

## **Community Life Breakout Group—Sustainability Retreat 2007 Minutes**

### **Breakout group:**

*Joyce Millen (facilitator)* – Anthropology Department, Sustainability Council Member

*Jody Lowes*—CLA Student

*Geneva Hooten* – CLA Student, ASWU Sustainability Committee

*Katie Rigsby* – CLA Student

*Chris Linn* – Catering Manager, Bon Appetit

*Andrea Carlson* – Coordinator for Centers of Academic Excellence (including, but not limited to the Center for Sustainable Communities)

*Dean Wentworth* – Botanical Garden & Greenhouse Curator

*Jim Kephart* – Director of Information Services, AGSM

### **Discussion Summary:**

Question: How do we “institutionalize” and integrate the Four Es of Sustainability at Willamette University?

We focused our discussion on *three* central themes. We elaborated most upon the first central theme.

#### I. Conceptualizing sustainability at Willamette through the student life cycle:

- a) prospective students
- b) orientation to campus life in first year
- c) on campus as well as off campus during four years
- e) upon graduation
- f) post graduate and alumnae relations.

#### II. Developing multiple kinds and levels of incentive structures to ingrain a sense of sustainability in all members of Willamette community and create ways to integrate the four Es in our lives on campus and in greater community.

Incentives might include: more academically credited courses, mini courses, programs and service learning; more work study opportunities for sustainability-related work; more awards and ways of recognizing individuals and groups; more media focus on success stories.

In addition to mini-grants, could we work with major grants and alumnae office to locate a wealthy sponsor who might want to contribute funds toward the development of a sustainability service/research grant for undergraduates to devote their summer to a particular project?

#### III. Recognizing clearly that to realize greater sustainability we need achievable, measurable goals. We would have liked to have seen the assessment measures the council developed in the course of last year’s retreat, for example. We struggled with questions: what are realistic goals and how would we measure our progress?

## **STUDENT LIFE CYCLE**

Prospective students (as well as prospective faculty, administrators and staff):

Willamette Literature and Webpage:

It should be quite clear on all admissions/recruitment materials and websites that Willamette takes sustainability seriously, intellectually and practically, both on the Willamette campus and beyond. Prospective students should not have to look for this, they should be able to easily recognize this in all WU literature.

Work study students or Sustainability Council student interns (or fellows) could work with extant publications such as the Scene, Collegian, etc. to research and report on sustainability success stories. They could also write weekly or monthly profiles of campus departments that are making strides in their efforts. In other words, we should learn to publicize, promote and reward efforts toward greater sustainability. Perhaps Sustainability Council could host an annual competition among campus departments. We have employee of the year, why not sustainability award of the year for departments. This could come with a beautiful (rotating) trophy and much positive, university-wide recognition.

#### Orientation to campus life in first year:

Encourage a five-pronged approach to inculcate in students a sense of responsibility for their new community; a community fundamentally built upon respect for one another and for the environment.

- 1) Opening days: cleverly integrate aspects of the four Es into all existing programs.
  - a. Begin one or even a few new campus rituals or activities sponsored by Sustainability Council, such as paint your own college mug or stencil your own hand towel.
- 2) Residence advisor program: encourage sustainability council student representatives to develop and implement special training programs for RAs both in summer and in January before students arrive. Develop a list of special sustainability-oriented hall programs.
- 3) Opening Days Convocation: encourage President Pelton to articulate a few basic principles of our overarching visions of sustainability and social justice in his opening welcome to Willamette students in the course of Opening Days Convocation.
- 4) College Colloquium instructors spend time in the first days of their course encouraging students to discuss their own behaviors as students in the classroom and to articulate their collective aspirations for their ideal learning environment. It seems entirely reasonable to extend this dialogue to include discussion of what constitutes “responsible and respectful living in a sustainable community.”
- 5) Develop *several* divergent community service projects to: get students out of bubble, introduce them to active community members; familiarize them with the greater Willamette urban neighborhood; and *teach* them something about the work of maintaining a sustainable community. The blackberry removal idea was good, but the implementation was somewhat problematic for logistical reasons.

#### During the four years

Three concrete ideas for promoting goals of sustainability at Willamette:

- 1) Develop a competition between classes in the form of a challenge to each class to reduce its collective carbon footprint by a certain percentage, per year. This would be symbolic in many ways, but could still offer concrete, tangible incentives and achievable goals. Of course measuring this would be difficult, at best.

- 2) In President Pelton's letter of November 29, 2004 to the Willamette community announcing the creation of the Sustainability Council, he wrote:  
"Sustainability extends beyond environmental to social and economic issues that affect our future. Considered within the context of civic engagement, sustainability is powerful, for it reaffirms a core university value, while creating opportunities for practical outcomes that benefit the surrounding community of which we are an essential part."

In recognition of this statement and of the undeniable learning that occurs when students are afforded opportunities to integrate their classroom learning with practical experiences outside the classroom, we would like to encourage a university-wide spirit of civic engagement. This would entail prioritizing the creation of more on-campus and community service learning opportunities, internships, and community-based research projects. Examples of on-campus learning include: 1) students work with grounds to research and eventually plant corridor of native Northwest plant species along the Mill Stream 2) students work with Bon Appetite to research ways to minimize food and paper waste or to realize goals of low carbon diet, for example.

This would also include supporting community service learning within the greater Willamette community and in all our study abroad programs. We have marvelous models of both that should be shared with community. Joe Bowersox, Karen Arabas, Susan Kephart, Linda Heuser, among others, have engaged students in important research and service. Other faculty could learn from and be inspired by their experiences. The Ecuador study abroad, community service requirement could stand as a prototype for other study abroad programs to follow. Sustainability Council and Center for Sustainable Communities are both well situated to promote such programs.

Willamette now has established relationships with several local schools. Why not develop and support programs where Willamette students could work with local teachers and classes on developing age-appropriate, sustainability-focused programs. If programs are successful, and students become enthusiastic about their new skills and knowledge, they may in turn help educate their parents, and so forth.

- 3) Proposal to develop and integrated thematic approach to sustainability on campus. This could be loosely modeled after the Columbia College "Critical Encounters" program ([http://www.colum.edu/criticalencounters/About\\_Critical\\_Encounters.php](http://www.colum.edu/criticalencounters/About_Critical_Encounters.php)). The idea is to have a different central theme each year for the entire Willamette community to center its activities around. Central themes could be, for example: 1) food 2) water 3) energy 4) air 5) native species 6) our animal friends 7) forests 8) urban landscapes 9) carbon footprint 10) local and global environmental justice 11) waste 12) recycling and reuse 13) hyperconsumerism 14) environmental and human health 15) transportation 16) global commons, etc. The Critical Encounters program has been extraordinarily successful and has far exceeded the expectations of the creators. Perhaps we could look at ways to create a Sustainability Council initiative of this sort that could be equally inspiring for Willamette University.

#### Off campus during four years

Work study student or intern could investigate study abroad programs with environment or sustainability focus. Encourage more and better return reflection, and develop a system by which return students become educators within Willamette community.

### Upon Graduation:

Create a Willamette-specific “graduation pledge.” The pledge from the Graduation Pledge Alliance reads: “I pledge to explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organization for which I work.” ([www.graduationpledge.org](http://www.graduationpledge.org))

Make strong efforts to encourage an institutional endorsement and adoption of the “graduation pledge.” Develop ways of following, helping and encouraging those who have signed the pledge.

### Post Graduation and Alumnae Relations

We recognize great potential here...though we didn't have time to explore it.

### **Additional ideas**

#### Education:

Sustainability Council and Center for Sustainable Communities should help faculty and students develop cognitive-intellectual discernment regarding the great environmental and social challenges of our time. One way to encourage this is to promote problem-centered, case-based pedagogy. The Council and Center could facilitate by identifying publications and other resources that could be easily adopted and would thus encourage faculty to integrate such curriculum in their teaching.

#### Equity:

Issues of equity are local *and* global. We need to recognize the extent to which our own local consumption patterns and resource use deleteriously impacts the global climate which in turn has devastating consequences for many resource-poor areas of the world.

What could our school do to learn more about this? To teach and recognize this phenomenon? Could we develop a sistership or partnership with a poor community in the global south so that their lived realities become familiar and real to us?

#### Miscellaneous:

Could we promote mini (a few hours) community service activities and programs among classified staff and administration?