

Women's Leadership Initiative
Women's Health Subcommittee
Wednesday, December 5th, 2018



To: Mr. Kevin Kane
Assistant Vice President of Facilities Operations
Office of Facilities Management

Mr. Robert Convery
Assistant Director
Office of Facilities Management

From: Women's Leadership Initiative
WLI@sju.edu

RE: Request for trash receptacles in individual restroom stalls on campus

Dear Mr. Kane and Mr. Convery,

We represent the Women's Leadership Initiative Executive Board and General Members. We are writing to bring a serious concern to your attention and seek your action in rectifying the issue. At present, there are several buildings on campus that do not have trash receptacles in individual stalls for disposal of feminine hygiene products in women's bathrooms. We have found this problem in academic buildings (Post Hall and Barbelin Hall) and all residence halls except for Villiger Hall. This is a serious issue with implications for individuals' health and dignity as well as for the university in terms of cost of operations and its reputation. We outline these points below and hope that you agree with us and take action to rectify the problem. We hope to receive a response from you when classes resume in January.

Health

The lack of trash receptacles in individual restroom stalls poses a significant health risk to the Saint Joseph's University community as a whole. Improper contact with discarded feminine hygiene products could potentially lead to transmission of bloodborne pathogens such as the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Students, cleaning and maintenance staff are at the highest risk of exposure. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, trash receptacles must be provided specifically for the disposal of feminine hygiene products. These receptacles must have a "solid tight-fitting cover" and be "lined in such a way to prevent contact with the contents" (OSHA: 1910.141 - Sanitation).

It has been brought to our attention that in some cases, in lieu of individual trash receptacles, a blue recycling bin has been substituted. For example: Students living in McShain Hall share one trash bin for all 36 women on the floor. The 36 female residents are expected to use one 3-gallon recycling bin to dispose of feminine hygiene products. Both the number of residents and the size of the bin have resulted in unsanitary conditions for both residence and custodial staff.

Additionally, the lack of trash receptacles in individual stalls forces many women into the uncomfortable situation of having to plan out which bathroom to use. This causes women to delay using the restroom until they are in a different building. Extending the use of the hygienic product unnecessarily increases the risk of toxic shock syndrome for these women.

Cost Efficiency

The lack of trash receptacles in individual restroom stalls creates not only health concerns, but also directly increases overall costs for the university. When sanitary items are disposed of incorrectly, it often causes toilets to clog and overflow as they are non-degradable. This creates a need to hire a plumber to repair clogged toilets from sanitary products. It is more cost efficient to buy trash receptacles in bulk, rather than to consistently spend money for plumbing services.

Basic Necessity/Dignity

Outside of SJU, trash receptacles in individual stalls are found universally in public restrooms. Therefore, the school does not supply women with the basic hygienic standards available everywhere. Moreover, it is very inconvenient for students, faculty, and visitors alike to not be supplied with a private and sanitary way to dispose of their feminine hygiene products. This may appear as a minor inconvenience, but when over 50% of the SJU community is affected by this, it becomes a larger issue that must be addressed. Specifically, in residence halls, this deprives women of this necessity in their own living space. Overall, women should have an environment where they feel safe and secure, not needing to disclose their personal health matters to others.

Reputation of SJU

The lack of trash receptacles in individual stalls poses a significant threat to damaging Saint Joseph's University's reputation. Given that the individual receptacles are universal elsewhere, it is embarrassing to not have it on our campus. It demonstrates a lack of knowledge and/or lack of respect regarding women's health thereby sending the wrong message to prospective students and their families who may encounter this problem first-hand during their visits to campus.

The lack of trash receptacles in individual restroom stalls is a serious self-contradiction of Saint Joseph's University's mission and the values it represents. We claim to be a school that embodies the Jesuit values, but without these waste receptacles, our institution fails in four aspects. First and foremost, living the Magis is the philosophy of doing more for Christ, and therefore doing more for others. This university is most certainly not doing more for others by denying women this basic health necessity.

Moreover, Saint Joseph's encourages our community to be with and for the women and men who attend this university, as well as with and for the staff who upholds this institution. By no means are we showing the unity among each other if the basic needs of women on this campus are not met.

The Jesuit value of Cura Personalis outlines care for the whole person, which includes recognizing and addressing individuals' fundamental needs, which the lack of receptacles in individual stalls neglects. Furthermore, the Jesuit value of Forming and Educating Agents of Change stresses the importance of students advocating for and working toward a society in which human dignity is upheld. Unfortunately, many women do not feel that their dignity is upheld by the University.

We hope that we have convinced you of the serious nature of this issue and that you are moved to rectify this situation. We hope to hear from you soon. We can be reached at WLI@sju.edu.

Sincerely,

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