

Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes  
Monday October 17, 2011  
11:30am, Lang Center Keith Room

**In attendance**

Joy Charlton, Clara Fang, Tom Cochrane, Carr Everbach, Deb Kardon-Brown, Nicole Lewis-Selby, Eric Wagner, Betsey Bolton, Jesse Marshall, Nadine Kolowrat, Mark Davis, Allison Holliday, Kathryn Wu, Erin Lowe, Cameron French

**Announcements**

Joy reminded everyone of an article published in College News about the community gardening project conducted by Chester Community Fellows during the summer. She said it is a good example of experiential learning that involves environmental sustainability (See article: <http://www.swarthmore.edu/x34062.xml>).

Nicole and Carr reported that students removed 40 pounds of honey from bee hives that were set up as a result of the NY Times Grant. There are approximately 5000 bees in each of the two boxes. It is not clear how the honey is being used at the moment. Carr suggested that the honey be given as gifts to donors that donate to sustainability.

Joy announced that a poster session highlighting student social responsibility projects will be held on Friday, October 21, 2011 in Shane Lounge from 11am-1pm.

**Report on AASHE Conference, Oct 8 - 12, 2011**

Carr and Clara traveled by bus to AASHE (Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education) conference in Pittsburgh over Fall Break. The conference brought together students, staff, faculty, and sustainability experts from higher education all over the country to discuss and share best practices regarding sustainability in higher education. Carr brought back the "Swarthmore Star" from the conference, which we can display on the doors of the Science Center, Lang Center, or some other highly visible location.

Clara was very inspired by the conference and learned a lot about how other universities are integrating sustainability into all aspects of their institution, namely operations, curriculum, "latent" curriculum, culture, and community. Clara made a two page to do list that she will put on Google Docs. The categories the to do items fall under are:

- Expand our capacity to do sustainability work
- Integrate sustainability into academics
- Expand our knowledge and learn best practices through continuing education and networking with similar institutions and regional coalitions
- Increase publicity of sustainability
- Improve sustainability tracking and metrics

More details are available in Clara's Google doc.

Carr was very energized by the conference. He highlighted David Orr's talk about the Oberlin Initiative. Oberlin College is in a politically conservative, economically depressed community with high unemployment. Oberlin is working with state and local partners to revitalize the community through sustainability initiatives, including creating a two block area of LEED certified buildings, buying local produce and creating green jobs.

Carr and Clara also met with Matt Sinclair, a Swarthmore alum who is also Sustainability Director for the University of California system. They discussed the idea of buying landfill gas to burn for energy or using other carbon free energy sources. Matt also gave Carr and Clara some ideas about integrating sustainability into the curriculum. He recommended that Swarthmore send some faculty members to the AASHE Sustainability Across the Curriculum Workshop that will be held at Emory in Georgia in January.

Carr focused on curriculum and faculty development while he was at the conference. The following are some of the ideas that emerged:

- Conduct faculty development workshops: Faculty would get together some place off campus, learn about the relevance of sustainability to their field and how to integrate it into their courses. They could be given some incentive for revising their courses.
- Form a faculty and staff book group around sustainability.
- Form food groups: get together to eat sustainably produced food.
- Go after small grants available outside of Swarthmore to support faculty development.
- Find headliners in various disciplines that are integrating sustainability in their field to come talk to faculty and give lectures on campus.
- Hold weekly lunches with free food where the community discusses sustainability.
- Take faculty on field trips.
- Hold skill-based workshops: how to embrace problem solving as opposed to just methodology

### **Betsy Bolton Report on Imagining America Conference**

Betsy Bolton from the English Department went to the Imagining America Conference and came back with ideas of how to integrate sustainability into the courses she teach. She consented go because there were no strings attached and came back inspired.

The topic of the conference was "What Sustains Us?" Attendees conducted site visits. One political scientist led a canoe trip down the Mississippi and gave a history/politics lesson about the river. Could this experience be replicated with Crum Creek and the greater Delaware watershed?

Betsy illustrated on the board a visualization of curriculum development using sustainability as an analogy:

- In the center: Economy (give credit to students and faculty)
- The next ring out: Society (engage disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields)
- Outside ring: Environment (engage the community, collaborative learning)

The way to integrate sustainability is to begin with the discipline and find connections within that discipline to the environment or sustainability.

Some examples from the conference:

- Fallen Fruit from Rising Women – A project that came out of a collaboration between Claremont College students and Crossroads Inc., a transitional housing unit for women on parole. The initiative teaches women on parole how to use local produce to make and sell homemade food products. <http://fallenfruitrisingwomen.blogspot.com/2011/03/about-us.html>
- Claremont College gave course credit to students to develop a program that teaches teenagers with learning disabilities sustainable agriculture and how to produce healthy food products.
- Deliberative Democracy (Stanford U)
- Carnegie Mellon theater professor used theater to engage students and audiences on hydro-fracking. A video of their production is available at [wqued.org](http://wqued.org)

Betsy shared two course proposals she developed that integrate sustainability with English:

1. River Stories – Begins with an 8 day canoe trip on the Delaware River before semester starts. Students read literature on rivers and study rivers as a nexus of social, economic, and environmental issues. They would keep field journals and produce a memory bank of the watershed.
2. Writing and Social Change - Honors seminar 2 credits. Traditional classroom work comprises the first credit, an internship or community based action comprise the second. Students would produce weekly logs, an organizational profile, video or reflective essay. Focus alternates between two topics, “literary action” and “what sustains us.” Internships would be conducted in Chester with community partners.

The committee then discussed how these kinds of integrations could happen across the curriculum. How can we reach someone like Craig Williamson in English? Eric mentioned that Craig teaches Tolkien, so there could be a connection there. How can we reach departments that aren't currently represented in ENVS, such as Mathematics or Philosophy? Carr and Clara talked about the need to bring scholars who are integrating sustainability into their scholarship and teaching to come talk to our faculty. We need to reach out and gather expertise and not try to reinvent the wheel. Matt Sinclair and AASHE are good resources for us to expand our network. The ASSHE Sustainability Across the Curriculum Workshop in January would be a good place to “train the trainers.”

### **Other updates**

Staff Development Week - Carr and Clara are hoping to retool last year's event; Clara is working on a proposal on educating staff about being sustainable on campus and at home. Ralph and Tom will perform the steam tunnel tour.

Carr announced that Facilities has allotted in their budget a green roof for LPAC.

Mark Davis is trying to get more specific info about recycling processes used by our recycling vendors. We do not currently have a guide for how to recycle equipment including lab equipment, computer equipment, etc. UPenn has a very good one to emulate.

Joy concluded by saying that sustainability in the curriculum, instead of operations/facilities, is where we need to focus our efforts.

Respectfully submitted,  
Deb Kardon Brown, Clara Fang

\*\*\* Future planned meetings of the Sustainability Committee \*\*\*

Monday, November 7, 2011, 11:30-12:30, Lang Center Keith Room  
Thursday, November 10, 2011, 8:30-9:30 am, Sharples Room 4  
Friday, November 18, 2011, 2-3 pm, Lang Center Seminar Room (106)  
Monday, November 21, 2011, 11:30-12:30, Lang Center Keith Room  
Thursday, December 1, 2011, 8:30-9:30, Sharples Room 4  
Monday, December 5, 2011, 11:30-12:30, Lang Center Keith Room

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