President’s Universitywide Sustainability Committee (PUSC) Minutes

Minutes of June 16, 2011
Room 205, Bernhard Center

Members Present: David Dakin, Mervyn Elliot, Paul Farber, Judy Gipper, Harold Glasser, Matthew Hollander, Patricia Holton, Carolyn Noack, Paul Pancella, Christopher Pyzik, Mary Peterson, Joel Raveloharimisy (Ex Officio), Anand Sankey, Andrew Targowski, and Caroline Webber.

Guest: Erin Kaplan (WSA)

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Paul Pancella to approve the Agenda as presented; seconded by Carolyn Noack; Agenda approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Judy Gipper to approve the Minutes as presented; seconded by Matthew Hollander; Minutes approved.

UPDATES

PAUL PANCELLA: CLIMATE ACTION PLAN – CAP:

Paul gave a quick update on how the CAP process is going. The CAP committee will be meeting regularly throughout the summer to develop WMU’s CAP to meet the APUCC requirements. The goal of the CAP committee is to have a DRAFT CAP for review by mid October. The PUSC committee discussed that Paul should have someone from the Power Plant on the CAP committee, because of the role that the Power Plant plays in WMU’s overall GHG emissions. Paul distributed a list of the CAP subcommittee members. To date, the CAP committee has had three meetings.

OF’S BUILDING RENOVATION:

Harold mentioned that the building renovation planning process has been somewhat piecemeal. The initial goal was to simply “white box” the building and move in during the fall. As the planning process developed it became clear that that there was a tremendous opportunity to make this prominently located campus building a statement about the potential for cost-effective, cutting-edge green renovations. Our focus now is to explore the possibility of meeting LEED platinum and to refine our current design through an integrated design charrette. We currently need to raise and at least $250,000.00 to complete the basic project (achieving LEED Platinum will likely result in additional costs, although the integrated design charrette is intended to help us tunnel through this cost barrier). Harold requested that PUSC members share any advice or suggestions they might have regarding fund-raising for the building. He will update the PUSC on our progress in August.

FYE COLLABORATION:

Darin Howard has been working with Toni Woolfolk-Barnes and her First Year Experience (FYE) staff to determine how to best distribute EcoMugs this fall. Two interns, Dean Simionescu and Mark Niskanen, have been working with Matt and Harold to develop a pilot program for seven FYS classes to help communicate to the larger university campus about key campus sustainability projects through a video competition. The winning videos will be featured on the OfS website and the winning team will have a tree planted in their honor. In addition, the OfS will have a variety of resource materials to support the FYS instructors on our website, including a three-minute example video produced by Mark and Dean. By the end of July, Campus Beet will also have a five-to-seven minute video on to promote its activities.
ADMISSIONS COLLABORATION:
Donna St. John and Scott Hennessy met with Matt and Harold two weeks ago to discuss specific strategies for integrating sustainability into Admissions' messaging and written materials (Viewbook and WebNow highlights). To facilitate ongoing collaboration, Scott and Matt are scheduled to go on a campus admissions tour in the next two weeks—as currently provided to prospective students—and Matt will identify opportunities to inject sustainability stories. OfS will also continue to work with Donna and Scott to identify opportunities to educate student ambassadors and admissions counselors about campus sustainability activities and initiatives.

STRATEGIC PLANNING:
PUSC would like to invite several members associated with Athletics and Intramural Sports to our August PUSC meeting to both help make them aware of campus sustainability efforts and to brainstorm about ways to make their activities and programs more environmentally sustainable. Subsequent PUSC meetings might include similar discussions with Martha Warfield (VP Diversity and Inclusion) and Dawn Gamer (Extended University Programs).

WSA COLLABORATION AND CONCERNS:
The Western Student Association (WSA) President (Erin Kaplan) would like to better understand how the Sustainability Fee monies are being distributed and spent. The OfS welcomes this interest from WSA and looks forward to meeting with Erin and her staff over the next few weeks. Erin also suggested that transparency and communication could be facilitated by having OfS student interns speak to various student organizations about the projects they are doing. This additional information and interaction should help WSA members and other students better understand what the OfS does and how

While discussing this year’s first Student Sustainability Survey, it was noted that motivating students to take any survey is difficult; only a fraction (1/10th) of WMU students usually participate in any mass sustainability surveys. PUSC members agreed that we would like to have the Campus Activities Board (CAB), Graduate Student Association Committee (GSAC), and University Relations distribute an “email blast” to all student organizations to encourage student participation in our annual Student Sustainability Survey.

Erin highlighted several additional concerns that WSA would like to work with the OfS to address in the future: (1) engaging more students in sustainability efforts/activities, (2) incorporating and infusing sustainability education into class curricula, (3) engaging and supporting graduate students in sustainability research, and (4) developing an undergraduate sustainability minor and sustainability certificates.

GENERAL DISCUSSION ON SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (RESEARCH & TEACHING)

SUSTAINABILITY CERTIFICATES (UG & G), SPECIALIZED COURSES, AND INFUSION:
Currently WMU has no sustainability certificates or an institutional provision for offering them (UG & G). Many HE institutions with active sustainability programs and initiatives offer specialized certificates, some cross-college and others structured for particular departments or programs. The OfS has received several requests from students, faculty, and EUP about creating such opportunities, but new institutional provisions would have to be made to create or identify an institutional entity that could grant and manage such certificates (this would usually be an “Institute” on our campus). The PUSC needs a mechanism strategy to help identify the level of support and commitment from faculty from across campus for such an initiative.

PUSC committee members considered several ideas in response to the discussion about a sustainability certification program. Members noted that the ideas about more sustainability courses, a certification program, and a resolution to support such a certification should be communicated to key WMU administrators. For example, the Provost could be asked about the feasibility of a major or minor in sustainability. Joel raised concerns about the time frame for making such changes (the curriculum change process can be tedious and has a long lead time). He also noted some of the challenges associated with encouraging and supporting full-time faculty members to take responsibility for the development and management of sustainability classes and certificate programs. PUSC can, however, create a sub-committee to get interested students involved with these ideas and can engage in needed research.
One issue that inhibits many graduate sustainability research projects is that they often require cross-college institutional support. Another issue is financial support for graduate assistants. GSAC’s Resolution and request to the Provost to support one M.S. student and one Ph.D. student with graduate/doctoral assistantships was discussed briefly. Harold agreed to present GSAC’s Resolution to the Provost when he meets with him in early July. PUSC members discussed the importance of continuing to partner with GSAC to collect ideas and strategies for moving this agenda forward.

“SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM (AND RESEARCH)” LUNCHEON & BROWN BAGS:

It became clear after our May 2010 “Sustainability Across the Curriculum” luncheon (which was originally open to 40, but ended up including 56 faculty members) that there is a need to provide a forum or learning community to discuss creating new opportunities, faculty development, and policy changes/incentives for integrating and infusing sustainability into research and teaching. Seven main areas were identified: (1) infusion of sustainability into existing courses, (2) creating new specialized sustainability courses, (3) integrating sustainability into new G.E. offerings, (4) creating new graduate degree options (M.S. & Ph.D.)—especially cross-college, (5) sustainability certificates, (6) creating a new, cross-college sustainability minor, (7) creating and supporting cross-college sustainability research groups to address key challenges facing society.

PUSC members could meet with faculty and the Provost during a luncheon to discuss strategic planning ideas and to encourage others to join PUSC. The committee should include faculty who have a related interest and who could focus on how to achieve and support classes about sustainability and how to infuse sustainability into the curriculum of current disciplines. Although Harold has already met with all college deans and has provided readings and syllabi that would allow the incorporation of sustainability insights into classes, an additional step would be to encourage interested faculty members to speak about their specific college at a proposed luncheon meeting.

Harold suggested that at the next PUSC meeting in July, the committee could continue to discuss this goal of infusing and integrating sustainability into teaching and research. In particular, he would like to focus on dovetail this effort with the Provost’s Academic Affairs Strategic Plan, the new University Strategic Plan (that is in process, and our other sustainability commitments (ACUPCC and Tailloires Declaration). The PUSC members approved continuing this conversation at July’s meeting.

Matt Hollander made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Carolyn Noack, and the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Upcoming meeting: July 21, 2011 at 3 PM in the President’s Dining Room (Please note room change).