

## Sustainability Committee Minutes 9 February 2009

Attending: Liz Crampton (guest presenter), Ben Dair (guest presenter), Rebecca Ringle, Carr Everbach, Maurice Eldridge, Nick Buttino (Notes), Eric Wagner, H.G. Chissel (new member), Kelsey Hatzell, Joy Charlton, Ralph Thayer, Nadine Kolowrat, Tom Cochrane

H.G. added as full member of committee, and first alumni representative on committee (other than Maurice '61)

### Green Advisors Report from Maurice

Mert Westphal would like training on green issues given to RAs

No decision on permanence or funding for Green Advisors

Possibly have a green lecture as part of frosh orientation

Maurice and ITS (in response to Nadine's query) sent out all-campus advice emails for how to be more sustainable on campus

Student visitors (Elizabeth and Ben) sent note to SusCom motivated to improve the Swarthmore that they so esteem; they see potential alternate, and preferable, futures to sustainability

Liz Crampton spent a winter externship (1 week) at Harvard's sustainability office.

Last July, Harvard president mandated sustainability as priority (top-down)

Each office has created a "Green team" to assess office performance and improvement at Harvard. Harvard committed to all new buildings being LEED-certified. Green advisors provided funds for "ecoprojects" proposed by students [this is similar to what Sustain. Planning proposed as "Action Items" in [May 2008 report](#) - ECE]

Liz emphasizes that improvement need not necessarily be tied to greenhouse gases, but we should have an integrating goal

Liz sees potential role of SusCom to create and promote this larger goal, also recommendation to connect more to other schools to find interesting and efficient ideas

Example: Oberlin uses a website called the "lucid design group" that puts on the web the results of monitoring the energy usage of each dorm, and displays per-capita use (<http://www.oberlin.edu/dormenergy/>)

"Awareness makes people use less"

Carr countered that our recommendations last year (Sustain Planning) set out big ideologies, but this year we were told to focus on small things obtainable within existing budget

Harvard has an office of sustainability (seven staff, as opposed to Swarthmore's 0)

Liz asks for a staff person – open to other ideas – to make sure that sustainability committee remains and has some kind of accountability

Maurice suggests that we ask COFP to make SusCom a permanent committee (as opposed to its current ad hoc status).

Liz responds that this action does not well address accountability or funds, but at least institutionalizes sustainability

Eric mentions need for wait for correct timing (remember financial crisis and new president)

Liz requests that we do as much legwork in advance to encourage sustainability in new administration

Carr reminds us that Swarthmore is not a top-down institution, but there are ways around this problem: faculty can bring things up individually to their departments

Connie sent out an email to all faculty this morning asking people to waste less because of financial crisis (Eric)

Liz notes that the problem with sustainability is that it is everyone's second priority (including members of SusCom) because we do not have time to do full-time research. SusCom can provide leadership by telling the public, "Here are things you should be thinking about." Ex: at Harvard, green office supply swap – departments who purchased too many staplers sell them to other departments who need them.

Problem of slow pace of things at Swarthmore because we have commitment to evaluating everything thoroughly

Maurice suggests that we expand connections with Lang Center to make this more central to the ethics of Swarthmore

Liz: there is quite a bit momentum right now, more so than past

Ben Dair served over the summer at UC office of president

Highest administrative body of Univ. of California system

Two staff devoted to sustainability (one is Matt StClair '97)

UC system has 10 campuses and over 200,000 students

Different management status – Ben interested in policy and management structure. Examples of top-down commitment to sustainability: 2002 feasibility study, 2004 policies, 2006 transportation, 2007 purchasing policy, etc.

UC sustainability starts with student call for change – and leadership from Matt St. Clair

At Swarthmore, student interest is decoupled from sustainability committee, which is uncoupled from President's Office. Ben wants to mobilize community around recommendations of sustainability committee

It is the mission of the new president to represent the Swarthmore Community, so if that community is forcefully for sustainability, president will endorse it, regardless of personal leanings

Recommends that every academic department have a sustainability liaison

“How do we create appropriate atmosphere of action” so that new president will want to take sustainability forward? A written commitment to date and percentage reduction (a “create what by when” executive approach).

Liz informs that more people would like to attend SusCom meetings, so that more student groups can be heard in SusCom

Joy would like to know about specific ideas that we can implement

Harvard has top-down, optional recommendation sheets, green advisors

Ben says that UC system commits itself to number-based goals with dates by which they must be accomplished

Where did these dates and targets arise?

Ben thinks that they calculated these arbitrarily, but relating to long-range sustainability plan

Carr reminds us that from our last large conference (with David Orr), we learned that many schools picked goals without much knowledge, then buy carbon offsets to reach goals

Liz references Clean Air and Clean Water acts (Nixon, early 1970s) that also took this blind stab to get things moving

-Note that some people (such as Klyza and Sousa) note that this early unbridled optimism has partially derailed environmental movement [personal annotation, NCB - very Swarthmorean notetaking! ECE]

Liz requests somewhat arbitrarily goals (percent carbon reductions by certain dates) and try to meet them, and maybe buying carbon credits to make up difference if we fail to improve

Liz suggests that investing in our own infrastructure could be a way to improve endowment when financial options are paying poor interest rates now; e.g., take money and make light retrofitting (already seen to pay back in three years) as a long-term investment

H.G. has sense that we have a critical leadership role – however, we need executive leadership to be fully integrated

Goals galvanize people to act, and even striving makes more improvements than would otherwise have occurred

Liz sees SusCom as taking that leadership role in this interim president period

H.G. would like SusCom to draft a letter to new president immediately to set goal of sustainability; show commitment based on long list of signatures

-How do we show that people have a commitment beyond mere signatures?  
[personal annotation, NCB]

Earthlust has already drafted a letter like this and plans to reach out to other groups for signature. Should SusCom take up this letter? Should we create another? Should we write a letter at all?

Swarthmore does not take committees lightly because of how much faculty time they consume (Maurice). Making SusCom a permanent standing committee would be very significant, show institutional commitment to sustainability. Liz: but how to ensure that SusCom is a powerful agent for change?

Carr thanks Liz and Ben for coming and offers to invite them back again later for more discussion (possibly Monday, Feb 23, 2009, our next Monday meeting).

Ralph and Tom Cochrane then spoke about Facilities' efforts:

Not everybody is onboard regarding saving energy/reducing waste; many people would like to keep things as they were in 1960's, e.g., 80 degree rooms in winter, 68 in summer

We should give people the most freedom possible so that they treat space better, e.g., Mertz has been given individual thermostats (range 64 to 72 degrees) and Ralph notes that some people do choose cold temps, although others prefer max

In the last 10 years, we have not increased much in energy usage, despite expansions and renovations

Multiple considerations of energy usage at college: Heat (from fuel oil) and Electricity are separate

Still some dorms that have not been efficiently renovated:

Worth and Willets are the worst

Making strides, but it is expensive to improve

Even with downturn in economy, materials are still expensive

Most service work is done in-house so that service people understand the machines, infrastructure, and problems that arise; can see bigger picture

Lighting systems have high upfront costs, but also a quick payback. Carr notes that early LED improvements failed because electronics failed. However, LEDs have improved dramatically since 1990s (Ralph)

Every person, and sustainability committee, should take up sustainability charge (not just Facilities)

Time Magazine article from a few weeks ago touts benefits of efficiency ("negawatts" is cheapest form of additional energy, and best for the environment)

Facilities agrees: efficiency and conservation are another way to think of sustainability. Example: Freer black box theater now has start button to control heating and air conditioning, as opposed to just heating based on booking times. Often room is used without the heat on, or is unused and unheated, saving energy.

Philosophy of sustainability (and from committee) might come in to teach people to take only what they need

Need to change behaviors in ways that continue beyond Swarthmore (Maurice)

**Next meeting on Friday, 13 February 2009, 11:30 am – 12:30 am Lang Center**