History

The EcoMug concept was hatched in 2002 in Harold Glasser’s ENVS4100: Campus as a Living Learning Laboratory course. Students began by selling the mugs and working with local businesses to offer discounts, but the program did not achieve widespread adoption. After a few iterations the idea caught the attention of the Western Student Association (WSA), who funded the project until 2007. In 2009, WSA passed a resolution that all incoming students should be given EcoMugs which was supported by President Dunn, the Office of Business and Finance, the Division of Student Affairs, the Office of Academic Affairs, the Office of Community Outreach, and the WMU Bookstore. During the same school year new student researchers in Dr. Glasser’s class conducted extensive quality control testing of over 60 types of reusable beverage containers. They loaded them in backpacks upside down to check for leaks, threw them down staircases in Wood Hall to test durability, and stared at them for hours seeking enlightenment. Ultimately 6,000 mugs were purchased and distribution began.

Since 2009 over 20,000 EcoMug have been distributed to students, faculty and staff. Incoming freshman, transfer students, and graduate students continue to qualify for free mugs, and all other members of the WMU community may purchase EcoMugs at a cost of $7.00 and EcoJugs for $5.00. Major distributions occur at events during fall welcome week. Day to day distribution happens at the Office for Sustainability.

In 2011 WMU began installing filtered, chilled water bottle filling stations in campus buildings. Office for Sustainability and Facilities Management have collaborated to install hydration stations in most major campus buildings. Paid for with the Sustainability Fee, the project is intended to offer students, faculty, and staff even more incentive to "lug your mug."