

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

2001-2002 ANNUAL REPORT

The Environmental Issues Committee (EIC) had a full plate this year, covering issues including but by no means limited to wood products purchasing, energy consumption, education and food waste. We were fortunate to have three committed student members as well as numerous outside contributors working with us on these issues.

We met several times throughout the year with Steve Mital, the coordinator for the fledgling Environmental Studies Service Learning Program (ESSLP). In addition to tracking its progress in this, its first year, we wanted to work with Steve to facilitate his efforts to tackle one or more campus-based projects in the coming year. We were able to provide input to Steve on what projects would be beneficial to the University and he in turn has let the EIC know what we can do to support his efforts. Steve hopes to include at least one campus-based project, a waste reduction analysis for EMU Food Services in the ESSLP for the 2002-2003 academic year. Other potential projects include:

- Do building-by-building monitoring of energy (and water?) usage
- Increase use of organic and/or locally grown food in dining halls
- Identify and plug holes in adherence to Recycled Paper Policy

Work continues on the UO-sustainability website that was begun last summer. Technical and staffing difficulties have contributed to delays in its implementation. Kay Coots continues to work with Sue Coppa and Dennis Soper on getting this site up and running. We did learn that we should be able to get help with any ongoing maintenance of the website from the Social Science Instructional Laboratory or the Wired Humanities Project at reasonable rates. We had a lengthy and thoughtful discussion concerning transportation issues with Rand Stamm from DPS. What began as an exploration into the effectiveness of the DPS-run Transportation Resource Center (TRC) broadened into a full-blown discussion of parking issues, education, publicity, carpooling and other programs. Rand enlightened us about the many ways that DPS is trying to promote alternative modes of transportation, and he also made it pretty clear that faculty/staff have the most room for improvement in this area.

Among changes that Rand believed would be helpful in promoting alternative transportation are the Breeze Shuttle, the Guaranteed-Ride-Home Program (launched January, 2002), Bus Rapid Transit, an extended and more evenly distributed class day (transportation demand management), market-driven incentives, and making transportation education a mandatory part of everyone's education. I think we all learned a lot and we all generally agreed that the TRC isn't as effective as we'd like it to be, but due to time constraints we reached no real conclusions as to where the TRC should go from here. We hope to finally revisit transportation issues in our May meeting and at the very least set transportation-issue-related goals for next year.

Two issues were brought to our attention via public inquiries to the President's Office: The Talloires Declaration (TD) and Indiana University's adoption of a wood-products purchasing policy that

prohibited the purchase of old-growth wood products. After discussing on several occasions the relative merits of the University signing on to the Talloires Declaration, we reached consensus that although we firmly supported the underlying principles of the Declaration and felt that the University was already in compliance with many of the TD's tenets, parts of the TD exceeded the scope of sustainability issues which we could realistically commit to at this time. Among these were significant commitments to environmental educational efforts, both within our classrooms and throughout the greater community. Signing on to the TD should not be taken lightly, and we felt that it would be a disservice to do so without being able to commit the resources necessary to work toward full compliance with the TD. We do hope to use it for guidance in setting future EIC objectives and direction.

Consideration of Indiana University's wood-products purchasing policy led to much more protracted discussions with a wide variety of people, including local Forestry Consultant Tom Giesen, UO Legal Counsel Melinda Grier, UO Purchasing Services Manager Harriet Merrick, Facilities Services Purchasing Manager Bill Kasper, and members of the Survival Center. Tom advised us that it would be more effective to include language concerning "sustainably-harvested" wood products and not just limit the discussion to old-growth wood products.

Melinda Grier insisted that any policy that explicitly "required" that UO construction projects use only non-old-growth or sustainably-harvested wood products would be in conflict with last year's OUS ruling regarding impartial business practices (approved at the February 2001 OUS Board Meeting). Melinda said that any wood-products-related requirements had to be value- or performance-based. Harriet and Bill worked with several of us to try to determine the most effective action we could take based on these constraints, and we concluded that at this time the best thing we could do was to propose a new subpolicy to the UO Comprehensive Environmental Policy that would "encourage" the use of non-old-growth, certified sustainably harvested wood products in all campus construction projects. We hope to submit this proposed subpolicy to Dave Hubin before the end of this May.

A few of us also met with members of the Survival Center who were preparing to initiate a Tree-Free-Campus Campaign with the support of the Rainforest Action Network. Since the main focus of the campaign seemed to concern Boise Cascade and tree-free paper, Karyn tried to provide them with background information on the UO Recycled Paper Policy and the stellar efforts of J.R. Gaddis and the UO Printing Department to promote the use of recycled paper throughout the University. Karyn also pointed out that student groups were among the worst violators of our Recycled Paper Policy, frequently using virgin paper as well as goldenrod and neon-colored papers (which present significant recycling problems). It was agreed that it would be helpful for students to be educated about paper choices and their relative impacts. This meeting helped underscore the need for an ASUO Environmental Coordinator, a position which has been filled for the coming year.

In February Kay Coots brought it to the attention of the EIC that the Computer & Electronic Equipment Harvest program was in danger of being terminated due to a loss of its storage space. Between May 2001 and February 2002, this program had shipped 1883 pieces of old equipment and diverted 6254 pounds of lead-containing CRTs from the landfill. It would be a significant loss not to be able to continue this program. As of May 6, the program is still in search of a new home for when they lose their current space. The Surplus Furniture program faces a similar fate.

Courtney Hight kept us informed about ASUO's efforts to reduce student energy usage and consequently reduce the student energy fee. Thanks to the effort of the Doin' It In The Dark Committee, the administration reduced the fees as their energy reduction goals were realized. During the past year or so, Good Company has conducted a sustainability assessment of the University. Although the final report has not yet been made public, Joshua Skov of Good Company presented a preliminary overview of their findings to us at our March meeting. In addition to helping to satisfy some of our curiosity, his presentation was very helpful in deciding what projects to propose to Steve Mital for the ESSLP. We are looking forward to seeing the final report, which we expect to be a useful tool for the EIC in setting goals for the near future. For better or worse, there are plenty of things to work on next year:

1. The inability to meter energy usage on a per-building basis has proven to be a major stumbling block for several envisioned energy-conservation projects. It would be nice to pursue getting electric (and perhaps even water) meters in place wherever possible so that the next time someone wants to do an analysis, interdepartmental competition, or whatever the foundation is in place for such an endeavor.
2. Time and again we see that the groundwork has been laid for people to live their lives and conduct their business in a more sustainable manner, but people still choose to eschew alternative modes of transportation, leave their lights and computers turned on, circumvent the Recycled Paper Policy, and create enormous amounts of garbage, etc. Many times such choices are made out of perceived notions of practicality, convenience, and even economy, but lack of awareness of the true long-term environmental and societal costs of, as well as alternatives to, such behavior is almost always a factor as well. Three of the ten tenets of the Talloires Declaration (mentioned above) stress the importance of educating people of all ages (employees, students, *and* surrounding primary and secondary schools) about sustainability and the environment. In the interests of raising environmental awareness and fostering environmental literacy, it might behoove the University to consider adding an Environmental Studies curriculum requirement for undergraduate degree programs.
3. Further pursue transportation issues and motivate people to consider loosening their grips on automobile travel at least a little.
4. Work with the newly appointed ASUO Environmental Coordinator to bolster students' efforts and vice versa.
5. Follow up on our proposed Wood Products Purchasing Subpolicy.
6. Improve compliance with the University's Recycled Paper Policy.
7. Continue to work with Steve Mital and the ESSLP.
8. Continue to develop and implement the UO Sustainability website.
9. Continue to promote energy conservation efforts and education.

10. Work with departments to prevent mailings to inappropriate recipients. For example, non-teaching faculty generally doesn't need to receive mailings regarding Dead Week, overseas teaching opportunities, and the like.

11. Reinstate "Environmental Citizen of the Year" awards.