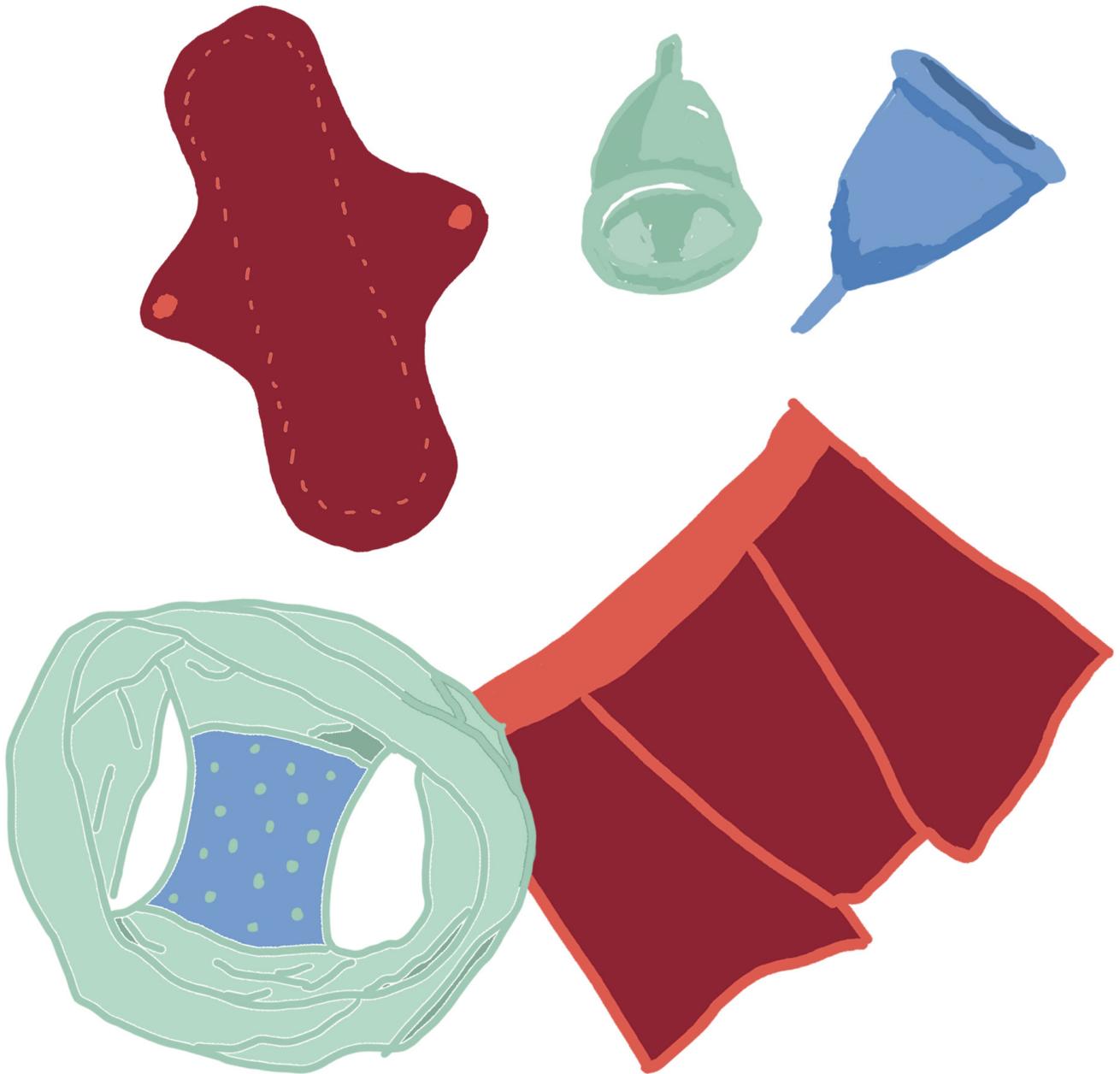


# Flow Don't Throw

*Reusable Menstrual Products on Campus*



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## In this guide, we cover:

- Understanding the context of the menstrual equity movement (p. 19)
- Building a team (p. 23)
- Securing support and finding funding (p. 29)
- Ordering and distributing reusable menstrual products (p. 35)
- Educating and engaging others (p. 42)

You'll also find **Case Studies** of other student organizers paving the way for menstrual equity on their campuses.

## Inclusion and Sensitivity

People's relationships to their menstruation (or lack thereof) and anatomy, as well as their comfort level with inserting anything into their bodies, is extremely personal. This understanding is reflected within this guide, to make sure that all interactions can be as inclusive and sensitive as possible. The goal of promoting reusable menstrual products is not to convince people to change their habits or beliefs, but to offer options that enable individuals to choose what is right for them. Additionally, this guide advocates for a gender-neutral understanding of menstruation. The majority of menstrual education, products, and discourse is heavily gendered and feminized, and falsely assumes that all - and only - women menstruate. We understand that not all menstruators are women; transgender men and gender nonbinary people can also have periods. These experiences and perspectives are a vital part of the conversation, making it important to de-link menstruation from womanhood and femininity - we hope your project will work towards that!



## What is Menstrual Equity?

“Menstrual equity,” a term coined by Jennifer Weiss-Wolf, refers to **equitable access to safe, affordable ways to manage menstruation**, most often referring to menstrual products. She writes that “the ability to access these items affects a person's freedom to work and study, to be healthy, and to participate in daily life with basic dignity. And if access is compromised – whether by poverty or stigma or lack of education and resources – it is in all of our interests to ensure those needs are met.”<sup>1</sup>

In places where manufactured menstrual products are uncommon or unaffordable, people mostly use cloth to absorb their menstrual flow. Some communities also use cotton, toilet paper, leaves, or other materials from their immediate surroundings. Of course, people have been using these things since before commercial products were even invented. But this can become a health issue when there is not clean water or soap for washing, a social issue if these methods are not effective enough to keep menstruators feeling comfortable and confident, and an educational issue when these two other factors prevent individuals from living their daily lives, such as attending school.

Another component to access is menstrual stigma. Most patriarchal cultures, including our own, shame menstruation and everything associated with it. This taboo leads to anything from experiencing mild embarrassment to forced isolation during menstruation. All forms of stigma make it harder to participate in daily life as a menstruator, creating barriers for them to learn about menstruation openly without misconceptions or superstitions, access what they need, and feel comfortable and safe.

Activists around the world are fighting for this issue from perspectives of personal well being and education by providing the physical and educational resources for communities to

<sup>1</sup> Weiss-Wolf, Jennifer. *Periods Gone Public: Taking a Stand for Menstrual Equity*. Arcade Publishing, 2019.



learn about menstruation and reproductive health. Within the US particularly, there is a focus on period poverty among menstruators who are poor and homeless. These folks often have to choose between period care and food, or use unhealthy or uncomfortable methods due to lack of money. Additionally, political activists are pushing for legislative policy to eliminate the “luxury tax” on menstrual products to make them free and available in the bathrooms of publicly funded institutions and schools. Students are starting campaigns to push their colleges to do the same, as well as organizing menstrual product drives and period kit packing to provide to local shelters.

One organization that does this on campuses throughout the country, and offered a lot of insight for this guide, is [PERIOD - The Menstrual Movement](#), an organization that has 150+ registered chapters at colleges and high schools across the country. They hold collection drives to make period kits that are distributed to local shelters, offer education and free menstrual cups to people who might experience period poverty, and fight for accessibility of period products in their cities and on campus. We hope that this guide can support you to do this in your own campus community, and know that there are resources like PERIOD and PLAN to support you every step of the way!

# Case Study

## Connecticut College

From 2015 to 2018, Emma Horst-Matz led a campaign at Connecticut College to institutionalize access to pads and tampons on campus. While reusability of the products was not the primary focus of the project, it was something that Emma and her peers explored every step of the way. She started the conversation by meeting with the campus Sustainability Officer, who introduced her to the Facilities Purchaser. She then applied for money from a campus fund to get 3 tampon and pad dispensers, highlighting that this initiative

would promote greater equity and community health. Once the funding was granted, tampons and pads were ordered in bulk from the campus's general supplier of toiletry products.



photo courtesy of Emma Horst-Matz at Connecticut College

To institutionalize the program across campus, Emma continued to meet with a variety of decision makers and stakeholders, including the Vice President of the Student Government Association, the Assistant Director of Sustainability, the Director of Gender and Sexuality Programs, and the Custodial staff manager. Because of Facilities and Custodial staffs' hesitation to take on the the responsibility of restocking dispensers, Emma and her friends took on the task. Due to their perseverance, the Dean of Institutional Equity and Inclusion decided to adopt the project and dedicated funding towards a new Work Study position to manage and refill the dispensers. By the end of the year, Emma had secured funding for 6 more dispensers, and partial funding for the products. Through these efforts, Connecticut College became a leader in the movement for menstrual equity, influencing the 2016 New York State policy to provide free pads and tampons in schools, shelters, and prisons across the state!