Smithies are Still Purchasing Period Products

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2023-02-21

Periods are expensive. But for people who menstruate buying period products is not a choice. Access to period products is a necessity, not a luxury.

At Smith College, students can purchase period products at either the Bookstore or at pad and tampon dispensers scattered throughout campus bathrooms in academic and administrative buildings. Students not only have to pay to access the period products in dispensers, but are unable to walk into their house bathroom and grab a pad or tampon. House bathrooms do not have period product dispensers. If you are lucky, another student on your floor may have left some spare pads or tampons in one of the bathroom cubbies.

The inability to afford or access period products is defined as period poverty. A study conducted by [BMC Women’s Health](https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5) found that 14.2 percent of college-aged women have experienced period poverty, and people of color were more likely to report struggling with period poverty. Even with the majority of the student population menstruating at Smith College, access to period products remains limited on campus.

While a box of tampons or pack of pads is around $7 dollars, the cost of a tampon or pad from dispensers around campus is typically 25 cents. A Smith student using 20 period products per cycle, would spend five dollars on their menstrual hygiene using period products solely from dispensers. Therefore, providing students with sufficient period products for an entire academic year would cost Smith College around $45 per student.

On Monday, February 6th, Smith took initiative in providing students with free period products. The Schacht Center hosted a workshop for Smithies all about menstrual cups. Students who attended the session had a brief training session on safe use and walked out with a free menstrual cup and menstrual cup cleaner. The menstrual cup workshop was sponsored by Wellness at Smith and the DivaCup Community Impact Grant. Smith had 100 menstrual cups to give away to students, with each DivaCup costing $35.

Additionally, Smith supports student sexual and reproductive wellness by providing free contraceptives. Smith provides students with free barrier contraception in every house and each Schacht Center bathroom. The Schacht Center also provides students with emergency contraception free of charge.

The average cost of emergency contraceptives, Plan B and Ella, costs around $50. That is equivalent to the cost of about 7 boxes of tampons or packs of pads.

Period poverty remains an issue at Smith College but offering educational workshops that provide free menstrual products is a step in the right direction. The widespread availability of free contraceptives may encourage increased accessibility of period products in the future. No one should have to worry about how they will be able to afford their next box of tampons or be forced to stay home from class because of a lack of access to menstrual products.