

News Release

BASF and Tongji University collaborate on used-pillow recycling initiative to explore circular economy concepts

- **Explores material recovery through the collection and recycling of used pillows**
- **Provides Gen Z with practical exposure to recycling and circular economy practices**

Shanghai, China – October 21, 2026 – BASF and Tongji University, a top-tier research university located in Shanghai, China, and Shanghai Yida Resource Recycling Technology Co., Ltd., a specialized organization in the circular economy sector, have launched a used-pillow recycling initiative to show how polyurethane foam from used pillows can be collected and evaluated for potential recycling routes and new applications. The project also provides younger generations with practical exposure to material recovery processes and circular economy principles.

The initiative combines BASF's expertise in materials and recycling with Tongji University's strengths in education and research. Through the collection and recycling of used pillows made of Polyurethane foam, the project shows how materials that would otherwise be discarded, can be reprocessed and given a second life. Polyurethane materials are widely used in applications including furniture, seating, bedding and synthetic leather. Establishing circular models for polyurethane requires suitable material design, identified waste streams, appropriate recycling routes and cooperation across the value chain.

“Advancing circularity requires collaboration across industry, academia and

society,” said Silvia Mok, Vice President, Business Management Polyurethanes Systems, Performance Materials Asia Pacific, BASF. “Together with Tongji University, we are demonstrating the potential of material recovery, in this case polyurethane foams, while helping students better understand the role of resource efficiency, recycling and material circularity. Polyurethane provides important performance properties in bedding and many other applications, but developing circular models requires coordinated work across the material lifecycle.”

The project gives students, especially younger generation like Gen Z, opportunities to observe and engage with practical recycling processes, linking classroom learning with real-world sustainability challenges and solutions.

“This initiative provides students with valuable opportunities to connect sustainability concepts with practical application. By engaging directly with material recovery and recycling processes, students gain a deeper understanding of how innovation and collaboration can support a more resource-efficient future,” said Professor Du Huanzheng from the Institute of Ecological Civilization and Circular Economy at Tongji University.

The collaboration reflects a shared commitment by BASF and Tongji University to promote awareness and understanding of circular economy practices. By bringing together industry expertise and student engagement, the initiative highlights the importance of cross-sector collaboration in developing practical approaches to resource efficiency and sustainability.

BASF’s Loop portfolio uses recycling technology to convert suitable polyurethane waste into raw materials for new polyurethane formulations. The collaboration with Tongji University draws on the Loop concept to help students examine polyurethane circularity across the material lifecycle, including product design, material composition, collection, sorting, waste-stream quality and potential recycling routes.

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