

Notes from Environmental Caucus Montly Meeting
September 14, 2009
ARD Large Pod

Present: Liz Grobsmith; Rosemary Sebestyen; Ali Smart; Ann Huffman; Kim Curtis; David Schlosberg; Allie Stender; Ron Hubert; Casey Fisher; Heather Farley; Robert Chavez; Lindsay Wagner; Agnes Drogi; David Bousquet; Ron Coles; Blasé Scarnati; Karla Brewster; Karin Wadsack; Matt Johnson; Jane Stewart; Alden Carr; Tom Rogers; Kathee Rose; R. Cruz Begay; Paloma Ibanez; Mark Aasmundstad; Rod Parnell, Shelley Silbert

I. Introduction and Announcements:

- Lindsay announced that a bill introduced by Senator Sanders and Merkeley, called the **Thermal Energy Efficiency Act of 2009** (S. 1621), would generate about \$1.5 billion annually to fund development and expansion of district energy, CHP (combined heat and power, or co-generation) and waste energy recovery systems. It could be incorporated into the Senate Climate Change bill. For more information on this bill, see <http://www.districtenergy.org>.
- Tom Rogers announced the **AZ Green Building Conference** is Nov. 10-14th – tours on NAU campus 11/14. Anu Kundoo, architect from Auroville, India will be speaking – As NAU is USGBC member, registration is reduced by \$200 – corporate number is needed for forum
- Jane Stewart announced that **Ecohouse** will host a lecture on Sept. 16 at 7:30 pm, ARD Large Pod, Roger Byrnes of Nebraska Renewable Energy Systems.
- Matt Johnson announced the **10th Biennial Conference: Collaborative Conversion in Rapidly Changing Landscapes**, Oct. 5-8 – Paul Erlich speaking Monday evening. Volunteers are still needed and get a free registration to the conference.
- Rom Coles announced that **Ecohouse and SEEDS living learning communities** are active. SEEDS has 30 undergrad students matched with grad students and are calling for faculty and staff involvement in projects, including home weatherization; water action team, food security team, public grassroots achievement at Killip School; sustainability café. Also SEDI is meeting with VPs for Unisource and Arizona Corporation Commission and expect that a **Revolving Loan Fund** will be established for weatherization projects.
- Karla Brewster announced that a **resolution** is being proposed in Flagstaff for all new City buildings to use at least 25% renewable energy.

II. Highlights From the First Year of the Environmental Caucus (Oct. '08 – Sept. '09)

- **Formation.** The Caucus formed October 2008, holding monthly meetings since then drawing 20 – 40 participants. Established Caucus website, www.nau.edu/envcaucus, established mission, operating plan, steering committee and action teams. Achieved representation on President's Cabinet.
- **Climate Action Plan.** Created a mechanism to complete the Climate Action Plan to fulfill NAU's ACUP Climate Commitment requirements. Plan will be completed in December 2009.

- **Green NAU Website.** Developed the concept and design for a "Green NAU" website as a portal to everything environmental at NAU, gained support and involvement from University Marketing. Launches in October 2009 at www.nau.edu/green.
- **Reactivated the Ponderosa Group** as the curricular arm of the Caucus. Originally formed a dozen years ago, Ponderosa is an interdisciplinary group of faculty seeking to incorporate sustainability and the environment across the university curriculum.
- **Student Action.** Sparked formation of the Student Environmental Caucus. Hosted Campus Climate Challenge student presentation on Green Fee (now called "Green Fund") and supported this effort.
- **Sustainability chosen as NAU Marketing Theme:** This year, sustainability is one of two themes for NAU marketing. Caucus activity helped to make this happen, and the Caucus will work closely with marketing to ensure success.
- **Improved coordination/networking on sustainability efforts across campus.** Some highlights happening across campus include reduction by 15% of overall energy consumption/square foot, increasing recycling visibility (in progress), educating about and endorsing Global Learning Recommendations, etc.

III. Environmental Caucus Business

1. Blase Scarnati – has asked to step back as Associate Chair for the Environmental Caucus this year; Rod Parnell has volunteered to replace him and the Caucus Steering Committee recommends approval of Rod as associate chair. Shelley asked if anyone else was interested; with no responses, Rod was accepted unanimously by the Caucus as Associate Chair. He will also represent the Environmental Caucus on the President's Cabinet.
2. Provost Lecture Series is merging speaker series with the Center for International Education. The Caucus is asked to send in suggestions for possible speakers – send an email to Blase Scarnati or Harvey Charles. Looking for prominent speakers who are relatively inexpensive, preferably no more than \$5000 as funds are limited.
3. Climate Action Plan Update – Using University of Wisconsin as model. Final document will be completed by Dec. 15th, rough draft will be sent out on the Caucus listserv for comments in October, along with an executive summary. Lindsay broke out plan document – email her if we have any suggestions or comments:
 - Organization (driven by Environmental Caucus)
 - Operations (electricity, heating, water and storm water, campus planning, purchasing, transportation, waste mgmt, dining services)
 - Teaching/Curriculum (Ponderosa Group) extra-curricular awareness raising; campus events; internships and volunteer opportunities
 - Research – all the research being done on campus
 - Outreach – to Flagstaff community
 - Assessment (progress towards zero emissions by 2020)

- Email Lindsay.Wagner@nau.edu with any suggestions or burning ideas that should be included.
 - Robert Chavez noted that NAU 's transportation is moving towards biodiesel, and information will be coming out on Inside NAU.
4. Environmental Identity Action Team – Shelley Silbert reported that the Green NAU website goes live in October. To highlight interdisciplinary or new courses on the environment, send e-mail to Shelley. Website will include a calendar, feature articles from Inside NAU and video/podcast library, sections on research and publications, courses and curriculum, sustainability initiatives, a section for students, LEED Buildings, etc.
 5. Ponderosa Group – Rod Parnell said they have revived the Ponderosa Group's nationally recognized work to integrate sustainability in the curriculum at NAU. Looking at holding a spring workshop through Faculty Development as a means of continuing Ponderosa's traditional efforts of bringing faculty together to discuss greening specific courses. The group wants both big box thinking: what is learning? Collaborative communities and engaged learning ? as well as focused curriculum improvement. Background of Ponderosa Group – formed about 12 years ago, faculty were asked to bring their course syllabi, listened to speakers and discussed how to integrate green into their courses across the curriculum. NAU now has much expertise on campus, so outside speakers should not be needed. At last meeting discussed: what is the role of Ponderosa Group and the "Students and the Environmental Experience" action team that was headed by Laura Cagney.
 6. Deja Walker from Students and the Environmental Experience Action Team is sick today, so no report this month
 7. Environmental Caucus potluck at Willow Bend, 9/17, 4 – 6:30 pm. Students without a kitchen need not bring food, faculty and staff should bring extra! No agenda – just an opportunity to get to know each other.
 8. Meeting presentation ideas – Ideas for this year include: City/County regional plan update; ITEP presentation on climate change training work. Provost Liz Grobsmith mentioned that on Sept. 24 around 1 pm there will be a report at the Conference Center during the ABOR meeting on NAU's research in sustainability. This type of presentation could also be made at Caucus meeting. Send ideas for future caucus presentations to Shelley. Suggestion that the Caucus could sponsor a faculty presentation once a month.
 9. Meeting time: It was decided to alternate the meeting date each month so more could attend. Alternating Mondays with Tuesdays or Thursdays, starting next month.

IV. Discussion: Brainstorming a carbon offset plan, especially for faculty and staff travel. Can we set up offset program that would invest in renewable energy and conservation here at NAU? Travelers would buy credits each time they traveled through this fund. Would need to delay offsets because funds would need to accrue before offsets could actually be enacted. To ensure that program would not encourage travel, it must promote video conferencing, car pooling etc as part of effort. Is this something the new VP for admin and finance can work on, or can we develop a program and suggest how it would work to the new VP? Where would funds come from? Staff/faculty

donations matched by President's office? Fundraising? Departments? Consider all of the above, but be sure personal contributions can be leveraged. How can we ensure that offsets are permanent? A fact finding group formed to continue to develop the concept: Heather Farley, Tom Rogers, Karin Wadsack, Shelley Silbert

V. Student Training and Organizing (Rosemary Sebestyen, Ali Smart)

- Rosemary Sebestyen is the campus organizer for Arizona PIRG (Public Interest Research Group), a national network of state-based advocacy organizations that are student directed – identify problems students care about (public transit; climate change; hunger; homelessness; health care;) work on state and local level on what students are interested in – compliments classroom experience for how college students can run effective campaigns (college students interested in engaging – how to work with the media; grass roots level organizing); Rosemary wants to know what issues students care about – she circulated a piece of paper to write down topics students are interested in along with our name and phone number, and student names. Currently have two interns and 10 students on an organizing committee; still trying to determine what AZPIRG might look like here at NAU

For more information on PIRG, contact Rosemary Sebestyen, rosemary@arizonapirgstudents.org.

- Ali Smart is the campus organizer with the Arizona Students' Association – 120,000 college students at NAU, UA, ASU – issues: textbook prices reduced; bill being worked on for taking money from third party to fund students financial aid; train students on grass roots actions; how to develop grass roots campaigns; national day of action this Wednesday, building a wall of public debt here at NAU.

For more information on ASA, contact Ali Smart, ali@azstudents.org.

- Rosemary and Ali are available to conduct trainings or presentations for student groups, classes or others on student organizing.

VI. Prioritizing sustainability projects at NAU – how do we focus attention, Coordination, and effort on specific projects on campus? ACUP Climate Action Plan will help us focus some of these efforts. How do we prioritize new projects? As an example, it has been suggested that the Caucus organize reduction of dumping of useable items by students leaving at the end of the year. Residence halls currently work with Habitat for Humanity and Big Brothers/Sisters, but many students oblivious to these efforts. Blue Key Honor Society and Eric Wolverton attempted to collect food discarded at end of semester, but were overwhelmed. How can Caucus help to support these efforts? Other examples: Campus education concerning recycling at NAU. Lobbying for more faculty support for environmental studies/sustainability programs including removing disincentives for existing faculty to participate in interdisciplinary work (could consider statement of support to bring to President's Cabinet); promoting a campus-wide composting system.

VII. Action Team Breakouts. Most of the action teams have met outside of the Environmental Caucus meetings but at the end of this meeting, groups met briefly to incorporate new members. Heather Farley and Lindsay Wagner – ACUP Climate

Commitment and Climate Action Plan; Shelley Silbert – Environmental Identity (Website); Blase Scarnati - Ponderosa Group; Rod Parnell - Students and the environmental experience – Rod.

Thanks to Kathee Rose and Rod Parnell for taking notes of the meeting.