

# The College Store

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**REDUCE,  
REUSE,  
RECYCLE**

**DOING IT ALL FOR  
SUSTAINABILITY,  
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**PLUS**

**HELPING STUDENTS  
INCLUSIVE ACCESS  
RESEARCH**

**STORE DESIGN  
SHOWCASE**

# REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

College stores  
are doing it all and  
more in the campus  
movement to  
sustainability.

by Ellen Ryan

**A**s colleges and universities from coast to coast pledge to go carbon neutral and use fewer of the planet's finite resources, their campus stores are right there—both on the sales floor and behind the scenes.

Sometimes pushed by students, sometimes pulled by visionary directors and staff, stores contribute to the effort in a variety of ways, from reducing energy use and packaging to reusing cardboard and unsold/defective clothing to offering recycled products in every department.

Let's begin with the two best-known, most visible product categories in campus stores: clothing and textbooks. Reduction and reuse in these areas has been simply revolutionary, up and down the supply chain.





BROWN

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BROWN UNIVERSITY

BROWN

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Upcycled Apparel

MADE FROM UNSOLD OVERSTOCK

BROWN UNIVERSITY

REFRIED APPAREL

BROWN UNIVERSITY

LIMITED

Bucket Hats



### UPCYCLING GOES TO SCHOOL

Merriam-Webster defines “upcycling” as recycling something in such a way as to create a product of a higher value than the original. That’s the aim of Refried Apparel, Re/Done, Looptworks, and other companies that repurpose clothing materials into something more saleable.

Refried Apparel has added campuses to its original base of pro sports teams. Got damaged, defective, broken-sized, or otherwise unsellable clothing you’re about to write off? Send X number to Refried and get the same number back when the company reassembles your goods and others into a form of your choosing.

“People on campus are thrilled at the idea of repurposing unsold product,” says Sheri Vukasin, director, Carroll College Saints Shoppe, Helena, MT. She sent off some 50 shirts, sweatshirts, and zip jackets and received pillows, drawstring totes, and canvas totes.

Refried Apparel took the Carroll logo from sweatshirts, added material from elsewhere plus canvas interiors and straps, and produced impressive tote bags that Vukasin sold for \$54 each. Pockets from the sweatshirts became part of the bags. Given cream-colored shirts with a floral design, Refried took matching colors from other sources and created pillows (selling for \$35).



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Carroll College Saints Shoppe**







Working with a third-party vendor to repurpose unsold apparel items into new garments has helped the Brown Bookstore to sell off a lot of inventory. And the clothing has been a hit with students, too.

The University of Dayton Bookstore, Dayton, OH, sent Refried items from clearance “that eventually would have sold, but this way they get a new look,” says Jennifer Napier, senior merchandising manager. “We’re lucky that the look of cut-and-sewing is in these days: one sleeve one color, the other another color, and so on.”

Marketing gets a boost through posters and other materials the company provides to explain what goes into its products and where they come from.

Brown University’s Brown Bookstore has reordered from Refried five times in a year, going through \$200,000 in deadstock. High-level administrators modeled the apparel

for two administrative groups. “We had people running over to the store the same day,” says director TJ Cochran.

A student majoring in fashion design at both Brown and the Rhode Island School of Design approached the Brown Bookstore about remaking some garments from seconds and deadstock, as she had the year before for RISD’s store.

Brown Bookstore launched her initiative, Missing Button, in September and took 117 orders in the first four days. Each item is unique, with, say, its yoke changed, the sleeves bloused, or the whole item cropped. “That scarcity drives sales,” says Cochran. A trunk show was scheduled for Family Weekend.

Sustainability “is on everyone’s mind,” says Vukasin at Carroll College. “I would like to learn about other clothing lines that are recycled and recyclable.” She buys from League Legacy—whose Reclaim line is made largely from recycled plastic and Re-Spin shirts use upcycled cotton—and advertises the fact to customers. Reclaim makes up one-eighth to one-16th her total clothing inventory (it would be more if Reclaim made sweatshirts).

“Kids definitely make the connection between flimsy water bottles and what they are wearing,” she says. I like to be able to offer the option to my customers. If I can find anyone else doing it, I’d probably switch to them, too.”