

Sustainability Council Meeting Minutes November 29, 2005

Present:

Council Members: Karen Arabas, Joe Bowersox, Sue Koger, Kiri Nelson, Elizabeth Siebert, Nathan Sivers-Boyce,

Campus Members: Jodi Lowes, Janelle Duyck, Lisa Frost, Ellie, Jenny, Susan Smith, Nadene Steinhoff, Dean Wentworth, Mary Collins.

Commission on Excellence Hearings:

Several folks attended the Commission on Excellence's open hearing on November 22nd, and gave a quick overview of the hearings and their thoughts. During the hearings each group gave an overview of their proposal and some seemed to make presentations. The Commissioners welcomed questions from the audience. The Commission's role in choosing the new centers was questioned and there were also questions about whether there is currently funding available for new centers and if there is, where the funding would come from. The audience also asked why the university was undertaking this initiative and what the purpose was for creating these centers, when much of the work being proposed is already happening on campus. The Commissioners said the University would like to focus on a few unique areas that could act as a incentive for new / prospective students and financial donors. The University would demonstrate their support for these projects by creating new centers, hopefully drawing more outside funding opportunities both for the centers and the University.

Several felt many of the proposals were abstract and needed more concrete ideas and should be more project focused with measurable outcomes and accountability. The issue of some of the proposals being very similar was briefly addressed, but it was not clear as to whether combining proposals was acceptable to the Commission or not. The Commission did say they would not stop anyone from making a final proposal and that a quick turn around time would be necessary for the final proposals as they would possibly be due sometime in February.

It will be very important to bring out the academic, community, and interdisciplinary focus of our Sustainable Communities proposal, along with its reach throughout the sectors of the university—these features make it rather unique. It is very important that we have a large presence during our hearing on Monday, December 5th. We hope students, faculty and staff will come out to show their support and give the Commission an idea of how broadly accepted and universally important this proposal is to the campus. Our proposal is unique in that it truly incorporates the University motto into its concept

and we should stress to the Commission our ability to serve as an umbrella in bringing people together from all areas of the university and the outside community as well.

The Council discussed strategy for the upcoming December 5 hearing. Folks were encouraged to do their homework beforehand, and look at the other proposals (www.willamette.edu/centers/commission), see who might be partnered and familiarize ourselves with our advantages.

The Commission stated during the hearing that funding would not be easy to find for the Centers. A question was raised about the Sustainable Fairview Project and a possible partnership which was mentioned at the last SC meeting. The Fairview project may provide us with a built-in funding opportunity, allowing us to sponsor Carson-like grants almost immediately. Karen will contact Sam Hall and Russ Beaton to get a clearer idea of what they are proposing and how feasible it might be.

Community Engagement:

The Council has been asked, of late, to weigh in on several issues involving various areas on campus and the greater Salem community: the Clean Cars letter from OSPIRG, the Art Department's position request for a Technician to handle the oversight of toxic chemical storage and safety, and the ongoing sustainability efforts in Salem, to name just a few. Could this possibly undercut our objectivity and persuasive authority on campus? Is this more "political" than we would like to be? What role should the Council play and how should they decide the issues we become involved with?

The Council felt issues involving the campus should be our first priority. The charge of the Council should be WU campus focused. We should provide guidance whenever possible and be proactive (i.e. actively seek review of chemicals used in various departments on campus). Issues off campus would be the territory of the new Center, if the proposal is accepted. We should discourage departments and groups from seeking us out for their own self-interest, but strongly encourage people to seek us out for issues affecting the greater good of the campus.

Council members felt it was important to prioritize issues on campus we'd like to focus on and advocate for without becoming involved in dispute resolution. This could be an agenda item for one of the first Spring Sustainability Council meetings. Dean stated that he would be interested to know what the students who were in attendance felt were important issues on campus and what should be the Council's role in those. He asked them to share their thoughts. The students felt the Council should serve as an outlet for ideas on how to incorporate making problems visible without taking sides. They feel the Council should be positioned as the venue to go through, that it is a powerful entity on campus with high visibility and should be a facilitator for discussions but not an advocate for problems. It should not become a matter of getting the Council's "stamp of approval" to get things done on campus. The Council was grateful for their opinions. The policy issue of how to deal with issues as they come up was discussed next. The Council feels

they should help direct people to sources and resources but not become directly involved. It is important to manage and balance the mission of the Sustainability Council.

Council members felt it was necessary to set aside time each semester for open forums for groups to attend and discuss their ideas. This would help to keep the weekly meetings on track and from becoming bogged down. The Council will look into assessment tools other universities use for strategies and issues and prioritizing on campus projects and expenditure of funds. It was decided that a Brainstorming Session to prioritize campus issues was crucial and should be done before the holiday break. Therefore, this will be the only agenda item set for the next meeting, on December 13th (the last meeting for this semester).

No meeting next Tuesday, December 6th.

The next Sustainability Council Meeting will take place on Tuesday, December 13th from 11:30 am – 1:30 pm in UC-Dining Room 1.