

Notes from 1st Environmental Caucus Meeting

The first environmental Caucus meeting was held on Wednesday, October 8, 2008 in the ARD Large Pod Room with more than 40 participants. This included faculty from psychology, communication, forestry, politics and international affairs, humanities, sociology/social work, criminal justice, biology, engineering, business, geography/planning, anthropology, CSE, Master of Arts in Sustainable Communities, CC&E, as well as four vice-presidents from VPR, EMSA, Center for International Education, and the President's Office, and representatives from the Office of Sustainability, Cline Library, Social Research Lab, ITEP, Merriam Powell, EMA, Bilby Research, CP-CESU, Diablo Trust, and student representatives

Agenda:

1. Purpose and Idea for Caucus
2. Introductions – what would you most like to see the Caucus accomplish?
3. Break out groups – Discuss A) mission statement, B) highest priorities, C) structure
4. Share conclusions of break-out groups
5. Summarize Next Steps
6. Announcements

Summary of desired accomplishments for Environmental Caucus (from introductions):

- Pont of communication and connection/collaboration
- “Become a central hub for Northern Arizona sustainability matrix” – link northern Arizona and NAU
- Sustainability Leadership – become a strong voice on campus and in region
- Achieve the practical: create database of environmental expertise on campus
- Increase energy – expand what we already have going on
- Increase opportunities for work with federal partners
- Facilitate student involvement in land sustainability efforts
- Embed institutional commitment to sustainability in the curriculum – base this on NAU's strategic plan
- Create a campus-wide degree program
- Help faculty/students/staff/community move across perceived boundaries
- Link with City's Sustainability Commission
- Host research presentations across disciplines
- Facilitate public service/engagement – promote a culture of service
- Facilitate NAU/tribal connections on issues of the environment
- Identify existing weaknesses that seem to have fallen between cracks among programs at NAU
- Promote NAU's excellent work on the environment
- Prepare for HESA grant application (Higher Education Sustainability Act, through Dept. of Education)
- Use ACUP Climate Commitment to stimulate engagement, create direction, ensure commitment is met.
- Develop a coherent, interdisciplinary program in Climate Change education and research

- Build on NAU's leadership with Ponderosa Group – greening the curriculum at the individual course level
- Point of communication/coordination to eliminate thousands of contact points, reduce multiple and sometimes conflicting voices
- Clarify role of caucus in relation to administration
- Help to form a student environmental caucus to bring together student groups on the environment

Summary of Break-out Group Discussion (7 groups of 5-7 people each)

Mission Statement Ideas (groups were asked not to spend time “wordsmithing”!):

- Shorten and simplify
- Prepare for it to get national attention
- Advocate for student connections/engagement
- Advocate for outreach to larger community

Structure for Caucus:

- Pros and cons of modeling after Academic Chairs Council or County's Sustainable Economic Development Initiative (SEDI) model
- Form possible executive committee and action teams
- Monthly meetings – committee/action team work between meetings
- Consider keeping meetings to one hour, vary time to increase participation

Information sharing and tools:

- Electronic forum
- Env. Caucus Website – important for all, plus student access
- Navigating the Green Road as guide (being updated by EMA)
- Seminar services
- Advocate for a cabinet position for the environment/sustainability
- Pre-semester workshop for caucus to discuss/inform each other

- Action/Ideas (see attached list of roles and initiatives summarized from break-out groups – a matrix will be created to allow Caucus participants to choose priorities):
 - The money is out there – must be ready to respond quickly when opportunities arise. Higher Education Sustainability Act funding is an opportunity for which we must prepare. Ponderosa Group is recognized as a leader on greening the curriculum.
 - Important Goal – promote culture of service
 - Build committees/action teams - help create focus groups
- Engage Students:
 - Use student diversity to build our direction/plans – as they bring very different perspectives to the university. The university is a service provider to students.
 - Bring one student to represent each group to meetings -- EcoHouse, Society for Environmental Communicators, Students for Sustainable Living and Urban Gardening (SSLUG), Campus Climate Challenge

- Help students build their own Environmental Caucus
- Important for this year:
 - Keep monthly meetings with smaller groups meeting
 - Form blog or use listserv to post responses, choosing to use (reply) and (reply all) when responding.

Announcements:

Navigating the Green Road (contact Karan English, Director, EMA)

- Includes listing of all of NAU's environmental programs
- New version coming out (both online and as a flier with website)
- Currently 117 programs – substantial increase from last issue

Formation of EPAC – Environmental Programs Advisory Committee (contact David Schlosberg, CSE faculty)

- Looking for faculty members interesting in advising students in environmental sciences/environmental studies
- Inviting faculty from all departments on campus

EcoHouse (contact Claudia Hutchison, CSE faculty)

- Focus is on climate change teaching
- Need speakers for 10 minute presentations – contact Claudia

Office of Sustainability (contact Richard Baron, Director): This new office is part of the President's Office and is based in ARD. Will focus primarily on the operational side of sustainability: water, energy, recycling, NAU's climate change commitment, operation of campus buildings, transportation

Center for Sustainable Environments (contact Rod Parnell, interim director) – CSE has added an academic role, coordinating Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as internships and experiential education and maintaining/growing external relationships. A search for a new CSE director is currently underway.

Upcoming Lecture (contact Sandra Lubarsky, Director MASC)

"How the Rich are Destroying the Earth"--a lecture by author Herve Kempf
November 5, 7 p.m., Cline Library Assembly Hall

A best seller in France, Herve Kempf's "How the Rich are Destroying the Earth," is an important primer on the link between global ecology and global economy. Kempf is environmental editor for France's leading newspaper, "Le Monde," and founder and editor of Reporterre, a website devoted to the environment and social justice.

Next Meeting: Continue with 1 _ hours for now. Shelley to schedule and announce.

Attended 1st Meeting: Laura Huenneke, Heather Farley, Rod Parnell, Matthew Holmes, Richard Baron, Jim Allen, Cal Seciwa, Kristen Bullard, David Schlosberg, Ron Hubert, Todd Barnell, Karan English, Ron Hiebert, Patrick McDonald, Marcelle Coder, Laura Cagney, Deja Walker, Harvey Charles, Marcus Ford, Sally Evans, George Koch, Tom Rogers, Mark Aasmunstad, Peter Friederici, Mehrdad Khatibi, Jamie Quiesenberry, Mark Hudson, David Bousquet, Shawn Newell, Miguel Vasquez, Jim Sell, Pat Ellsworth, Ann

Huffman, Derrick Widmark, Sandra Lubarsky, Romand Coles, Heidi Wayment, Rich Bowen, Claudia Walecka-Hutchison, Tom Sisk, Ray Michalowski, Shelley Silbert.