



**STAPLES**  
Business Advantage

## SUCCESS STORY: STAPLES THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

### The University of Washington Promotes Supplier Diversity with Staples & Guy Brown

#### The Situation

The University of Washington (UW) is committed to expanding opportunities for small and diverse businesses, including those certified by the State of Washington Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) and classified through the Small Business Administration (SBA).

UW's collaborative approach to increasing diversity spend includes the combined efforts of three organizations on campus: Procurement Services, the Business Diversity Program (BDP), and the Foster Business School Consulting and Business Development Center.

In conducting an evaluation of its contract utilization, UW realized that a number of departments on campus were using the E&I Staples contract for janitorial/sanitation products. They determined it might be a good opportunity to bring in a diverse supplier and approached Staples with the idea of implementing a contract with Guy Brown – a Staples diverse alliance partner. Guy Brown is a certified Minority Women Business Enterprise, a Small Disadvantaged Business, as well as a Woman Owned Small Business.

#### The Obstacles

Although UW was utilizing E&I's competitively solicited Staples contract, there was no contract in place with Guy Brown. UW worked with the E&I team to craft an agreement to support their needs – with a particular focus on ensuring consistency in pricing.

"Oftentimes there is an assumption that things will cost more with a diverse supplier, and that's a challenge we had to overcome," said Claudia Christensen, UW Procurement Manager. "In some cases that may be true, but the best price does not always represent the best value. Small businesses can provide benefits beyond favorable pricing—and that message really needed to be shared."



"Small businesses can be more nimble or more flexible than a larger company, or they can sometimes provide custom stocked items that a larger company might not carry. We really encourage our folks to give these businesses a chance to demonstrate their capabilities, because that's the only way you'll find out what they can do."

**Claudia Christensen**  
UW Procurement Manager  
The University of Washington



“We’re continually looking for our larger suppliers to help us support small businesses. By creating these partnerships, everyone wins.”

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## The Actions

UW is currently in the process of migrating Staples purchases to the E&I Guy Brown contract. The goal is to eventually place all orders directly through Guy Brown.

With a new contract in place, the UW procurement department and the business diversity team focused on effectively promoting the value of Guy Brown and small businesses in general - to campus end-users.

Claudia worked closely with the team at Guy Brown to identify specific departments on campus that have federal contracts or require utilization of federal small businesses so that these individuals were aware of how Guy Brown can help meet their federal small business contracting goals.

“It is incumbent on diverse suppliers to conduct their own outreach by getting out on campus and meeting with each of the departments to discuss what they’re buying, how they’re buying it, and possibly uncovering new savings opportunities,” she said.

## The Results

Two major departments on UW’s campus – athletics and housing – are now using the Guy Brown contract for custodial supplies, with current spend at over \$300,000 and on the rise.

“Our staff has shown they are willing to migrate as long as the pricing and service remains consistent,” Claudia explained.

Guy Brown now has a local presence in the Seattle area – the company has provided a dedicated local representative specifically for UW, something the University believes truly demonstrates their commitment to the relationship.

In addition to Staples, UW has and asked a number of its existing supply partners to identify a diverse alliance partner they can work with. “We’re continually looking for our larger suppliers to help us support small businesses,” Claudia said. “By creating these partnerships, everyone wins.”

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### About Staples/Guy Brown

*Staples Business Advantage® is the business-to-business division of the world’s largest office products supplier. Whether your needs include technology, facilities, furniture, print or promotional items, Staples Business Advantage specialists will customize the ideal solution for your institution. Staples is a member of the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC), an organization that certifies and supports minority-owned businesses, including Guy Brown. Guy Brown is a certified Minority Women Business Enterprise, Small Disadvantaged Business, as well as a Woman Owned Small Business.*

### About E&I

*With nearly 5,000 institutional members, E&I Cooperative Services is the member-owned, non-profit sourcing cooperative focused on education. Established in 1934, E&I provides members with access to a diverse portfolio of competitively solicited contracts and electronic procurement solutions to help reduce costs, save time, and optimize supply chain efficiencies.*