Josh Wroniewicz, Director of Purchasing

Josh Wroniewicz, the Director of Purchasing for all retail dining locations on campus, shed further light on the types and quantities of single-use plastic bottles sold around campus. Among Wroniewicz’s responsibilities are to place purchase orders with suppliers that are sent to him weekly by individual retail location managers, as well as to manage UR’s contracts and purchasing agreements with these vendors.

On UR’s campus, Coca-Cola holds exclusive “pouring rights” (as the sole provider for fountain drink machines), “vending rights” (as the sole provider of beverage vending machines), and concessions rights. Additionally, the contract guarantees Coca-Cola an allotted majority percentage of campus sales space.

In the other sales space not occupied by its majority vendor Coca-Cola, UR is able to stock its shelves with any competing or non-competing beverages they wish (i.e. bottled coffee, boxed water, yerba mate, kombucha, etc.). The space allocations between Coca-Cola products and non-Coca-Cola are determined by the “slots” in a beverage refrigerator. In other words, UR is still able to purchase competing beverages from other vendors, as long as Coca-Cola retains its pouring rights, vending rights, and specified majority sales space on campus.

The contract is renegotiated every 5-10 years. Because the contract is centered around exclusivity and majority sales space agreements, rather than demand, UR has the freedom to purchase as much or as little Coca-Cola products as they wish, mostly dependent on the historical demand of customers.

Wroniewicz affirms that while the contract with Coca-Cola affords UR with competitive prices for beverages as well as other benefits, he never desires to become a completely Coke campus. Having other vendors on campus, Wroniewicz says, “is part of our ability to provide flexibility and keep interesting things [in the dining locations].”
In contrast to the predominant contract that UR has with Coca-Cola, UR has smaller purchasing agreements with other vendors that supply the retail locations with its unconventional items, such as kombucha or yerba mate. These purchasing agreements, Wroniewicz explains, outline a purchase volume and delivery schedule but do not cement UR into exclusivity like the Coca-Cola contract. Wroniewicz recalled his experience managing ETC and Dean’s Den and bringing in experimental beverages. “It’s all driven by demand,” he says. “If I brought a new product in and I wasn’t selling several cases of it a week, it wasn’t worth having, and I can’t afford to give up a slot for something that doesn’t move.” The Boxed Water Is Better boxed water brand sold in ETC is one of these competing brands that requires competitor shelf space, as specified in the Coca-Cola agreement. When Wroniewicz first ordered boxed water for ETC, despite having “a great sustainability story,” it flunked in sales and Wroniewicz pulled it off the shelves after two months.

In contrast, a success story of consumer demand is Guayaki yerba mate brand, which grew from having single slot in the general ETC refrigerator to its own dedicated case on the floor of ETC. Wroniewicz emphasized Dining Services’ willingness to take student suggestions for new products, but also conveyed the necessity of continuous customer demand to keep the items on the shelves.