

July 20, 2006
To: Sustainability Retreat '06
Re: Intro to the Readings

Hi all,

As always selecting some introductory readings has been an interesting, so I wanted to offer a brief explanation of and introduction to the readings we chose. As you are no doubt aware, this year's retreat will focus on assessment. Each participant will work as part of a small group that will focus on a particular aspect of Willamette's mission and operations—from our central mission of research and teaching to campus planning and waste management. The charge of each group will be to:

- 1) identify indicators that can be used to track Willamette's performance in each sector;
- 2) outline a sector assessment plan based upon those indicators;
- 3) explore the resources that may be needed to carry out an assessment, including budget requests;
- 4) examine the potential for short term projects that can advance the goals of the proposed indicators (such as curriculum development, or teleconferencing).

Depending on your level of familiarity with other assessment projects, the charge above may not seem entirely clear. What does this kind of sustainability assessment look like? What do we hope to get out of making these kinds of measurements? How can we think about constructing indicators that will help us learn something useful?

The readings we have selected begin to develop these questions. The first reading, Berea College's¹ 2004 *Ecological Indicators of Sustainability*, is offered as an example of a campus sustainability assessment. As Berea is an institution that is similar in size, resources, and mission to Willamette, its indicators report represents a potentially useful launching point for our own efforts. In the second article, authors from Western Michigan's Campus Sustainability Assessment Project² (CSAP) outline the benefits of performing an assessment. And in the final article, authors from Sustainable Measures³ discuss some principles of designing effective indicators.

In addition to the readings, we also include several more examples for your review: suggested lists of indicators from CSAP and Good Company; and assessment reports from Vassar College, the University of Vermont, UC Berkeley, and Penn State University.

I hope these resources will provide a fruitful starting point. I look forward to our upcoming discussions! If you have questions, concerns, or suggestions please feel free to contact me at nboyce@willamette.edu.

Nathan Sivers Boyce

¹ See <http://www.berea.edu/sens> for more information about efforts toward sustainability at Berea College.

² See <http://csap.envs.wmich.edu> for more information about the Campus Sustainability Assessment Project.

³ See <http://www.sustainablemeasures.com> for more information about Sustainable Measures.