

Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes February 20, 2012, 11:30am Lang Center

Attendees: Carr Everbach, Nicole Selby, Clara Fang, Tom Cochrane, Eric Wagner, Joy Charlton, H.G. Chissell, Emily Zhang, Erin Lowe, Deb Kardon-Brown, Marge Murphy, Jessica Scott (via Skype)

Guests: Paul Shortell (via Skype), Emily Zhang (Sustainability Intern), Philip Stern

Green Advisors

Clara and Paul prepared a presentation on the proposal to create paid Green Advisor positions which they shared with the committee. Paul summarized the “bottom up” history of GA program and what tasks their workers do. He stated that they would like to incorporate the benefits of a “top down” program that institutionalization and pay would provide— more uniform and widespread influence in each dorm, a stronger sense of legitimacy, and more reliable performance by staff. The objective of the program would be to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as to provide students with an understanding of sustainability.

Marge pointed out that the written proposal seemed to imply that “comparable programs” at other institutions were paid positions, while she did not think that was the case. Clara clarified that the listed programs all have staff oversight and about half have paid student positions.

Eric expressed concern that a formal structure that evenly distributes GA’s and sets a precise number of employees was likely to exclude some people who have, or would want to, participate as volunteers. He suggested that there be a hybrid structure with some paid GAs but also a broad volunteer group.

Clara responded that it wouldn’t make sense to split the 4-hour per month responsibilities into even smaller duties, and it would result in an unfair distinction between what is paid versus volunteer tasks. Joy mentioned that there is a related discussion occurring campus wide about what jobs are paid versus unpaid. For example, student council positions are unpaid but have asked for pay. She suggested that the question whether to pay GAs should perhaps be decided as part of the broader discussion.

Paul explained that he doesn’t think the hybrid model is suitable because the existing leadership of the GAs are highly motivated and committed regardless of money. The financial motivation is most needed to recruit a larger network of GA workers and to improve their reliability. He also mentioned that recruiting GAs before the beginning of the semester would allow GAs to promote their mission right as the semester begins, possibly expanding to having orientation activities.

Carr questioned whether the small amount of pay (about \$8.50 per week) could really have so much sway on one's participation, and reminded the group of the economics principle that sometimes pay diminishes perceived value of an effort. Erin responded that for her, pay would move the job into a higher level of commitment compared to her other voluntary clubs and activities. HG commented that it would probably also make the students feel that their effort was more valued by the college community. Jessica said that based on her experience supervising volunteers, she believes that compensation will bring out better performance, though she isn't in a position to say whether an all-paid versus hybrid model is best for our situation.

HG noted the favorable payback calculations in the written proposal and asked how well and quickly they will be able to provide that data in real time. HG feels that it greatly strengthens the proposal and will positively impact the security of its ongoing funding. He likes that it is in line with how decisions about sustainability investments are considered in the private sector and that the students will face when they move beyond Swarthmore. Clara responded that our ability to track payback is strong in some areas and limited in others. For example, assumptions can easily be made about savings from switching out light bulbs, meters are in place for electricity, and GA's could eyeball and estimate trash quantities, but heat metering is unavailable and water metering only in some places. Overall, however, even the most conservative estimates of the potential paybacks are much more significant than the cost of a paid GA program.

Carr said that there are many unknown and debatable aspects to calculating payback in a situation like this (for example, would an improvement have happened anyway), and he doesn't think the fate of the GA program should be dependent on that. Its highest value is for embodying the espoused principles of the institution and for positively impacting the students with knowledge and habits of sustainability that they will carry into the future and apply.

Deb suggested that we consider other types of compensation besides straightforward pay, such as building a special sense of community through gatherings before orientation or over fall break, or having a unique role in an existing event or program.

Marge said that she didn't sense a buzz of excitement in the community that should accompany the launch of a new initiative.

Nicole asked about the source of financing. Clara said that Student Budget Committee has expressed interest in funding the Green Advisors' startup year, and she hopes the Sustainability Committee would endorse the proposal as it is written, with 13 paid positions. Nadine said that the group doesn't need Sustainability Committee endorsement to apply to the SBC, so we could wait to decide on our endorsement until evaluating its accomplishments over its first year and consider

it for renewing fund financing next year. However, it may be problematic to perpetuate funding and it is unclear how the renewing fund would be paid back.

Nicole said that she feels the Sustainability Committee should support this effort, even if there are some details that we do not endorse with a consensus. She wants to give it the opportunity to develop, prove its impact, and build buzz. Carr and Deb moved that the committee support the Green Advisor program's attempts to secure startup funding.

Carr announced an upcoming event:

Workshop with Leith Sharp: "Stages of Change: Where are we now?"

How do we move to the next level?

Thursday February 23, 2012 1 - 4 pm

Bryn Mawr College

Benham Gateway Building Conference Room

Lecture by Leith Sharp: "Who Are the Change Makers?" Thursday, Feb. 23, 7:30 - 8:30 p.m., Dorothy Vernon Room

Multipart Workshop with Korinna Thielen: "Design Challenge 2012: What a Waste?"

Monday, Feb. 27, 10 a.m. - noon; Wednesday, Feb. 29, 10 a.m. - noon; Friday, March

2, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Dalton 119. Participants are welcome to participate in any or all of the workshops, which deal with issues of waste. Online Registration

Lecture by Korinna Thielen: "The Sustainability Grand Challenge 2012: A Proposal for a Sustainability Competition at Bryn Mawr," Wednesday, Feb. 29, 1 - 2 p.m., Dorothy Vernon Room.

Logo

Carr showed the logo drafts Philip Stern had provided previously and revealed the order of preference that committee members had voted on by email. Phil described the messages and moods that the top four were designed to evoke. The first design with a leaf coming out of a globe was overwhelmingly the favorite. The committee asked him to revise two for their continued deliberation:

1) changing text on the globe-leaf to "Sustainability at Swarthmore", and

2) changing the blades of the wind turbines to evoke flowers and people.

The committee will circulate these updated versions and decide on which one or two we would like to take to the next phase of development.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30pm

Respectfully submitted, Nicole Selby and Emily Zhang