

SusCom Subcommittee Reports AY11-12

This year, with the addition of a Sustainability Coordinator to take action on much of what SusCom has initiated in recent years, SusCom decided it could increase its effectiveness by working in subcommittees dedicated to making sustainability advances in targeted areas (curriculum, fundraising and alumni, GreenBox, outreach, the Renewing Fund, and STARS). These subcommittees met biweekly throughout the year, alternating with biweekly meetings of the full SusCom. Reports of their activities, and the committee as a whole, follow.

Curriculum

Collaboration of 4 faculty, 2 staff, and 1 student

The Curriculum Subcommittee has met to discuss ways of developing faculty resources that are distinct from the activities of the Environmental Studies (ENVS) Program Committee. ENVS has been successful in attracting Mellon Foundation support for an adding an Environmental Economics full-time faculty position, hiring a 3-year GIS professor, and sponsoring an annual faculty-development workshop. In contrast, the Curriculum SubCom is working to infuse the curriculum with sustainability-focused and sustainability-related curricular options:

- Marjorie Murphy (History) and Alison Holliday (Chemistry) have signed up for Faculty Lunch talks in early 2013 that will show faculty how to increase the sustainability content of their existing courses, whether or not the courses count in the ENVS minor.
- CAPcom has discussed plans to increase the sustainability learning of students in the dorms through an enhanced Green Advisors program. The Curriculum SubCom has brainstormed ideas to support this direction.
- Giovanna DiChiro (Environmental Studies) will be on campus as a Lang Visiting Scholar and offering courses in Environmental Justice and Activism in AY12-13. This effort ties in well with the sustainability elements of the Lang Center mission and the Curriculum SubCom will help support spinoff curricular components.
- Concern for faculty renters who cannot avoid wasting energy due to College rental policies has resulted in discussion of how sustainability is not only in the classroom, but a cultural change that should be manifested in College policy more broadly.
- The relationship between the curricular portions of the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment and the ENVS minor, which is now TriCo-wide but still focused mostly on minors, has been discussed extensively. How to measure and track sustainability curriculum across the 3 three campuses and how it relates to Swarthmore students is an ongoing issue for the Curriculum Subcommittee.

Fundraising and Alumni

Collaboration of 1 administrator, 23 staff, and 1 alumnus

This subcommittee works to inspire the wide network of Swarthmore community members to be engaged with the college on sustainability issues. It will support the Alumni Relations and Development departments by providing them with information (via white papers; Alumni, Garnet, and Arts Weekend programming, story ideas for the College website and Bulletin) about college sustainability efforts and accomplishments. Its members staff related campus events. Other key progress included the following:

Alumni contact

- Attendance at Lax Conference, discussed sustainability issues with David Gelber and other alumni.

Increasing visibility & reporting on current efforts

- Met and talked with Donor Relations' Nadine Kavanaugh about what information we could generate that traveling fundraisers could use to increase visibility for sustainability projects. Formats include: photos, digital stories, story ideas for the website & College Bulletin.
- Discussed with Stu, Carr and Maurice how potential solar array plans may appeal to certain donors. Discussed with Jeff Jabco plans for informational panels inside LPAC to be included as part of the future green roof project, so that visitors and Admissions Tour participants can understand its sustainability benefits.

Fundraising

- NK updated a white paper for Traveling Fundraisers, enhanced by SusCom conversations about priorities.
- NK, Clara Fang, ME, Peter Collings, and others worked with Capital Giving's Dierdre Konar to help her secure c. \$25K gift from Jeb Eddy for the President's Climate Commitment Fund, a current discretionary fund.

GreenBox

Collaboration of 3 staff and 2 students

This subcommittee manages the sustainability suggestion box, "GreenBox," which includes both physical and online locations to where campus community members can submit questions about campus sustainability and suggestions for improvement. This group focused on updating earlier GreenBox answers, increasing public awareness of the tool, and providing thorough responses to each new submission, based on information from experts across campus.

Awareness-- Submissions to GreenBox nearly doubled compared to the previous two semesters. The dialogue that takes place via GreenBox facilitates knowledge about and participation in sustainability initiatives.

To achieve this increase in participation, the subcommittee:

- Hosted a Parlor Party, which drew approximately 45 students. Attendees heard about the box purpose and locations, read GreenBox archives, and submitted their own questions and ideas.

- Published a Green Advisor's digest
- Revamped the physical box, which is located in Shane Lounge, and the online submission form, which is linked from the Dash.

Responses-- The subcommittee published over 40 new responses to GreenBox submissions, including a backlog from the previous academic year. The process of researching each item opened valuable channels of communication with the relevant departments, including the following frequent topics:

ITS; power settings and paper saving
 Facilities; water savings and automation of lights
 Dining; composting
 Grounds; outdoor recycling availability
 EVS; recycling procedures followed by staff

Some of the submitted suggestions yielded unique accomplishments that would not have otherwise been undertaken. For example, a compost bin was provided at Mary Lyons, whose location excluded it from the compost collection program that occurs at other dorms. Thanks to another submission, a sign was installed by the Meeting House to discourage the numerous idling cars. GreenBox provides an accessible way for any member of our community to participate and have an impact on the college's sustainability.

Outreach

Collaboration of 4 staff

The Outreach Subcommittee worked to improve community awareness and participation in sustainability by addressing the following topics:

- Drafted the sustainability **website**. Clara Fang put together the text and layout of the website and the subcommittee provided suggestions and advice for getting it approved. Tom Cochrane (Facilities) and Mark Davis (ITS) provided content about Energy and Recycling. We shared this with SusCom as a whole and invited their comments. Clara compiled the comments, made further revisions, and is waiting for further review.
- Discussed a **brochure** for sustainability. The brochure would be in the same style as other admissions brochures and summarize our efforts. The goal is to convey information but minimize paper. We should create more opportunities for people to explore our website. Sustainability should have a link from Admissions, About Us, Environmental Studies, etc. Clara met with Arboretum staff to get advice on a brochure that would incorporate an illustrated map of the campus. The design of the brochure itself would need to be created by Communications. They are really busy this Spring so we hope to approach them in May.
- Discussed the **Green Advisor** proposal. Clara presented the proposal to SusCom, which supported finding funding for the program from other sources. The proposal has been tabled because Clara will no longer be able to supervise them next year. Clara is working to get them some support through the Lang Center instead.

- Discussed the **Sustainability Director** position. Nadine Kolowrat (Development) noted that the college is working on an implementation plan for the recommendations in the Strategic Plan so the fundraising for those priorities will not begin for a while. Without anyone taking the place of Sustainability Coordinator Clara Fang (leaving July 1), it will likely be difficult for SusCom to be as productive next year as it was this year. We talked about how this should be discussed in a full SusCom meeting.

Renewing Fund for Resource Conservation

Collaboration of 2 faculty, 1 staff, and 1 student

This subcommittee gathered and organized existing information about the fund, and it formalized and improved the application process. The following documents are now available to provide detailed information:

- A Short History of the Renewing Fund for Resource Conservation
- Descriptions of the 8 currently funded projects
- Chronicling of expenditures and reimbursements
- Status of each currently-funded project as of 3/15/12

The Renewing Fund Subcommittee of the Sustainability Committee proposes that, going forward, a unified procedure should be developed for allocating funding to projects, monitoring the progress of those investments, collecting the loan returns, and certifying completion of project goals. Accordingly, a loan form has been developed based on a Swarthmore Foundation template that proposers of projects must fill out prior to funding decisions. The form includes a repayment schedule, and makes explicit the requirement that the burden of risk be borne by the proposing person/entity, not the Renewing Fund.

STARS

Collaboration of 1 faculty, 1 staff, and 1 alumnus

The STARS (Sustainability Tracking, Rating, & Assessment System) Subcommittee established the goals and processes for annual updating of the sustainability tracking process established by AASHE.

- Jessica flagged the items for updating from last year's STARS filing (the College's first), and these were distributed to SusCom members to complete.
- Clara was able to update the greenhouse gas (GHG) data for calendar years 2009, 2010.
- We established June 30, 2012 as the date of record for updating the STARS data. In future, the Spring semester will be used for data collection and early summer for performing the updates.
- The SubCom agreed that synchronizing the data to a calendar year made sense going forward, considering that last year's filing was for the academic year for some items and calendar year for others. Therefore we will note that the June 30, 2012 update will apply to the 2011 calendar year.

- We will include TriCo curricular sustainability offerings, in line with the merging of the ENVS programs at the three schools.

Committee as a whole

Administrative, high level

- Addressed the Social Responsibility subcommittee of the **Board of Managers** regarding the urgency of climate change and the college's opportunity to exert leadership.
- Crafted a vision for college sustainability that was incorporated as a recommendation in the **Strategic Plan**, in partnership with Climate Action Planning Committee and the Crum Woods Stewardship Committee.
- Met with Ayers Saint Gross architects to contribute ideas for integrating sustainability in the **Campus Master Plan**.

Students

- Considered a proposal by engineering students to install a **photovoltaic system** on LPAC roof. The committee stated support for making the roof solar-panel-ready during upcoming reroofing, so as not to preclude future opportunities to tap solar energy.
- Supported Swarthmore Christian Fellowship student leaders planning a **forum** about Christian perspectives on environmentalism and stewardship.
- Discussed a request from a Bryn Mawr student leader for participation in **TriCo Food Week**. Facilitated dialogue and planning with appropriate Swarthmore students.
- Considered a proposal by the Mountain Justice student group to divest from certain energy companies. The committee determined to form a subcommittee to explore further the issue of **sustainable investing** during next academic year, in partnership with Investment Office staff and concerned students.

Outreach/communication- to raise awareness of sustainability issues and ways to make a positive impact. Cultural change.

- Utilized the **Phoenix** to inform the community about sustainability issues: Climate Action Planning and the Sustainability Coordinator hire, 100% Renewable Energy Credits purchase, and a local food festival.
- Developed a sustainability **logo**, in partnership with the Communications Department.
- Incorporated sustainability education into the **staff handbook** and **staff orientation**, in partnership with the Human Resources Department.
- Revamped the sustainability **website** content and format.

Building internal and external relationships.

- Discussed new single stream **recycling** system with Environmental Services Director, resulting in improved recycling strategy at indoor and outdoor athletics facilities.
- Met with representatives of the **EPA WasteWise Program** to discuss ways to reduce college waste. Shared relevant opportunities with students and staff in a **Dining Committee** meeting.
- Partnered with **aFewSteps.org**, a local organization working to raise awareness of energy use in neighboring communities and educating residents and organizations to save money and reduce greenhouse gases.

- Met regularly with the Student Health and **Wellness** Program Coordinator to identify shared goals and opportunities for partnership.