

Environmental Affairs and Sustainability Committee—Minutes
January 26, 2011
210 Anheuser Busch Natural Resources Building

Members Present: Jason Hubbart, Chair Kevin Petersen
Peter Ashbrook Christopher Peterson
Rachel Brekhus Troy Rule
Steve Burdic Caryn Scoville
Paul Coleman Jan Weaver
Daniel Hooley Martin Wills

Guests: John Adams Janet Moreland
Josh Baniak John Nichols
Ben Datema LuAnn Roth
Tyler Hutcherson Mark Ryan
Cerry Klein Jim Spain
Ben Kreitner Gerald Summers
Frankie Minor Ted Tarkow

Jason Hubbart called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Climate Action Plan

Steve Burdic announced that the campus had filed the Climate Action Plan to meet a requirement of the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. The 40-page plan can be downloaded from the AASHE web site (<http://acupcc.aashe.org/cap/819/>). The plan sets forth a strategic structure through rolling 5-years plans that are updated annually to ensure that the campus makes significant reductions of greenhouse gas emissions. Burdic stated that this plan has already had a significant impact on campus sustainability activities even beyond greenhouse gas emissions. Peter Ashbrook noted that many large universities had not signed the commitment because they did not feel they could eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. The MU plan does not set a date for elimination of such emissions, but sets out a roadmap for making serious reductions. This seems to be in line with the original goal of the Climate Commitment, which was to have colleges and universities take a leadership role on a national level for this issue.

Forum on Environmental Studies Program

Ashbrook gave a brief introduction for the purpose of the remainder of the meeting. The Committee had arranged for several presentations to discuss various aspects of the Environmental Studies Program and what issues should be considered in determining its future direction, given that its Director, Jan Weaver, is stepping down at the end of the semester.

Weaver began the discussion by sharing and reviewing a handout with program statistics since Environmental Studies was first conceived in 1992. The Environmental Affairs Council (predecessor to this Committee) approved the Environmental Studies proposal in 1993 and Weaver was hired in November of 1994 as the Director of the program, which was and has been a half-time position. The program was a collaborative arrangement between, Agriculture, Arts and Sciences, and the Provost. Currently, the program sits administratively in CAFNR. Over the

past decade, the program has typically had 1-3 graduates with Environmental Studies majors and an average of 6 (high of 12) students graduating with a Certificate in Environmental Studies. There have been four courses developed, two at the 2000 level and two at higher levels. The program has an annual budget of \$36,495; this number has been augmented by \$9,465.97 (carryover from previous years) for FY11. When salary and wages are taken out, very little is left over for any other expenditures. Weaver went through an extensive list of resources on the Environmental Studies web site. Weaver has advised student environmental groups; the biggest success was the development of Sustain Mizzou with the leadership of Jared Cole several years ago. Sustain Mizzou developed a strategy to sustain its existence as well as meet members' interests. In recent years, Sustain Mizzou has had upwards of 100 interested students at early fall meetings. Weaver has pushed the concept that Environmental Studies requires skills, abilities, and perspectives of both the natural sciences and the social sciences. Weaver raised the issue of the proliferation of certificates on campus and the need to develop some consistent meaning of the term (minors are all 15 hours; but certificates can be anything such as a class, 15 hours, taking a test, etc.).

Ben Datema, Sustainability Advisor for Student Life, presented information on student perspectives and issues. First, he shared testimonials from seven students, all of whom were most complimentary of Weaver and the mentoring she provided them. Datema then gave a personal testimonial about how Weaver pushed him outside of his comfort zone. Kevin Petersen shared his experience that Weaver actually talked him out of an Environmental Studies major in spite of his interest in environmental issues. Petersen further mentioned that his Environmental Studies class included a project that enabled students to develop a solution for a real life issue—in his case, the project led to the establishment of the Bike Resource Center at MU. As the discussion progressed, it became clear that one of the strengths of the Environmental Studies program is that students were encouraged, perhaps required, to study very real problems at MU and/or the community. Students found these real world experiences to be most valuable. The Environmental Studies web site was mentioned as a great resource for students. A question was raised about what kind of programs MU's peer groups offer. Weaver said that most Big 12 Schools have some kind of Environmental Studies program; however, MU has a strong Natural Resources program that other schools don't often have. The Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) should have information about how MU's offerings in Environmental Studies might compare with other schools. Datema mentioned that he has been identifying student environmental groups; the list is currently over 60 organizations long and is still growing. Clearly there is a lot of student interest in sustainability.

LuAnn Roth, the education coordinator for Mizzou Advantage gave some remarks about how her office is working to help make connections between faculty and departments to help strengthen MU's commitment to its five goals of Mizzou Advantage, one of which is sustainable energy. Roth arranged for Cerry Klein to talk about the Sustainable Energy program in Engineering. Right now students are suggested to pursue an Environmental Engineering minor. There is also a Sustainable Energy Masters degree program that is shared with other Big 12 schools. There is an Environmental Energy/Renewable Energy certificate arrangement. The College also has undergraduate research teams (URTs) that gain real world experience by working on current issues, such as storm water. These experiential learning programs are believed to be quite valuable. Roth noted that many courses have environmental components, but are not labeled as

such. One approach to addressing environmental studies would be to encourage departments to consider including an environmental component appropriate for their discipline. Roth also noted that language changes over time and words change meanings. Thus, “environmental” was in vogue for awhile, but now “sustainability” seems to have taken precedence. These changing definitions can have either positive or negative connotations.

Mark Ryan, Director of the School of Natural Resources, first thanked Weaver for giving birth to the Environmental Studies program and her continuing passion to make the program successful. Ryan noted that the Environmental Studies program is administratively located in the School of Natural Resources, but the degree program is in Arts & Sciences. Ryan talked about his dreams for the program, which include that he would like to see a full-blown Environmental Studies degree, greater focus on environmental policy, a focus option on environmental planning, and partner with the College of Agriculture and the College of Education on environmental education. He opined that such a program would likely grow and could get 100-125 majors annually. Moving from “dream” mode to “scrooge” mode, Ryan put forth the issue of resources—in the current environment, resources will be hard to find. This year will present another challenge to find funds given the State budget and University projections. It is hard to see that the budget situation will change much in the next few years.

During the discussion that followed, MU Extension was mentioned. Having been through significant budget cuts over the past 20 years, they may be able to teach us something about how to retrench and refocus. In addition, Extension may also present some opportunities for joint efforts.

Another issue is that of electives. It seems like there is less wiggle room for students in their choice of electives as requirements for various majors became increasingly complex. Likewise, transfer students have significant constraints in choosing elective courses as they struggle to meet their department’s requirements.

Jim Spain indicated that the next step would probably be for Mark Ryan, Ted Tarkow, and Jan Weaver to meet with him to go through these issues and begin crafting a strategy for next steps.

Next Meeting

The next meeting has yet to be scheduled.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m. PCA