

Changing Olin Coffee Behaviors

Sustainable Design - Individual Project
Fall 2011, Olin Year 3

My individual project in Sustainable Design was to design around the coffee consumption behaviors of Olin students. An atrocious amount of 250 disposable coffee cups are used by the 330-student population *every day*.

Aim: I wanted to **reduce the unnecessary use of disposable coffee cups** at Olin. I replicated the ‘use-and-throw’ mentality of the cups but with the ceramic mugs in the Dining Hall.

Design: I started with some user research of coffee-consuming Olin students. It was clear that they preferred coffee cups: can be thrown away, convenient to carry to class, held more coffee than a mug, and had a cover to avoid spills.

I targeted the portability issue. To mimick the ‘use-and-throw’ of disposable cups, I positioned bins across campus where students can leave used ceramic mugs. For 5 days in December, I worked with the Dining Hall staff to remove the disposable cups completely (only available if asked for) and **campaigned via student ads for only the use of ceramic mugs**.

Results: The use of disposable cups reduced by 7 times in the 5 experiment days. Student feedback suggests that next steps are to prototype a cover for the mugs so they avoid spills. The Dining Hall hopes to keep up this initiative in the coming semester.

