**Environmental Issues Committee Meeting Minutes**

March 11, 2014, 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

Umpqua Room, EMU

**MEMBERS PRESENT**
Erin Moore – Architecture

Shabnam Akhtari—Math

Holly Lynn—Biology

Marie Swarringim—Campus Planning, Design, and Construction

Doug Brooke - Environment, Health, and Safety

Students:

Erin Walker, Student Sustainability Coalition Board

Ryan Ahrling, Environment Science and Geography

Ex-Officio:

Eric Beeler—Student Sustainability Coalition

Other Attendees:

Frank Stahl - Biology Department

Conny Isaacs – Travel Office

Sonya Carlson—Office of Sustainability

**WELCOME AND MINUTES**

Erin welcomed everyone. Committee members and guests introduced themselves. Holly moved to approve the February minutes and Marie seconded the motion. By a voice vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Sonya let the committee know that the second JC Biomethane presentation had to be postponed and that the Office of Sustainability would keep the group updated on the next steps in regard to that issue. She also noted that this was the last EIC Meeting of the term and that a Doodle poll would soon go out to schedule Spring Term meetings.

**TRAVEL TAX PRESENTATION FROM SONYA CARLSON**

Sonya gave the floor to Professor Emeritus Frank Stahl, who originally brought the cidea to the committee. His reasoning for bringing the proposal included the significant impact airplane travel has and his experience with video conferencing with large lecture hall type settings as well as smaller one-on-one interactions using programs such as Skype, which work well, save time and money. He believes that experience was every bit as intellectually satisfying as being there in person except that he wasn’t exhausted at the end and didn’t get to experience the local culture and food. Lastly, he brought the idea to the EIC because bringing proposals “out of thin air” to the UO Senate has not been successful in the past, so he wanted the EIC to study the situation, so that if he does chose to bring this to the Senate he has more information.

Sonya described the reasoning behind putting a price on carbon – essentially carbon dioxide and carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2E) emissions contribute to global warming. Additionally, what gets measured gets managed, so putting a price on it forces us to track those emissions and can influence behavior (if the price if set at an appropriate level). The aim of this mechanism is to encourage awareness of the impacts of travel, reduce unnecessary travel, and invest in fuel-switching and efficiency projects on campus. The action at the Federal Level has put the onus on states to come up with their own methodologies for curbing CO2E. Some states, such as Oregon are reviewing policies to price carbon, either through a tax rate or cap and trade system. This type of regulation is coming. UO is seen as a green campus and this aligns with our mission and strengths.

Sonya ran the info-graphic in the power point that shows when different countries have or are projected to adopt carbon policies. Australia had a policy, but then had a change in leadership, who unfortunately reversed that policy. There are 69 companies, which have a carbon-pricing scheme in the US. Another chart showed the carbon price used by a handful of large publicly traded companies in North American. This prices shown in the chart ranged from Microsoft at $6.50/metric ton to Exxon Mobile at $70/metric ton. This lowest price range is really seen as the marginal cost of reduction to the company. A price of about $30/metric ton is the minimum price social scientists believe will cause behavior change and will actually make an impact on the problem. The top tier pricing (around $70) is seen as strong investor pressure on companies to change their behavior and model to prepare for the future. Investors understand that if these companies don’t make significant change then their bottom line could be impacted.

There are not any other universities that Steve could find, which have a program as significant as the one being proposed here. Arizona State has a voluntary program, of which about 5% of their faculty participate. Cornell has a proposed carbon price on travel. There was also an LA Times Op-Ed that urged universities to adopt these types of policies. Again, carbon pricing is coming. The leaders will get credit for it, the followers will not. They will be seen as being in compliance with resulting regulations.

We reviewed the Sanky Diagram, which shows UO energy consumption and emissions. Airline travel is the activity with the largest emissions. The next portion of the presentation focused specifically on UO air travel miles. Between 2004 and 2014 airline miles traveled has increased 83%, whereas the number of faculty has increased 22% and the number of students has increased 23%. We don’t currently know the story behind those figures, but think it is something that should be analyzed further. We worked with the travel office at Business Affairs Travel Office and really appreciated all of the work they did to get us the numbers to create these estimates. For the presentation we reported on the top 15 units on campus with the most travel expenses. This covers about 97% of all travel at the UO for FY 2014. Athletics had the greatest travel costs, followed by CAS and then Research and Innovation. If a $5 price were placed on carbon, Athletics would be charged roughly $41,000/year, followed next by CAS at $9,500/year. At the lower end, Music and Dance would be charge approximately $700/year. Overall the UO would reallocate about $80,000/year. At a $30 price on carbon, Athletics would pay roughly $247,000/year and the UO overall would reallocate $475,000.

How would this reallocated money be used? In short this would be spent on campus to reduce energy consumption and emissions. We discussed the Oregon Model for Sustainable Design and how new projects on campus are required to be LEED Gold certified and create no new emissions. That goal is achieved by funding efficiency upgrades to older buildings, which offset the new building’s energy usage.

Next Steps include more presentations and talking to more groups around campus to get feedback. Steve had a good meeting with the Deans, who seemed receptive. If they give the green light to move forward, then Steve has spoken with some campus staff, who would be willing to pull together an Return on Investment (ROI) Study.

This is coming. Leaders are the only ones who will reap the positive reputational benefits. Having a plan in place already could help mitigate impact of future legislation. We have been asked what we would do with the tax if the state passed legislation. UO’s response would need to be handled at that time depending on what the legislation entailed.

Q&A and Suggestions:

Frank Stahl asked if there had been any consideration given yet on the improvement of conferencing facilities or questioned whether they are already adequate? Sonya noted that the EIC group had briefly discussed this issue.

Holly does not believe the services are adequate on campus and that the old facilities on campus are hard to retrofit. Wiring new services in requires new electrical so you don’t trip breakers. She also noted that some facilities are booked out months in advance.

Frank Stahl believes that video conferencing facilities will be key to get faculty buy-in and noted that he wouldn’t want to bring this to the Senate until that issue was addressed. He also said that the money raised from this type of proposal seems like a prime candidate for a project that the funds could be allocated towards.

Eric Beeler, noted that the EMU is reviewing more options for teleconferencing. Marie noted that they didn’t have any problems accessing teleconferencing facilities and that the scale of the teleconferencing is a larger factor. Individual conferencing technology exists and is very easy to use (such as GoTo Meeting).

Erin thought that Steve had actually posed this question to IT and suggested that we make a note to have him report back to the EIC on that conversation.

Erin thought that we should reframe the language in the presentation to move away from the cost language and to language that reflects reinvestment, reallocation of funding priorities.

Discussed how Athletics felt about this policy, since they were impacted the most.

Doug asked if there were any benchmarks compared to other universities for air travel and if there was any way to normalize the data so that we were comparing apples to apples.

Erin asked what caused the large growth over the last five years in air travel? Sonya would need to dig into that data more. Many suggested that bowl games and success of our athletic teams could be a large contributor.

Holly suggested that if we have a survey to get input then she suggested sending the survey to the office managers for the departments with a smaller batch first. Marie suggested that to get the most feedback you should send it to as many people as possible.

Frank asked if we would be willing to do this presentation to other faculty meetings and Erin suggested that student groups might be another to present to. Eric thought that students would want to know most about how this would impact their individual budgets and costs. Holly asked about impact to intercollegiate sports. Eric thought that most of them drive to games and thus wouldn’t be impacted by this proposal.

Doug thought that something like this would need to be driven from the top down. Marie pushed back though saying that the Oregon Model was rolled out from below and then moved out. Frank Stahl said that when he raised it with Scott Coltrane that his response was that this wasn’t a good economic model.

Holly suggested that we describe further what ROI is and what that study would entail. Marie said that we should add another slide on the work that has already been done from the Oregon Model. She also thought there was a huge spreadsheet of work that needs to be done.