

The Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee has been meeting since September 2008. The members of the committee are: co-chairs E. Carr Everbach and Ralph Thayer, Amanda Bayer, Nicholas Buttino, Joy Charlton, Maurice Eldridge, Kelsey Hatzell, Elizabeth Haegele, Nadine Kolowrat, Linda McDougall, Arthur McGarity, Rebecca Ringle, Michael Roswell, and Eric Wagner.

The committee's primary goal for the fall semester was to gather information from individuals and group representatives across campus about existing sustainability efforts and ideas for steps to take in the future. Accordingly, the committee met ten times this semester and heard from the following groups and staff members:

Sept. 5, 2008 – Al Bloom, President

Sept. 17, 2008 – no visitor, discussed committee charge and laid out agenda

Oct. 1, 2008 – faculty lunch presentation with questions and suggestions from the faculty

Oct. 6, 2008 – Environmental Justice Group, The Good Food Project, Earthlust,
Green Advisors

Oct. 20, 2008 – Scott Arboretum (Andrew Bunting)

Oct. 29, 2008 – Grounds (Jeff Jabco), ITS (Eric Behrens, Mark Davis); met with Earthlust at
their request to hear about 100% wind proposal (Everbach)

Nov. 10, 2008 – Libraries (Peg Seiden)

Nov. 19, 2008 – no visitor, discussed feasibility of several recommendations. Outside of
meeting, co-chair Everbach met with Learning for Life group (Diane Anderson)

Dec. 1, 2008 – compiled list of Greenbox suggestions and began discussing them

Dec. 16, 2008 – Finalized list of initial recommendations

Members of the committee were deeply impressed by the commitment of students and staff to issues of sustainability, the steps they have already taken to move the college forward, and the creativity and sophistication of their ideas for the future.

Among the first actions the committee took was the creation of a “Green Box” to collect campuswide suggestions for improvement of sustainability efforts. A physical “Green Box” now sits across from the Post Office in Parrish, an electronic “Green Box” link has been added to the student and faculty dashboards, an email address greenbox@swarthmore.edu has been set up, and a voicemail telephone number (X5731) established. Each Greenbox suggestion was read, reported to the committee, and in some cases, soon acted upon. In other cases, suggestions reflected actions already taken or considered, which made us aware of the need to publicize our good efforts already underway. Some suggestions were clearly infeasible and were not brought to the committee for discussion, though every committee member has access to the original Greenbox responses via Google spreadsheet.

Informed by these conversations and suggestions, the committee then compiled and reviewed the following list. Items in *italics* are ideas that are already undergoing implementation. Asterisked items are those that the committee recommends for implementation in the near future. We were especially attuned to budgetary constraint and the desire to effect meaningful change quickly, and so these first recommendations are no- or low-cost efforts. The committee will take up discussion of the other recommendations at the beginning of the Spring 2009 semester.

Low-cost recommendations

*Education of the community about usage habits:

Ask ITS to publicize proper actions people should take to save energy vs. wear and tear on computers

Ask ITS to provide public information about how much energy personal computers use when they are: (a) off, (b) sleeping, (c) on, etc.

Encourage staff, faculty, and students to turn lights off in halls and classrooms when not in use; educate the community about the beneficial effects (SusCom, Earthlust/Green Advisors, and SAC)

Encourage faculty to state explicitly what their students need to print (ex. no need to print 20 pages of references) – Carr to faculty

*Educate the community about steps already taken:

Publicize extent of EVS use of environmentally friendly cleaning products (Facilities, SusCom website)

Publicize extent of pesticide and herbicide use by Arboretum and Grounds (Grounds, Arboretum, SusCom website)

Publicize current efforts regarding rain harvesting for plant watering, and consider increasing the practice (Grounds, SusCom website)

Publicize the extent to which lights in the hallway in dorms are dimmed at night (Facilities and SusCom website)

Publicize correct battery recycling procedures and locations on campus, and consider creating more battery recycling boxes (Facilities and SusCom)

Publicize how building temperatures are determined (on Facilities webpage with link to SusCom website)

Remind community to tell Workbox about heating/cooling problems (e.g. need for weatherstripping)

*Establish goal with laundry vendor of converting one facility each semester to new energy/H₂O-efficient machines (investigate tying profits to energy/water savings)

*Work with Good Food, Grounds, EVS, and Dining Services to enhance composting operation for compostable paper cups and plates at the coffee bars and at faculty lunches

*Talk to departments about instituting reading return systems for classes taught frequently

*Encourage discount on coffee bar coffee if customer provides his/her own mug or uses a reusable mug; investigate coffee-cup collection and reuse system

*Ask ITS to change the default margins in Microsoft applications to decrease number of pages printed (Also possible: defaults for double-sided printing, Ecofont or other ink-saving settings)

*Ask Dining Services if there is a more sustainable way to distribute “bagged” lunches. Consider alternative: place all items on the counter, students choose the items they want and use their

own bags/carry it (saves time for people who bag the lunches, won't waste food students won't eat, and saves paper); provide students with recycled bags from the bookstore, etc.

**Provide pitchers of water at faculty lunches instead of water bottles, and metal flatware (to be placed in dishpan of soapy water after use) instead of plastic*

**Provide more explicit instructions for use of recycling bins; better pairing of trash cans and recycling bins in all buildings (Grounds, acknowledge GoodFood)*

*Provide copies of Green Advisor summary sheet on SusCom website and student dashboard

Ask Maurice Eldridge to ask community members to use less (acknowledge Earthlust)

Medium-cost recommendations

Consider making Green Advisors positions permanent, and paid up to 1 hour weekly at top pay scale; have a role in diversity workshop during first-year orientation (Dean's Office)

*Increase the number of drying racks available for student check-out through the current Green Advisors system (Facilities)

*Continue to provide compact fluorescents to first-year students (Facilities)

**Grounds and Good Food move food composting operation out of grandstand area to other side of access road*

*Ask SAC to provide extra trash and recycling bins at student events/parties

Implement plastic bag recycling

Monitor certain dorm halls for electricity use, and have competitions for reduction

Implement an incentive program for departments and faculty/staff to turn in lightly used computers for a benefit (ITS)

Larger-cost recommendations

Create a Green Loan fund or prize for student who proposes the best sustainability project

Commit to installation of electricity, water, and heat monitoring systems in all buildings

Include consideration of rainwater retention with green roofs, paving systems or holding tanks for any new or renovation construction.

Adopt a target percentage goal for locally grown produce and make the "local food coordinator" position permanent

Extend faculty mortgage benefit to staff so that they too can live closer to campus; subsidize Morganwood house rentals for staff

Reduce paper consumption: print-release software/hardware incl. a counter of printed pages on MySwarthmore

Buy 100% electricity from wind energy credits

Recommend that a Sustainability Director position affiliated with the Lang Center be incorporated into the long-range planning process

Convert vehicles (including shuttle buses) to hybrids

Initiate water conservation contest

Studies to Undertake

Study of efficacy of flush valve replacements that give the option of a 1.1-gallon flush for liquid waste or a 1.6-gallon flush for solid waste (Facilities)

Perform before/after study of occupancy sensors in lighting select locations

Perform turf grass study for alternatives where appropriate, including every-other week mowing of some areas (possibility of renegotiating current contracts)

Perform washing study of ceramic bowls/flatware vs. paper/styrofoam in Sharples; determine cost/benefit of composting paper products on campus

Perform study of faculty/staff driving to campus, including incentives for reduction and carbon offsets

Perform cost/benefit analysis of college-run (student-run) laundry facilities

Study occupant “comfort curve” in relation to building temperatures

Investigate student request for improved lighting outside of the Lodges: students reporting needing to leave lights on in their rooms in order to feel safe (Rachel Head, housing coordinator)

Study feasibility of an electronics recycling program (Jinny Shiffer, coordinate with county)

Study “used goods” exchange programs

Conduct costs–benefit analysis of making simple but energy-conserving faculty housing repairs a higher priority