

Sustainability Committee Minutes  
12/16/16

**Attendance:** Anne O'Donnell, Aurora Winslade, Ben Berger, Carr Everbach, Gigi Simeone, Mark Davis, Melissa Tier (notetaker), Nathan Graf (notetaker), Ralph Thayer, Sheila Magee, Sibelan Forrester, Sierra Spencer, Tao Wang, Tyrone Dunston

**Measuring Water Usage on Campus (Sierra Spencer)**

*Presentation*

- Summer 2016 research
- Goal: emissions reductions by conserving water from shower usage.
- More heat goes to dorm shower than keeping the dorm warm.
- The Green Initiatives Fund funded low-flow showerheads in the fieldhouse during Spring 2016 (2.5 gpm → 1.5 gpm).
  - A GA assessed student reactions and found little notice or complaint.
- Sierra then conducted research over the summer in Willets to see if a lower flow resulted in longer showers.
  - There was not a statistically significant difference between the students using the old showerheads and the students using the new ones.
- Sierra went out to swap out 242 showerheads in the rest of the dorms, which has the potential to save ~1 mil gal per semester.

*Questions*

- Isn't water an infinite resource?
  - No, its not infinite.
  - Treatment requires energy, chemicals, and infrastructure.
- What buildings have been covered?
  - Field house and most dorms, except Parrish, ML, Woolman, Kyle.
- Timing change with water pressure change?
  - Very slightly longer showers with lower flow heads, but not statistically significant.
- Upcoming communication plan?
  - Yes, an article in the Phoenix soon now that we're a semester in.

**Green Initiatives Fund Proposals**

*GA Project: Computer Energy Usage Monitoring*

- Requesting \$130 for equipment.
- Project is in partnership with ITS.
  - The supplies that they are asking for are reasonable as they cannot obtain them from ITS.

- Vote: CONSENSUS for full cost.

#### *GA Project: TerraCycle*

- Requesting ~\$300.
- TerraCycle recycles Solo cups, which are otherwise not recyclable. This is an interim solution as GAs work with OSE to identify ways for students to purchase compostable cups.
- Vote: CONSENSUS for full cost.

#### *GA Project: Waste Bin Labels*

- A group of GAs wanted to raise campus awareness that waste is going to the incinerator by labeling bins (trash, recycling, compost) across campus. This group did not stay in good communication with the PSRF waste group, however, and didn't realize until after submitting their proposal that the waste Fellows were working to replace all bins.
  - The group feels that the labeling of some bins, primarily office trash bins, is still worthwhile.
- Some concerns with the project idea:
  - We will be replacing all bins and putting up new signs soon
    - Exact timeline is not yet known
  - Labels might get covered by bags
  - Bins need to be facing the right direction for labels to be seen.
  - Bins aren't eye-level, so labels may not be noticed.
- Positives:
  - Important to educate people that our waste goes to Chester.
  - Key behavior change target.
- Possible next steps:
  - Just fund 'incinerator' labels for office waste bins.
  - Just fund 'incinerator' labels in certain office spaces (not necessarily on the bins).
  - Fund a pilot with a few locations.
  - Conduct a detailed survey of where this sort of labeling would be most helpful.
  - Instead of or in addition to the labels, the GA group should talk to each department about waste.
    - The GAs could get a member of each department to take on the task of putting on the labels.
      - Could tie really well into the upcoming 'Sustainability Guides' program (each department will have a sustainability point-person) to be launched next year.
  - Write a Phoenix article.
  - Host a faculty lunch education session.
- Vote: CONSENSUS for:
  - A 'do not exceed' amount of \$150 to place incinerator labels on or above office waste bins. This effort must be partnered with:

- Communication with each department and identification of an office liaison.
- Assessment of success through surveys of departments or small-scale collection of waste data.
- Public communication of project through school newspaper.

### *Good Food Project*

- The Good Food Project (GFP) is providing us with updates, as requested last year, as well as the corollary request for the next step in funding.
- Updates:
  - GFP was provided with funds at the end of last semester for 3 raised beds and soil. These were built in May and have been in use since then.
  - GFP, Grounds, and the Office of Sustainability hosted a novel volunteer group to keep up the garden during summer 2016.
    - Very successful; regular participation of students, staff, and some community members; harvested food was made available at the weekly CSA.
  - GFP continued to make harvested food available to students weekly throughout the fall.
  - GFP now maintains a work log at the garden and documents exactly what is being grown.
  - GFP conducted a survey of garden neighbors at the end of Spring 2016 and mid-way through Fall 2016. Clear improvement in attitudes about the garden.
- Current funding request:
  - A pre-fab shed, with installation cost, and a rain barrel for maximum of \$5,000.
    - This is the second step in a four-step funding process: 1) raised beds; 2) new shed & rain barrel; 3) table & benches; 4) fence.
- Vote: CONSENSUS that GFP should revise and present in person at next SusCom meeting.
  - GFP to identify the exact specifications of the shed.
  - GFP will also reach out to neighbors again to inform them of the specifications.
  - Funding approval will ultimately be given by the Ecosphere Executive Committee.

### **Updates of SusCom and Ecosphere**

#### **STARS**

- Deadline to submit relevant points is March 2 to be included in rankings by Sierra Club and Princeton Review.
- SusCom will next semester have to make a decision whether or not to get a rating.
  - We will need to devote a substantial amount of time to this discussion.
- SusCom will also be involved in developing recommendations of sustainability goals based on this year's STARS data.

### *Ecosphere Structure & Role of SusCom*

- SusCom may be less effective or even obsolete with the development of the Ecosphere structure and the Office of Sustainability.
  - SusCom is no longer the umbrella committee - there are paths for ideas, projects, decisions to bypass SusCom. So what relationship do we have with the other pieces of the Ecosphere structure?
- The three main committees (SusCom, Carbon Charge, and Crum Woods Stewardship) all now have written charges.
  - It is clear that there are many things not covered by Carbon Charge & Crum Woods - these fall to SusCom.
- SusCom now has a direct connection to College decision-makers, so we can (by reporting to ExCom) hand down decisions.
- SusCom seems to be doing a lot of vetting proposals - what else is our role?
  - STARS review & next steps.
  - Development of Sustainability Guides.
  - Planning of Sustainability Summit.
- How does SusCom stay informed of the goings-on of the Carbon Charge & Crum Woods committees?
  - We need to develop feedback loops within the Ecosphere structure.