

# Environmental Stewardship Committee

## Meeting Notes

**March 1, 2011**

**Members in attendance:** Robert Shibley, chair; Mary Alice Coffroth, Graduate School; Michael Dupre, University Facilities; Carol Kobrin, Health Sciences; Alan Rabideau, Undergraduate Education; Kenneth Tramosch, Research; Jean Wactawski-Wende, Strategic Strengths; Michael Alcazaren, Undergraduate Student Association; Joseph Raab, University Facilities; Tricia Kandler (for Dan Vivian), Procurement Services, and Ron Chihocki (for Tom Furlani), Information Technology.

**Absent:** Beth Del Genio, Office of the Provost; Massimo Betello, Graduate Student Association;

**Excused:** James Nadbrzuch, Student Affairs; Dan Vivian, Procurement Services; Thomas Furlani, Information Technology, and Jeffery Reed, Employee Relations.

**Staff and others:** James Simon, UB Green; Erin Moscati, UB Green, and Kristina Blank, UB Environmental Network

**Review of Minutes.** Notes from the December 7, 2010 meeting were circulated by e-mail. The notes were approved for posting on the ESC website.

**Committee Structure.** Ryan Mcpherson is no longer in the role of chief of staff for external affairs. We will be searching for a new chair for the Communications Subcommittee and a representative from University Communications. Sean Sullivan will be asked to join us at the next meeting. This is in effort to focus on “the business case” for our work. We are 2-3 months away from bringing our document to the University Planning Board. Jim Simon and Erin Moscati are inheriting the role of Staff to the ESC from Bradshaw Hovey. They will be available to support the work of the subcommittees. They outlined their proposed structure for communicating meeting agenda and minutes. Agenda items should be forwarded to them the Monday prior to an ESC Meeting. The Draft Agenda will be circulated a week prior to the meeting. The minutes from that meeting will be distributed no later than one week after.

**Green Fee.** Mike Alcazaren, Director of SA Environmental Office presented an update on the student Green Fee. Mike and student team looked into possibility of creating a sustainability fee. There is precedence for this around the country at other colleges and universities. A green fee is a small charge to students, between 1 and 10 dollars per semester. Structurally, projects would need to go through a committee of students, faculty, and staff. Funding from the green fee would help support campus projects.

However, SA is currently tabling the green fee. They encountered road blocks and would like to present a better case in the future. Roadblocks include the general SUNY cuts and the question of why should the sustainability fee take precedence. SA Environmental is looking for tips and pointers on how the University at fund this.

- Ken Tramosch asked whether there are any best practices related to philanthropy. Alcazaren said that there is an opt in/opt out option and that it is built into the current proposal.
- Jean Wactawski-Wende said that the fees that students are currently charged the maximum student fee, so an “opt-out” would mean that something else needs to be dropped. Are there any other restrictions on fees? The Student Fee is at the HEPI (Higher Education Price Index) max for US. A separate fee would be best. We need a better sense of the rules. Wactawski-Wende asked if anything the students are doing is able to raise funds—can we get a self sustaining fund.
- Mike Dupre asked whether these are student based projects? Alcazaren mentioned that anyone at UB could propose a project. Student proposals would need a faculty advisor to ensure continuation when student leaves. The selection committee would ask what project has the greatest return and effect on the students. It would then be proposed and accepted.
- Shibley suggested that projects could be picked from the CAP or a new project could be added that is believed to be consistent with the agenda.
- Dupre appreciates the use of energy savings at this level, but there has been no success yet.
- Shibley asked about the resistance that Alcazaren mentioned. Where is it coming from? Alcazaren mentioned that it is coming from the Student Association E-board, who likes the fund but not the fee. The E-board is in favor of doing a pilot project this semester. Students are currently looking for projects, but this is all tentative right now. Shibley suggested that this is an opportunity to build the alignment with the student base and complement the process. This is a great way to put ownership to this.

**PVC.** Kristina Blank, President of the UB Environmental Network presented on the dangers of PVC (polyvinyl chloride). Students would like to revise campus purchasing policies so that we reduce the amount of PVC products we purchase. Why PVC? Made from chlorine and additives that have toxic properties. Known carcinogens are created in the production of PVC. The additives leach out during the products lifetime. Health and PVC—workers can be exposed to toxins. Many PVC plants are located in low income communities in the Southern US and the plant pollution has an impact there. Therefore, buying PVC products, in a way, supports pollution of these communities. On campus, the off gases impact building users, especially cleaners. This becomes an environmental justice issue.

Where is the incentive for change? EO 4 establishes a green procurement program. Governor Cuomo extended the EO until 3/30 and will likely renew it. The interagency committee on Sustainability and Green Procurement creates purchasing specs. They created a list of 85 chemicals of concern that should be avoided by NYS agencies. Chemicals unique to the PVC lifecycle are on this list. In 2010, UUP delegates called on SUNY campuses to participate in the new green procurement policy. In July 2010, a LEED Pilot Credit was created for reduction of PVC use. PVC is in many University products, but alternatives do exist. This may have a higher initial cost but a lower life-cycle cost. The Healthy Building

Network is a great resource. Student support for a ban on PVC at UB exists. UB Environmental Network sponsored an event this fall with a giant “rubber” ducky and Spring Valentine’s event asking UB to have a heart and go PVC free. Students circulated a petition with over 500 signatures, asking UB to choose the safer alternative.

- Ron Chihocki asked how easy will it be to figure out which products have PVC. Do companies report their PVC use? Kristina mentioned that this data is fairly available, that with more education will come more transparency.
- Erin Moscati asked if there are any other schools that have phased out PVC. Blank noted that we are part of a statewide network that includes Albany, Geneseo, Fredonia, and Cornell. Many schools are working on this.
- Mike Dupre mentioned that Dennis Black had passed on the student petition to him. Some of the PVC materials come in through Procurement Services, but most of it comes in from general construction on campus. The construction plans for building projects pass through construction agencies within the State like the Dormitory Authority, Construction Fund, etc. This makes it more complicated to reach out to these organizations. Newer projects like the CTRC have less PVC in them. They are using High Density Vinyl or cast iron. Dupre suggested that this committee write an endorsement to go to other agencies and make the case for reducing PVC use. Joe Raab agrees—this makes sense.
- Bob Shibley asked how other committee members can add value. Two places—construction and materials procurement. Tricia Kandler asked what chemicals are being looked at. Are they chemicals that researchers are using? What type of office supplies? There are alternatives and they could be explored with campus vendors. Blank mentioned that there is a whole list of office supplies that is more comprehensive and can be provided to the committee. Blank is most concerned with replacing building construction materials which contain PVC.
- Shibley stated that there will be committee work in Energy, Materials, and IT. We’ll invite students into committees as they take on these tasks. This is not an issue of carbon footprint, but one of environmental stewardship. Working this into the matrix will bring forward different measures of our footprint. We carry both missions, but we have a stronger charge to go after carbon.
- Wactawski-Wende said that we are focusing on new purchases, what can be done about what exists? Blank stated that there is not a good answer for that. Once PVC is produced, there isn’t a very safe way to dispose of it. There are recycling facilities that will take PVC, however it is difficult and expensive to recycle. PVC needs to be separated from other plastics.
- Alan Rabideau pointed out that the City of Buffalo has a procurement policy for persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBT). It may strengthen the case here on campus by connecting to this policy. Would you want to broaden it to include PBT?
- Blank expressed her willingness to be part of the ESC process. She and the Environmental Network can be a resource to this work. Shibley said that the next step is for the three committees to review suggestion and invite participation. Dupre pointed out that we don’t have a construction committee, so this will need to be ad hoc. Shibley agreed. Raab suggested that we could look at carbon equivalents for the changes we make. Shibley wondered if there is a

role for Mike Alcazaren to play alongside Kristina Blank, and a recommendation from the Committee.

**Next Steps for Planning Board.** Shibley stated that there is a lot of work yet to do. Looking forward to work taken towards creating a 1,3, and 5 year plan.

### **Committee Reports**

**Research, Teaching, and Public Service.** Alan Rabideau reports that the committee has been “rebooted” and is meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of the month. Of all the groups, this group is the least connected to the 1, 3, 5 year process. Coordinating with UB Green to make sure this effort is ongoing. Membership is expanding as faculty from the School of Architecture and Planning and the School of Management have been added. Currently, members are mostly from the sciences. Initially created several projects, including a Discovery Seminar on Climate. This is based on the work of Jason Briner and has expanded into a team taught model. There are eight lecturers coming in with a number of different lecture topics. Another Discovery Seminar, Climate Change: Fact or Myth was cancelled. The new Discovery Seminar will be repeated annually. The Undergraduate Academy may shape the form of Seminars. Rabideau wants to offer a high quality seminar where students can see the depth of research. There have been some discussions within the subcommittee about coordinating curricula. Currently focusing on basic science offerings.

- Rabideau submitted a proposal to the EPA P3 program for student energy projects. The proposal highlights a plan to build solar and wind powered walkways. Al Gilewicz in Facilities is assisting. If we are successful, the EPA will award us \$15,000 and then there is an opportunity to compete for \$90,000. Educational value is what will come out of this. Shibley said that these projects could become “poster children” for energy best practices. Rabideau said that this would become a very obvious renewable energy exposition. Students will be involved in design.
- Rabideau mentioned the SUNY Chancellor’s plan for six focus areas, one of which is “Energy Smart New York”. Shibley noted that the energy research center in Stony Brook is coordinating a system wide research effort. These are fairly high level discussions with the Chancellor.
- Yale Climate Project did a survey on climate literacy and connected knowledge of climate science with environmental literacy. The subcommittee plans to implement this electronically and work alongside the committee’s planning colleague.

**Information Technology and Human Resources.** The Committee is looking at business processes in three areas—computer labs, data centers, classroom IT. Small fixes can return large results. Have identified approximately 24 places where footprint can be reduced. Creating action plans and moving forward. Dupre mentioned hot and cold data centers. CIT is on the verge of retaining a consultant for the design and rehab of the Computing Center. Imagine the potential energy savings with the adjustment of the thermostat.

**Materials.** Tricia Kandler reported that the Committee is currently reforming the campus wide recycling program. Should have a contract out for bid shortly. Implementation in May, after commencement. This would mean that we don’t need to separate paper from containers.

- Dupre suggested that we remarket the proper recycling/disposal of plastic containers.
- Moscati noted that we have a marketing plan in place. Kandler pointed out that the group is also hoping to reduce the number of trucks on campus. Reduce volume of vehicles on campus

**Transportation.** Jim Simon reported on the Zipcar expansion, the success of the carpooling program and the bus home are in process. Looking to fill out data on the matrix.

**Energy.** Mike Dupre reported that the committee is meeting on an ad hoc basis. Energy projects are slower and take time. Dupre updated the CAP recently and is having a discussion on how to rationalize energy savings to fund carbon mitigation.

- NYPA Phase II—Capen ground floor—new heating and cooling control boxes with efficient lighting. Other projects in play—there are currently 5 construction projects. The new Engineering Building will be LEED Gold. We'd like to claim an annual number for savings. We think that \$10 million is a solid number. Note that annualized avoided energy cost is highlighted. Other dynamics are in play. We'll likely see how energy costs will increase due to the tension in the Middle East. Also, we continue to add load. Shibley pointed out that as costs increase, our avoided costs will improve. We are also making new costs. It will be a challenging discussion. Graph—Working to normalize the line—we have temperature influences. SUNY Report Card from Chancellor—campus measurements—one is KBTU/GSF. Would ultimately like to show a graph that heads downward. Tramosch noted that the blue line is flat during our climate action plan. Dupre asked the perennial question--how far can we go back to find savings, perhaps the CES/Way Project? Shibley said that we've picked the low hanging fruit even before the climate action plan. Conservation and budget were compelling cases for a performance contract.
- Shibley asked if the uptick in 2010 is a result of new projects. Dupre suggested that this is still being determined. We may not need to make the case of where to start looking at historic cost. We can just recommend where to draw the line. Rabideau asked if there are metrics for people instead of square footage that would be relevant for students and others. Dupre said that this would be easy enough to get. The SUNY Report Card has a lot of metrics. Shibley pointed out a tension within the CAP—that growth is expected and how do we deal with that. Perhaps we can look at a measure like carbon/student. However, in the scheme of things, this is irrelevant; we need to get to zero no matter what.
- Dupre asked if we use the renewable energy credits as a first or last report. Read an article about how another University uses RECs as a first resort—recognize that technology will take some time to catch up. Hope to move our purchase up to 30%. Would like to have UB support regional renewable energy efforts. By us supporting NYPA, we can support local energy. Shibley pointed out that a large part of the business case will come from Energy Committee. Everyone else still makes a difference.

**Sustainability Workshop.** Erin Moscati discussed how the workshops that were held in the past were received well by students. It may be time for a public forum and give everyone an update as to what we've been up to. It would make sense to do this around Earth Day, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Is there interest, can committee chairs attend? Would we have mini presentations from each committee? Last workshop was

Spring 2009. Make sure this issue is still on everyone's radar. Shibley asked if we have a clear objective—this is right about the time that we bring this to the Planning Board. Would be great to identify progress to date relative to actions taken. Raab asked whether our object to get feedback. If so, is this the right path to take? Moscati pointed out that the communications committee hasn't done a great job communicating our work. UB Green gets environmental/ESC questions all the time. The community doesn't know what they can do. Makes sense to regularly present what we are doing. This goes a long way. This forum would be based on a presentation and taking questions, less of a solicitation of feedback.

- Tramosch asked if we would we get the same turnout if we aren't asking for input. Shibley said that we are in a stronger position with the Planning Board if we have vetted our work publicly. We should draft a proposed agenda and vet it here and have a communications team in place to put changes in play. Bundle this into 1.) progress report so far from subcommittees 2.) here's how we've packaged this 3.) what do we want from constituencies.
- Moscati said that maybe there would be an opportunity for those who haven't participated to contribute. We could find more help. It should be less "open ended". Shibley agreed, stating that we could have more of a fully coordinated plan for 1, 3, 5 year progress—a proposal review of sorts.
- Kobrin mentioned that we have two years of students that haven't participated before in these forums and they would likely have a lot of feedback. Shibley suggested that we can aim the content of this event and allow an open section to take feedback. Let's put together a draft agenda.
- Moscati asked permission to reserve space and coordinate with student groups. Rabideau noted that the time around Earth Day is a tough time to schedule anything. There's a lot going on, so please vet the date soon and widely.

**Recyclemania.** Moscati reported on our participation for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row. Looking at how much we've recycled, thrown away and composted. Keep track via "SEFA" bottle signs outside. Visit [buffalo.edu/recycling](http://buffalo.edu/recycling) for promotions. There are fun events like Caught Green Handed and occasional events in the Student Union, like "Mug Shots", an event that shows appreciation to those that use a reusable mug. The "I Recycle, Do You" Campaign has gone viral on Facebook.

**Next month.** Committees continue to work on 1,3, 5 year plans from the committee. We will recirculate a draft for another review.