones - you never know who might need one for any reason, even if it's just grabbing one for a friend."



# Contact:

[donna.baluchi@utah.edu](mailto:donna.baluchi@utah.edu)