President’s Universitywide Sustainability Committee (PUSC) Minutes
Minutes of November 17 2010
Room 205, Bernhard Center

Members Present: Bill Davis, Paul Farber, Judith Gipper, Harold Glasser, Matthew Hollander, Patricia Holton, Paul Pancella, John Patten, Mary Peterson, Christopher Pyzik, Joel Raveloharimisy, Lowell Rinker (Ex Officio), Anand Sankey, and Kaitlyn Shields.

Guests: Shelley Grant, Director of WMU Custodial Services, Paul McNellis, WMU Landscaping Services, and Cari Delong, WMU Natural Areas Manager.

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Motion by Peterson to amend agenda to include discussion on paper towel dispenser stickers; seconded by Pancella; Agenda modified and approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Motion by Holton to approve the Minutes as presented; seconded by Rinker; Minutes approved.

I. DISCUSSION

SHELLEY GRANT: SHOULD WMU PLACE “THese COME FROM TREES” STICKERS ON CAMPUS PAPER TOWEL DISPENSERS?

After being contacted by Western Student Association Sustainability Chair and PUSC member Alyssa Schafer, Director Grant was invited to the meeting by Harold Glasser for a discussion on “These Come From Trees” stickers for campus paper towel dispensers. Schafer’s inquiry was informal, and the WSA has not yet passed a resolution on the sticker initiative.

The request from WSA was twofold. First, Alyssa requested the “These Come From Trees” stickers be placed on all paper towel dispensers on campus. Second, she requested that the University switch to “natural,” brown colored, 100% recycled towels.

The first part of the discussion dealt with the practical aspects of such an initiative. Grant and the PUSC members presented the following facts relating to the WSA request:

a. WMU currently uses 100% recycled, chlorine bleach-free, white paper towels.
b. Previous attempts at using brown towels were unsuccessful due to poor absorption, likely leading users to consume more towels on average to compensate.
c. The vendor, and not the University, owns the dispensers.
d. The University has approximately 1,200 dispensers.
e. The amount of stickers necessary would cost less than $200.00.

It was quickly determined that the PUSC was in general support of the WSA proposal and that there was no harm in testing brown towels to determine if improvements have been made.

The discussion then focused on the details of the initiative. Glasser expressed that he would support the initiative as long as it included a research component to assess the long-term behavioral effects of the stickers. This idea was met with general approval, although Sankey expressed a desire to quickly implement the initiative regardless of research component. Director Grant clarified that purchasing and use data would be easy to gather for behavior change analysis.

Next, the discussion focused on the stickers themselves. Although the WSA had asked for premade “These Come from
Trees’ stickers, the PUSC determined that it would be a better strategy for the University to make its own stickers using the Wesustain Identity. This part of the discussion bled into a general discussion of large scale branding initiatives for the Wesustain Identity, described below.

The PUSC decided informally to move the WSA initiative forward with the following changes:

a. The addition of a research component to determine what effects the stickers have on behavior.
b. WMU should create its own stickers using the Wesustain Identity.
c. Brown towels should be piloted on a small scale to determine if improvements have been made to absorption.

II. DISCUSSION

PUSC: LARGE-SCALE BRANDING OF THE WESUSTAIN IDENTITY

Several ideas for branding were discussed during this portion of the meeting, but while there was a consensus that this should be a priority for the PUSC no decisions were made on how to proceed. The options presented below were given particular attention:

- A major banner campaign on main campus.
- Wesustain advertisements as wallpaper for computer lab workstations.
- QR codes for the sustainability website on Bronco Cards and other University paraphernalia.
- Design competitions for various advertisements through the Frostic School of Art.

A more general conversation on marketing followed. There was a general consensus that many people do not know that WMU has a significant sustainability presence or what the Wesustain identity stands for. It was suggested that we re-deploy a new Marketing / Promotion Subcommittee should be created to address these advertising issues. Bill and Kate expressed interest and Joel offered to identify a graduate student to serve on this subcommittee. Harold will try to get this committee up and running for next semester.

III. DISCUSSION

PUSC: GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES IN SUSTAINABILITY

PUSC Members had a very short discussion about general education courses in sustainability and strategies for implementing such courses throughout the University. Glasser updated the committee on his ongoing efforts to engage the Faculty Senate, Office of the Provost, and other stakeholders in this effort, partially through his Sustainability Across the Curriculum Initiative. Members also had an informal debate on the efficacy of the Lee Honors College as a representative testing ground for these types of courses.

The November PUSC meeting adjourned at 5 pm.

Upcoming meeting: Bernhard 205, Thursday December 16 at 3 pm.