Dear President Bridges,

We are very grateful for your interest in promoting paper conservation here at Whitman. Reducing unnecessary paper use is the primary focus of the Paper Campaign, a student group that has been active on the Whitman College campus since the spring of 2004. Over the past three years we have worked in many different ways to raise awareness about paper waste on campus and to encourage conservation. While our efforts have not been without their successes – most notably the new college policy of purchasing all 100% recycled-content printer and copier paper – printing on campus has increased since 2004. As a small, but dedicated, student group, our access and visibility, and thus our influence, is limited. For these reasons, we are particularly excited to have you, as President of the College, promote paper conservation.

Per your request, and with the help of suggestions from members of the Conservation Committee, we have compiled a list of recommendations that we firmly believe would decrease unnecessary paper use on campus. Our list of recommendations focuses on ways to reduce the consumption of plain, white printer/copier paper, but we have also made suggestions for reducing paper waste related to campus publications, Whitman letterhead, special print jobs from Production Services, and paper products such as hand towels. Some of our recommendations will have small effects; others could have very large effects. Some will cost the school nothing; others will require funding. And some may be implemented immediately, while others will take time to show results. Because it would be difficult to categorize each of our recommendations according to the factors listed above, we have divided our list into two categories: actions that require no funding and little staff or faculty time, and actions that will require funding or increased labor. Within each of these lists, our recommendations are placed in descending order of their potential to reduce paper consumption (1 = greatest impact). We hope you will pass our recommendations onto staff and faculty and choose to fund those actions that are likely to have the greatest impact on reducing paper consumption here at Whitman. If you wish to discuss any of our recommendations, or have questions for us, please do not hesitate to contact any member of the group.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and especially for your interest in making Whitman a more environmentally sustainable college.

Sincerely,

The Paper Campaign
[1] Move the Debate Team to Electronic File Management

We have put this at the top of our list because the Debate Team’s use of paper is a “point-source” problem. By targeting this specific group, which makes only one-sided print-outs, using literally hundreds of reams of paper a year, we could see an immediate decrease in the college’s paper use. Moving the debate team to a new system of file management would require some technical changes to their operations as well as habit changes, but debaters across the country and around the world have already switched to electronic file management. The Paper Campaign does not wish to promote the purchase of new computers or other technologies for the Debate Team – high-tech equipment represents a very serious environmental problem. However, no such purchases are necessary; the change to a nearly paperless Debate Team can be made with the technology that is already available to the debaters. Jay Heath has already begun work with the Debate Team to find new ways for them to reduce their paper consumption.

[2] Verify that all faculty, staff, and lab computers print double-sided by default

While most of the campus computers are set to automatically print double-sided, there are several that are not. Nearly all of the lab computers – accessible to students – are set to double-sided printing, but faculty and staff computers largely are not. In addition to staff and faculty computers, several Mac computers throughout the campus are not set to automatically double-side. There may be some PCs that also have this problem. As far as students are concerned, this is a particular problem because Whitties now assume that the computers will print double-sided automatically and, therefore, do not check the default status before printing. Staff and faculty will require special attention from WCTS on this matter as most of those whom we have spoken with do not know how to change the print settings on their computers. This problem can be remedied with some effort from WCTS.

[3] Reduce the number of course catalogs, phone directories, Undergraduate Conference schedules, and class schedules printed each year: make more
documents available by request only

Given the wonderful example of the new Whitman Planner (previously contained in the Student Handbook), we think this recommendation has a great deal of promise for reducing our paper waste – and the amount of money spent on printing – because so many of these resources are now available online and students no longer use their paper copies. To implement this recommendation, the college would first alert students that these documents are now available only by request, and then could start by printing only half as many course catalogs, directories, etc., as usual. The number of these copies that are requested would dictate how many copies should be produced in the future.

[4] Encourage professors to have hard copies of all required readings available in the library and alert students to this alternative to printing e-reserves.

Reserve readings only became available for printing in the 2005-2006 academic year. Since this time there has been an enormous increase in the amount of printing, though there has also been a decrease in the amount of photocopying. Previously, if students wanted hard copies of reserve readings, they had to pay 5 cents a sheet to photocopy them; they can now print them for free. While the cost of photocopying discouraged some students from obtaining their own hard copies, other students refrained from photocopying simply because they saw it as an unnecessary use of paper. Like checking a book out of the library, students were able to access the needed reading material, find a cozy place to sit, and take notes on the reading as necessary. Now, few classes provide hard copies that can be checked out at the circulation desk, and students who previously were content not to have their own copies must either print off the reading or strain their eyes by reading multi-page PDFs off the screen. Professors are allowed to request that hard copies of reserves be available for check-out for all of their courses, and so long as they inform their students that these copies are available, students will not be forced to waste paper or compromise their vision.

[5] Make conservative orders of Whitman Letterhead that can become outdated; consider switching to a higher recycled-content letterhead; encourage careful copy-editing before printing multiples on letterhead

Large boxes of entirely unused letterhead stationary and envelopes are a regular occurrence in Memorial Building’s recycling as well as recycling from Penrose House. The bulk of this unused letterhead, we believe, is recycled when the Whitman logo is updated or certain information on the letterhead becomes outdated. Given that the school does change the look of its logo periodically, it would save paper and money if smaller orders were placed as necessary for such letterhead. Over the past few years the cost of reordering printed materials like letterhead has decreased; therefore, there is less incentive to place such large bulk orders. Similarly, the quality of recycled-content paper has greatly increased recently; all of the College’s letterhead, when reordered, could be switched to paper containing a higher recycled content without diminishing the high-quality look of the letterhead. Other times when large quantities of letterhead have been sent to recycling, they have contained printed messages with errors in them – presumably the reason why they have been recycled rather than sent out. If an error could be caught after printing multiple copies, it seems it might be caught before printing. And, if an error is not caught until after printing, perhaps the severity of the error
should determine whether or not letters are reprinted. This last recommendation is clearly not easy to enforce, but might be a message passed on to the many offices on campus that produce bulk mailings.

[6]
Track quantity of programs used for campus events and adjust future ordering to reflect demonstrated need

Similar to letterhead, hundreds of untouched copies of lecture, performance, convocation, and commencement programs are found on a regular basis in campus recycling. While there may be a good reason for printing a few more copies than are likely to be necessary, these untouched copies regularly come in the hundreds. Given that Whitman conducts the same ceremonies year after year, and brings speakers to campus of the same high caliber year after year, we recommend that the administration keep records on how many programs were actually used at each of these events and limit production of these pamphlets to the demonstrated need. Though it is readily apparent, it should be noted that limiting orders according to need will save the college money.

[7]
Increase printing fees for Printing Services

Groups and individuals throughout the campus would likely decrease the number of copies they made of fliers, table-toppers, programs, posters, etc., if the fees for such jobs were increased by a few cents each. It seems unlikely that this would cause problems for budgets; it would only push people to prioritize what they need and do not need to print.

[8]
Reduce paper announcements/increase use of e-mail for announcements

This change is already underway with the new “announcements” listserv. Further reducing paper announcements, however, may require addressing paper conservation directly at Staff and Faculty Development Days. Without making a direct request to a captive audience, this recommendation is unlikely to produce significant results. Announcements come from all corners of the campus and getting the message out to people one individual at a time would be inefficient and would likewise fail to demonstrate that reducing paper waste is important to the whole Whitman community. If announcements are sent out in hard copy in order to ensure they are noticed, a good alternative would be mail-merge e-mail messages that show up as individually addressed, and messages flagged as “important.” WCTS teaches workshops on how to use mail-merge and could certainly show interested individuals how to flag e-mails as important and how to check to see that they have been read.

[9]
Encourage professors to consider double-sided as a part of paper formatting, and to have grade penalties for one-sided papers

Most students print their papers off of campus printers and therefore automatically print on both sides; some students, however, still use inkjet printers and do not take the time to double-side their papers or to use paper that has already been printed on one side. While this recommendation may rankle some students, double-siding a paper is no less a part of formatting than 1-inch margins or double-spacing. Professors who feel comfortable taking off points for these formatting specifications should be encouraged to consider taking off points for students who do not make the effort to conserve paper.
Track the amount of printing resulting from e-reserves. If the system does not begin to save paper over the next two years, consider returning the system to being a non-printable resource

While we understand that many students and faculty are pleased that e-reserves are now printable, when The Paper Campaign heard about this change we were immediately concerned. Moving reserve readings to an electronic format held great potential for reducing paper usage only so long as the documents were not printable. Previously, hard copies were also available for those who did not wish to read off the screen. We have been told that in the near future the e-reserve system will actually save paper as students become adjusted to reading on the screen. The system has been in place for nearly two years now, and there has been only an increase in printing. Whitman has been tracking the overall amount of paper printed from each of its labs for the last five or six years. Therefore, if someone were to look at printing rates prior to printable e-reserves and compare them to printing rates after printable e-reserves (with the necessary adjustment for a general trend of increased paper use) the College could determine whether or not the e-reserves are increasing or decreasing the amount of paper used at Whitman.

It is important to mention in this recommendation that in order to prevent students from unnecessarily printing reserve readings, we must make them consider whether it is worth printing these documents. For our classes we are expected to pay for books or to check them out of the library, why then should other course readings be free for printing and not available as a public hard copy? This is particularly important when one considers the unavoidable fact that students do not always do all of the reading that is assigned to them. This fact is unfortunate but there is nothing that either faculty or the administration could do to change it, and ignoring it only compounds the problem when it comes to paper use. Because printing at Whitman is free, students will almost always print off their readings in their entirety regardless of whether they will read them in their entirety (this is sometimes a way of assuaging one’s guilt: “Well, I may not get to the reading, but at least I’ll have it on me.”). As a group of students, it seems foolish to us to give our selves and our peers an open opportunity to waste paper. When students had to pay for hard copies, they were far less likely to make them if they didn’t actually think they’d get around to the reading.

Recommendations that Require Funding &/or Labor:

[1] Earmark money for WCTS specifically for implementing and maintaining a print quota system

Whether one is measuring electricity use, gas mileage, or paper use, study after study has shown that when people are aware of their consumption they will curb it. While we are quite certain, given the evidence from other schools with paper quotas, that implementing such a system would save us an enormous amount of paper, we cannot put the system in place if WCTS does not have time to maintain it. We believe that this addition to the campus printing system would have the most dramatic influence on our paper consumption, though it is not the least expensive option.

A print quota system would give each student a print limit for the semester or academic year; each time a student chose to print a document, the computer would tell them how many sheets of paper remained in their quota. While the limit would be set so that students were highly
unlikely to use up their quota (perhaps giving seniors with theses a higher limit), simply seeing a number would encourage students to question whether or not they needed to print their documents. The quotas would be influential as well because students who reach the limit would have to pay for print jobs beyond their quota, perhaps 5 cents a sheet as is the case for photocopying.

The second element of this quota/print-tracking system would be a computer placed next to every lab printer that would serve as a checkpoint for all print-jobs sent to the printers. When students send jobs to the printer they would then go to the computer next to the printer, log on, and confirm or cancel the print job. This would be particularly valuable because the greatest immediate source of paper waste on campus is probably uncollected printouts. This is the case because in each of the computer labs and in the library, the computers are located at a distance from the printer(s); students can easily accidentally send multiple copies of the same print job without realizing it, or - as is frequently the case in the library - simply forget to pick up their printouts because it was too much of a hassle to walk to the printer to pick something up in the middle of working.

[2] Encourage greater use of online course management; Training workshops for CLEo:

The faculty’s limited use and in some cases resistance to these new electronic forms of course management are entirely understandable. New computer programs are very daunting unless someone from Technology Services is able to take the time to train faculty in how best to use them. While there is no doubt that not all professors can be convinced to move to online course management, it is certainly the case that many would take advantage of the system if WCTS had time to train them in groups or one-on-one. The advantages of systems such as CLEo are numerous and include online syllabi and assignments, as well as the potential for submitting homework and essays online, and having professors grade work online using software akin to Word’s Track Changes.

[3] Replacement policy for photocopiers: simple duplexing capability and capability to produce PDFs

While most of the campus’s photocopiers are capable of double-siding copies, not all of them have simple systems set up for duplexing - the instructions are just plain complicated. As Whitman replaces its photocopiers, a key consideration should be the ease with which a user can duplex his or her copies. New photocopiers should also have the ability to make PDFs rather than printouts and should be hooked up so that this capability may be used. The newest photocopier in the library, for instance, is able to make PDFs but it is not set up so that students can use this capacity. Being able to make PDFs from hard copies allows individuals to circulate documents without either making hard copies or risking having others adjust/edit/copy/paste their documents. PDFs also allow users to photocopy books and retain electronic copies of the material rather than printing it out.

[4] Increase use of electronic signatures for internal documents

Electronic signatures are now being used for student worker timesheets, and - we’ve heard - in the President’s Office. Since there are more than just these documents that require signatures on campus, there is room to expand the use of this technology among staff, faculty, and students.

[5]
Reduce paper notices on bulletin boards by replacing bulletin boards with public chalkboards or white boards

We have already addressed increasing the cost of printing posters through Production/Distribution Services, but by decreasing the number of public bulletin boards the school would also see a decrease in such posters. We do not want to limit the potential for making public announcements about events, speakers, performances, etc. Therefore, as an alternative we propose replacing some of these bulletin boards with public space chalkboards and or white boards. These boards would be reserved for announcements and cleaned off periodically as are the current bulletin boards. Having boards such as these would also encourage public expression and artwork on Whitman’s campus.

[6] Place one tray in each campus photocopier that contains paper that has already been printed on one side

Such a tray exists in one of the library’s copiers and has been popular with students. It uses one-sided printouts and one-sided copied pages for new print jobs. With the simple instructions placed in a small sign-holder next to the copier, students, staff, and faculty can access this paper tray for their own copying.

[7] Replace paper towels in public bathrooms with hand-cloth machines or hand dryers

We are not certain that hand-cloth machines or hand dryers would be more environmentally sound than the recycled-content paper towels that Whitman currently uses, but it is worth researching. Matters such as electricity use, cost for repairs, and shipping would need to be taken into account; no longer having paper towels available, however, would eliminate much of the paper waste in the bathrooms. If these towels are not replaced, the College should consider replacing the towel holders, because it is not an uncommon occurrence to see an entire stack of unused towels end up in the trash bin having fallen out of the dispenser directly into the can below.