

2019-2020 GREEN GRANT AWARDEE

Zimri T. Henshaw- Bucha Leather



Temple University's Student Green Grant builds upon Temple University's commitment to sustainability by funding projects led by students that focus on advancing Temple University's sustainability mission and have a positive impact on our local environment and community. This award is given in the late fall semester for project implementation over the course of the following calendar year.





2020-21 Awardee

Zimri T. Hinshaw

Bucha Leather



The leather industry produces more than four million tons of solid waste per year, making it one of the highest polluting industries worldwide.

Approximately 80% of leather worldwide is tanned using a chemical called Chromium Sulfate. This process is highly toxic, and because of lax regulations and enforcement, millions of tons of toxic waste are being released into waterways around the globe. This process ultimately affects both the people that make the leather, as well as the people and wildlife that rely on the water for survival. Essentially, the production of leather when mismanaged, poisons the environment for people and animals.

Unfortunately, vegan leather or non-animal leather, isn't much better. One of the materials used to make vegan leather is Polyvinyl Chloride, (PVC). Greenpeace even went as far as naming PVC, the product used in plastic leather production, as the single most environmentally damaging plastic.

These terrifyingly unsustainable statistics are what urged Zimri and his team of innovative thinkers to develop their solution, Bucha Leather Inc.

How it works

Bucha Leather is made from renewable bacterial nanocellulose, one of nature's fundamental building blocks. It's found in nature, residing in trees, bacteria, and algae. Zimri realized the unique growing conditions of nanocellulose allow for layers of densely interconnected fibers to grow together, resulting in massive mats that can be dried and processed, creating a new and sustainable textile.

How is Bucha Leather a climate solution?

Bucha Leather provides sustainable leather alternatives, 100 percent biodegradable product that is animal-free, with zero plastic additives while having high strength and durability.

Zimri, along with his team, have built a sustainable production system. Their goals are focused on a full cycle of sustainability, creating zero waste and low impact on the earth. After the growth period is complete and treatments are applied, the material dries and is ready for its finishing touches. Bucha products come full circle, even after use. The textiles can be composted and recycled back into earth - not to mention, its only byproduct is delicious kombucha! Zimri is constantly thinking about Bucha Leather Inc.'s sustainable innovation.

How does Bucha Leather stand out?

Zimri states, "our product is widely appealing. It produces the same appeal to people that adore real leather." He understands the potential for pushback from real animal product users, but combats it by saying, "you have to make what you are doing widely appealing and transcendent of conflict so that it's the best solution period... bringing more change instead of more polarization." He jokes how they love the vegans AND the meat-eaters alike and want everyone to benefit from Bucha Leather.



How do student-led initiatives affect change on campus?

Zimri notes how important it is to cast a broader and more inclusive net when it comes to reaching new students on campus. Initiatives like the Green Grant, that involve students and campus organizations, make a big difference. He stresses the importance of providing students a platform to actively work to solve environmental issues on campus. By doing so, together we will foster an even stronger, and more sustainable community.

Zimri notes with excitement that when a student approaches him and says, 'I've seen every pitch you've done, every event you've been at, etc... That's when I know there is a community forming around sustainability and entrepreneurship at Temple University.'

He urges Temple University organizations and students to ask themselves the questions, "how do we make this more visible?" It's important to provide new and returning students the platform to make a difference on Temple's campus, within the Philadelphia community, and even on a global level. The goal of student-led initiatives like the Green Grant are to connect Temple Students to the movements they care about, while contributing the resources they need to reach their goals.



What's happening next in Bucha Leather Inc.'s future?

Zimri notes that the company will begin moving into new products as they achieve new levels of technical strength and durability. Bucha Leather Inc. is currently “working with partners to craft the possibility of shoes, pillows and clothing.”



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