

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

2002-2003 ANNUAL REPORT

It was another busy year for the Environmental Issues Committee (EIC). In addition to addressing issues that were brought to our attention during the course of the year, we tackled several items that had been identified as worthy goals from the previous year. We welcomed the newly appointed ASUO Environmental Coordinator, Vivian Vassall, and her successor, Erin Rowland, to the EIC and we were happy to have the increased student representation on the committee.

This report is generally broken down into the following sections (with some inevitable overlap):

- Transportation
- Education and Outreach
- Environmental Literacy
- Center for the Advancement of Sustainable Living
- Energy
- University Policies
- UO Sustainability Assessment / Coordinator
- Future EIC Plans and Wish List

We formed several subcommittees this year: Transportation, Education, and Environmental Literacy Curriculum Requirement subcommittees were formed near the beginning of the year, and a CASL (Center for the Advancement of Sustainable Living) subcommittee was formed in late fall after the concept was presented to us at our November meeting.

TRANSPORTATION

The Transportation Subcommittee reviewed various recent surveys and reports from both Campus Planning and LTD and summarized their findings to us. After some productive brainstorming and discussions, we decided to produce an informational flyer which could be distributed to inform members of the campus community of transportation alternatives. That flyer is nearly complete and should be available soon for inclusion with the regular distribution of parking permit materials, as well as for distribution as part of New Employee Orientation and IntroDucktion and other suitable uses.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

The Education Subcommittee placed periodic eco-tips in the Oregon Daily Emerald, staffed an EIC table at this year's Earth Day celebration, and identified several goals. The response to our Earth Day table was sufficiently positive that organizers recommend making it a yearly occurrence. The Education Subcommittee recognized the importance of collaborating with and capitalizing on the efforts of others, rather than having many separate entities such as ASUO, the Ecological Design Center, and others constantly reinvent the same wheels. For example, John Baldwin has made available to us a customizable display board, and we used it for our Earth Day table. Steve Mital's Environmental Studies Service Learning Program (ESSLP) will experiment with a campus energy and conservation project, determining where energy is used and by whom, and how it can be used

more efficiently. Thanks to the active involvement of Karyn Kaplan and Robyn Hathcock on the EIC, we already have good interaction with our wonderful Campus Recycling Program. Christine Thompson has also ensured that we are kept abreast of many the good things that Campus Planning is doing.

In response to frequent interruptions due to inquiries about sustainability projects around campus, Christine Thompson developed a brochure titled "Self Guided Tour -- Campus Sustainability Initiatives." The EIC will be reviewing it in more depth at our final meeting in June, but it looks like an excellent resource for interested individuals as well as to use on campus tours.

The range of educational ideas that we discussed is too extensive to list here. For a good description of most of these, see the [minutes of our 18-February-2003 meeting](#).

Another website that is worthy of inspection is the newly launched UO Sustainability website, <http://facilities.uoregon.edu/sustainability>. It is being maintained under the direction of Kay Coots (EH&S), and should be updated this summer when Kay hires a student to follow up on recent sustainability-related efforts at the University.

ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

Last year we identified a lack of environmental consciousness as a major stumbling block in advancing the cause of sustainability. We felt that the establishment of an undergraduate environmental literacy curriculum requirement would be an important step in raising the level of consciousness among our students, and would serve to better prepare them for their roles as citizens and decision makers of the world. A subcommittee was formed to investigate what would be needed to pursue this, but unfortunately the subcommittee disbanded due to attrition (one faculty member withdrew from the subcommittee due to her workload and one student member withdrew from the UO) before much progress was made. This idea is far from forgotten, however. In fact, graduating EIC student member Levi Strom has laid the groundwork for bringing Oberlin College's Professor David Orr to the UO next year to talk about Environmental Literacy and perhaps also Ecological Design. The UO Bookstore has already offered to help sponsor the event, and the Business School and the Humanities and Environmental Studies Programs were all identified as potential co-sponsors.

CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVING

Community member Gary "Spruce" Houser, EIC member Jo Rodgers, and four others presented the idea of a "sustainability demonstration house" to the EIC in November. Much of their presentation focused on the example of Humboldt State University's Campus Center for Appropriate Technology (CCAT). Several EIC members formed a subcommittee to review the idea, and it was ultimately decided that the EIC would heartily endorse this project, which became known as the Center for the Advancement of Sustainable Living (CASL). In addition, a few EIC members have gone on to become part of the CASL team. The project has been endorsed by numerous campus programs and units as well as community entities such as BRING Recycling, EWEB, and the Center for Appropriate Transport. CASL is awaiting word from UO Administration regarding a building that it could move into and call its own.

ENERGY

We had several discussions on energy usage and conservation. Josh Ruddick, Facilities Services' Energy Specialist, gave us a rundown on heating, cooling, and electrical use and conservation measures on campus. Josh informed us that there are indeed electric meters in most if not all campus buildings, and some are also metered for steam and chilled water. Over the past four years, the UO had seen an 11% reduction in electricity consumption in spite of the addition of new buildings. The ASUO's "Reduce the Juice" campaign further contributed to energy conservation this year. We believe that visible energy-use monitors and readouts in key buildings such as the EMU could help maintain awareness and yield positive results. Facilities Services is interested in purchasing sustainably generated electricity such as wind or solar power. They are also pursuing the use of biodiesel fuel in their vehicles.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

In November of 2002, we received notification that the Wood Products Purchasing Policy proposed by the EIC last spring had received final approval. The new policy was to be "posted on the appropriate website." I do not know what that website is, or whether it has been posted there yet. In April we finished working out the details for a proposed strengthening of our Recycled Paper Policy. Those changes were approved by Karyn Kaplan, Harriet Merrick (Business Affairs Office), and J.R. Gaddis (Printing and Mailing Services) and forwarded on to Dave Hubin for approval by the President's Office.

UO SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT/COORDINATOR

Following up on a recommendation in Good Company's 2002 UO Sustainability Assessment, J.R. Gaddis asked Tom Larson in Intercollegiate Athletics whether they could print their game-day programs on recycled paper. It turns out that they were aware of the recommendation and have contracted with a local printing company to use recycled paper for their programs.

Another recommendation of Good Company's Sustainability Assessment was a reduction in food waste. One of this year's ESSLP projects was to analyze the waste stream generated by EMU Food Service and try to identify ways in which it could be substantially reduced. Steve Mital and Mike Sims presented their findings to the EIC and have continued to work with EMU Food Service people on this. Much of the waste stream is compostable, and efforts to redirect these materials to a campus composting project would be a huge benefit. We hope that lessons learned from this study can eventually be applied to UO Catering and the UO dining halls.

Follow up on other recommendations from the Sustainability Assessment have been sporadic at best. This is but one reason that we have begun to actively pursue the creation of a UO Sustainability Coordinator position. There are many ways in which we could benefit from having such a coordinator, including but not limited to follow up on implementation of the Campus Comprehensive Environmental Policy and Sustainable Development Plan, better coordination of disparate campus ability efforts, having a single point-of-contact for UO sustainability issues, and better promotion of UO's ongoing efforts in this area. The position seems like a logical next step in furthering the University's commitment to sustainability. Christine Thompson, Dean Livelybrooks, Paige West, Peter Reppe, and I met with Dan Williams to discuss the possibility of creating such a

position, and we referred him to a few universities which appear to have an effective sustainability coordinator. We are awaiting Dan's return from travel and further insights on how to pursue this.

A Sustainability Coordinator would also be an appropriate person to follow up on the findings of several group projects by students from Peter Reppe's ENVS411 class. Recommendations on improvements in dormitory and Athletic Department heating efficiency from that class have already been reported to Nancy Wright (Housing), and proposals for other innovations such as grey water recycling and the tracking of UO sustainability indicators await an advocate to pursue them.

FUTURE EIC PLANS AND WISH LIST

Following are some things for the EIC and its new chairperson, Dorene Steggell, to consider next year:

1. 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, 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 (which, the EIC concluded in 2002, called for programs and resources in excess of the UO's current ability and/or willingness to commit) 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 would behoove the University to consider adding an Environmental Literacy curriculum requirement for undergraduate degree programs. Such a move would enhance the University's reputation as a leader in promoting sustainability as well as better prepare our students for the significant environmental challenges that await them and future generations.
2. Bring Oberlin College's Professor David Orr here to speak and possibly even conduct a workshop.
3. Create, fill and empower a position of UO Sustainability Coordinator.
4. Find a suitable new space for the Computer & Electronic Equipment Harvest program.
5. Find space for and reestablish the Furniture Surplus program.
6. Further pursue transportation issues and motivate people to consider loosening their grips on automobile travel at least a little. For example, the most recent survey on Faculty/Staff automobile use was done by LTD in 2000. It would be wonderful if the ESSLP would take on a project involving research of usage and marketing of alternative modes of transportation.
7. Continue to work with Steve Mital and the ESSLP on whatever projects they choose to do.

8. Improve compliance with the University's Recycled Paper Policy.
9. Continue to develop and maintain the UO Sustainability website.
10. Continue to promote energy conservation efforts and education.
11. Continue to pursue the use of biodiesel fuel and sustainably generated electricity (e.g., wind and solar power, salmon-friendly hydropower).
12. Work with departments to prevent mailings to inappropriate recipients. For example, non-teaching faculty generally don't need to receive mailings regarding Dead Week, overseas teaching opportunities, and the like.