

# YOUNGSTOWN FOUNDATION DONOR REQUEST GRANT APPLICATION

**Organization Name:** Youngstown State University:

Student Government Association (SGA)

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## **Agency History and Mission Statement:**

The key function of Student Government Association (SGA) at Youngstown State University is to represent the interests of our fellow students. In doing that, we pursue tasks in the best interest of the students; more closely unite the interests of undergraduates, graduates, faculty, and staff; encourage on-campus involvement; promote improved community and University conditions; and develop lasting relationships within the surrounding community. SGA has been voicing students' commendations, concerns, and suggestions since its establishment in 2003. A few of its most prominent current initiatives include professor evaluations, degree-specific curriculum plans, revision of the academic advising and scheduling procedures, and installment of water bottle refill stations.

## **Project Description:**

During the fall semester of 2013, a student mentioned to SGA representatives that she wished water bottle refill stations would be installed on campus. As student representatives, SGA began to pursue this issue. Water bottle refill stations are water fountain-like stations with an upright water bottle refill component that allows students to use refillable, reusable water bottles. The stations filter the water and thus eliminate the necessity for students to purchase bottled water. Each station is also equipped with a counter that records the number of water bottles refilled to date at the station.

YSU SGA administered student surveys to confirm the need for these fountains, and students responded overwhelmingly that they were unsatisfied with the current and often outdated water fountains on campus. They expressed interest in using water bottle refill stations should they be installed in the campus student center, the student recreational center, academic buildings, and campus housing. As a result of this initial request, two stations were installed in 2014 in the student center, Kilcawley Center, and the student recreational center, Andrews Wellness Center (photos included in the Appendix). Both Kilcawley Center and "the Rec" funded roughly one half of the cost of each fountain, and Student Government Association used a portion of its administrative budget to cover the

remaining half. Following the installation of the fountains, students responded with wonderful feedback regarding the benefits of the water bottle refill stations. Additionally, YSU Recycling noted a decrease in water bottles recycled close to the fountains, believing that students are refilling their bottles rather than tossing them! While not necessarily equivalent to the number of water bottles saved, within the last 9 months the two YSU refill stations have refilled over 45,000 water bottles.

This academic year, SGA continued the initiative and successfully secured campus support and community funding for refill stations to be placed in academic buildings including Maag Library, the Williamson College of Business Administration, DeBartolo Hall, Cushwa Hall, and potentially Bliss Hall. In order to fulfill students' requests of refill stations in on-campus residences, SGA reached out to University Housing and Residence Life. However, they are unable to afford the entirety of the project.

SGA feels strongly that water bottle refill stations are necessary in campus residence halls and apartments. In these locations, water fountains are aged and often in declining condition. Students, who are financially burdened by their education, can potentially save funds by avoiding the purchase of plastic, non-reusable water bottles. They can instead use environmentally-friendly water bottle refill stations for their drinking water needs. Several other peer universities (listed below) have water bottle refill stations; thus SGA is further motivated to update our university's residences to meet this standard.

Water bottle refill stations in campus housing will serve resident students, YSU Housing and Residence Life employees, and both students and community members who utilize residence hall multipurpose rooms. There are currently over 700 residents living in the buildings in which we hope to install refill stations. Of that number, 235 are out of state students, and 30 are international students, representing 15 different countries, with no access to a personal vehicle with which to travel to the store to purchase bottled water. The campus dorms can house 870 students and YSU Housing is expecting that number next academic year. Moreover, another 200 are athletes, commonly from out of state and also without transportation but with definite water-drinking needs. From this, we estimate that approximately 1500 students will use the water bottle refill stations each day.

The installation of water bottle refill stations on campus will help Youngstown State University improve its overall appeal to both the student body and general public. Universities that implement environmentally-conscious policies and support plastic conservation efforts are able to market this attribute to their current and potential students. Installing the new, efficient water bottle refill stations will not only increase Youngstown State University's overall appeal, but it will also bring the University to the same standard of surrounding universities. Many universities including Ohio State University, Oberlin University, the University of Cincinnati, and the University of Toledo have water bottle refill stations and have had tremendous success in reducing their overall plastic bottle waste and raising awareness regarding recycling reusable materials.

Goals of the initiative are as follows: address facility shortcomings, save students funds, and encourage reduction of plastic water bottle waste. First, many of the water fountains around campus are in desperate need of maintenance. One of the water fountains in Cushwa Hall, home of the Bitonte College of Health and Human Services, has been malfunctioning for an extended period of time. The spigot forces water to shoot out over the edge of the fountain and onto the floor. This not only causes an environment in which students must walk precariously, but it is also wasteful. The pressure pads on certain fountains become lodged, causing them to run continuously for hours and even days. Having fountains that waste water and money does not help alleviate YSU's financial issues. Apart from the initial costs of installation and the replacement filters, the University can decrease spending on waste from leaks and maintenance workers constantly fixing the current fountains. Fountains in other buildings, including campus residence halls, experience similar problems and often have such weak water pressure that a person struggles with a small drink of water.

In addition, many of these fountains are not aesthetically pleasing due to their outdated appearance and the observable buildup of calcium on the spigots. This deters many students and guests of the University from using the fountains, as they may deem it unsanitary. The refill stations, being contemporary in appearance and attractive to see during a tour for potential students, can be indicated with an explanation of how the University is on par with other larger universities, specifically allocating funds to the direct needs of the student body and upholding a green initiative.

Furthermore, Youngstown State students will receive many benefits from the installation of the refill stations. Not only will Youngstown State University enrich its community and culture by promoting awareness about the importance of recycling and reusing water bottles, but it will also help students maintain a healthier lifestyle by encouraging water consumption due to a more convenient and cost-efficient method of filling their bottles. Student residents commonly purchase large 24-40 packs of plastic bottles, a periodic purchase that is costly and can be eliminated with these water bottle refill stations. Overall, we see that the benefits greatly outweigh the costs!

In regards to a project timeline, we plan to order the stations as funds become available, with installation occurring during the summer semesters. This coming Fall, SGA will promote the placement of refill stations in YSU residences during Welcome Week by distributing reusable water bottles. YSU Recycling has agreed to collaborate with SGA to conduct waste audits for the recycling receptacles near water bottle refill stations to assess if they are in fact reducing plastic water bottle waste. We invite you to attend our water bottle giveaway event, and we will follow up with you regarding the results of the waste audit.

As far as projected outcomes, student surveys have indicated that the refill stations will be most certainly be used. One hundred and forty one resident students were surveyed, 134 of which would like water bottle refill stations in the dorms, and 125 of that group indicated that they would use a water bottle refill station one or more times daily if placed in the dorms. The two current refill stations have potentially reduced plastic waste for YSU Recycling by over 100 pounds. It is expected that students will save money and become more environmentally conscientious as a result of the refill stations.

**Total Cost/ Budget for the project or program:**

In an effort to supply all on-campus residents with access to water bottle refill stations, one station will be placed in each of the following buildings, with the associated cost of each unit and installation for the total estimated project cost of \$8365.00.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Fixture Costs</b>	<b>Installation Estimate</b>	<b>Total</b>
Kilcawley House	\$895.00	\$300.00	\$1195.00
Cafaro House	\$895.00	\$300.00	\$1195.00
Lyden House	\$895.00	\$300.00	\$1195.00
University Courtyards Building A	\$895.00	\$300.00	\$1195.00
University Courtyards Building B	\$895.00	\$300.00	\$1195.00
Wick House	\$895.00	\$300.00	\$1195.00
Christman Dining Hall	\$895.00	\$300.00	\$1195.00

The refill station fixtures will be purchased from a local Youngstown vendor, C&V Wholesalers Plumbing Distributions. The installation will be performed by YSU's maintenance groups assigned to each of the above auxiliary buildings. Labor estimates were based off of the past costs of labor to include work hours of laborers, any replacement water lines or connections, and any corresponding plumbing supplies needed.

**Amount of Request:**

SGA has met with YSU Housing and Residence Life, who has agreed to pay for half of the total project costs. **We are asking for a matching grant of \$4182.50.** This amount will guarantee that all residence halls and the primary dining location on campus have a water bottle refill station installed.

**Other Possible Funding Sources:**

Student Government Association is a department of Youngstown State University and thus is limited in its ability to fundraise in the traditional way. YSU students have asked SGA if they were planning to fundraise for this initiative, and while the entire SGA body would like to, university policy prohibits a department from holding a fundraiser. Thus, SGA is limited to asking other campus departments for help, such as we have done with Housing and Residence Life, and external community grant support.

Several student leaders of our Water Bottle Refill Station Initiative have researched what community grants are available. One grant available is the Youngstown Rotary Foundation Community Advancement grant. Over Thanksgiving break, our student leaders compiled an application for that

grant and just last month received word that they would match the university-contributed funds for a water bottle refill station in Maag Library.

Another avenue of funding currently being researched includes asking local water companies such as Gordon Brothers Water Company and Culligan's Water Systems for support. However, we are less optimistic about their support since they are not currently university vendors. Research on companies with water initiatives and mission statements aligning with our goal include: Starbucks Coffee, Whole Foods, Mustard Seeds, and the Green Team. SGA is contacting privately-owned companies with our project description to solicit support. Thus far, our contact with YSU's recycling department indicated that the Green Team does not have funds available for a project with the goal of plastic bottle waste reduction like this one.

We plan to continue reaching out to local companies over the next several months. If you or your organization has additional suggestions, please let us know.

Above all, thank you for your consideration.

### Appendix:

Here is the first water bottle refill station we installed in the Student Center of YSU! Kilcawley Center matched our contribution to pay for fixture and facilities installed it over spring break of 2014. To date over 23,000 water bottles have been filled here.



Here's is the promotional signs we use to encourage students to use the fountain. With your support of this project, we would place your logo on the signs in the dorms and adjust "compliments of YSU Student Government," to say, "compliments of the Youngstown Foundation."



Here are photos of possible locations for the water bottle refill stations in on campus resident halls and apartments.

Fountain in Cafaro House Residence Hall, First Floor:



Fountain in Lyden House Residence Hall, Second Floor:



Fountain in Kilcawley House Residence Hall, Second Floor:



We plan to give students water bottles as promotional items for SGA and your group. These will allow them to use the refill stations and achieve the project goals.



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