

## **Sustainability Committee Activities 2008-2009**

### Activities of the Sustainability Committee in its inaugural year:

- Alumni and the current Swarthmore community demonstrated overwhelming interest in sustainability in their responses to the call for input on 2020 Planning for the College. As an initial response, in Spring 2008 the College established a Sustainability Committee (“SusCom”), comprising 4 faculty, 3 staff, 3 students, one alumnus, one member of President’s Staff, and the directors of the Lang Center, of Dining Services, and of Maintenance. The committee’s initial charge was to make recommendations on issues of environmental sustainability. Since its inception, SusCom has also added value to community-wide discussions regarding the sustainable use of resources; educated faculty, students, and staff about sustainability; and contributed solutions through innovation and example.
- SusCom’s earliest efforts included bringing a number of sustainability experts to campus:
  - ~Oberlin College’s Environmental Studies Program Chair and Sustainability visionary Professor David Orr
  - ~Matthew St. Clair ’91, Sustainability Director for the University of California system
  - ~Mark Alan Hughes ’81, the city of Philadelphia’s first Sustainability director (podcast here: [http://media.swarthmore.edu/featured\\_events/?p=58](http://media.swarthmore.edu/featured_events/?p=58))
  - ~Peter Raven, environmentalist, botanist, and longtime Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden
- It then invited a broad representation of College stakeholders to meetings to describe efforts already underway and of possible future best practices. These included: President Al Bloom, student groups (Environmental Justice Group, The Good Food Project, Earthlust, Green Advisors), leaders from Scott Arboretum, Grounds, ITS, Libraries, the Learning for Life group, Dining Services, and Environmental Services (housekeeping).
- Two websites were created to highlight and expand the “greening” of Swarthmore: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/sustainability.xml> focuses on environmental initiatives in the curriculum and on campus; <http://www.swarthmore.edu/suscom.xml> (SusCom’s web site) details actions taken and future recommendations.
- This year, SusCom began soliciting suggestions from community members via a physical, email, voicemail (610-690-5731), and website (<http://www.swarthmore.edu/x21982.xml>) location called the GreenBox ; these suggestions are posted on the SusCom website, along with responses about implementation from the Director of Maintenance and Dining Services Director, and the Committee. Especially attuned to budgetary constraint and the desire to

effect meaningful change quickly, SusCom began making preliminary recommendations to the Administration, prioritizing no- or low-cost efforts.

- Due to economic constraints, the College does not currently have funds to hire a sustainability director or additional faculty to teach about sustainability, so **we are looking to bring a sustainability expert to campus for a 1- or 2-year appointment as a Lang Visiting Professor**
- **Faculty at Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore convened a working group to add global climate change to our schools' curricula.** As a first step, Physics Professor Peter Collings has retooled one of his courses:

"PHYS 24: The Earth and Its Climate" will be offered in fall 2009 in a revised format and with a new name ("**The Earth's Climate and Global Warming**"). Instead of concentrating almost entirely on understanding the Earth's climate from a scientific perspective, it will develop climate science as a prelude to understanding the scientific, technological, economic, political, and ethical dimensions of the global warming issue. There are no pre-requisites, but basic concepts from biology, chemistry, and physics will be utilized. There are two sections of the course (i.e., students may take this as a lab-based course or a writing course).

- **In March, the College committed \$4,000, matched by \$5,000 in alumni gifts, to be one of 11 institutions forming the first cohort of participants in the Energy Management Collaborative, a peer-to-peer energy self-assessment program** designed by the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania (AICUP). Campus assessments will identify steps to take to reduce energy consumption and costs by up to \$500,000 annually.
- **Environmental Services changed practices** - reduction in toxic cleaners, all recycled paper products.
- **Dining Services' changed practices** - more locally sourced food and improved recycling and composting practices.
- **Sustainability tour on Alumni Weekend**, given by Director of Planning and Construction Jan Semler – **Friday, June 5 at 3PM** – "Tour of new facilities on campus: Meet by the piano in Parrish Parlors."
- **Student council voted to create a green-loan fund** after a student referendum identified this as the best use of residual student fees. SusCom has been tasked with identifying projects whose payback in resource savings can be used to replenish the fund.