President’s Universitywide Sustainability Committee (PUSC) Minutes
Minutes of September 15th, 2011
Bernhard Center Room 205

Members Present: Pat Holton, Peter Strazdas, Matt Hollander, Carolyn Noack, Carrie Delong, Paul Pancella, Mary Peterson, Andrew Targowski, Paul Farber, Anand Sankey, Caroline Webber
Guests: Kirk Dillery, Steve Gilsdorf, Megan Walsh

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Motion by Pat Holton to approve the Agenda as presented; seconded by Bill Davis; Agenda approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Motion by Paul Farber to approve the Minutes as presented; seconded by Matt Hollander; Minutes approved.

INTRODUCTION

HAROLD GLASER
Harold briefly oriented the group to Climate Action Planning (CAP) as prescribed by the ACUPCC. Harold also mentioned that CAPs were discussed in a recent meeting with Anthony Cortese, founder and President of the ACUPCC. Changes are in the works to make the process of developing CAPs simpler and easier.

PAUL PANCELLA
Paul oriented members to WMU’s CAP process and described the CAP sub-committee. Paul presented a current draft outline of the CAP with the caveats that he and Harold will be developing full prose for the plan and it will still need to be vetted by others on campus. The purpose of presenting at this PUSC meeting was to elicit feedback on the outline in its current form.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN OUTLINE

REVIEW
President Dunn signed the ACUPCC commitment in 2009. He also serves on the ACUPCC steering committee. As part of these commitments, a plan needs to be formulated that indicates how the university will achieve climate neutrality by a yet to be determined target date. The committee has until the end of this year to develop this plan and pass it on to university leaders for feedback and approval. WMU’s CAP is due to the ACUPCC on January 15, 2012.

The CAP sub-committee began meeting in May. WMU’s Kalamazoo campus is the target for the plan and carbon dioxide emissions are the major focus. Several greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories have been completed and major sources of GHG emissions are well-established.

OUTLINE
The CAP is now in bullet form, following the outline recommended by the ACUPCC. Main points have been outlined by the CAP sub-committee and other campus contributors and the full CAP with prose will be developed by Paul and Harold.

Introduction: Overview of campus sustainability efforts, history of sustainability projects and WMU’s commitment to
climate neutrality.

- Growth projections
  - **Discussion:** Harold asked Pete whether he knew if the new medical school might possibly affect WMU’s power plant. Pete answered that he is not sure yet, but an announcement will be made within the next two months.

- Proposed target date for climate neutrality: 2072
  - **Discussion:** Many PUSC members felt that 60 years is too long of a timeline for achieving carbon neutrality.
    - Paul stressed that achieving neutrality is an enormous accomplishment, especially while limiting the purchase of offsets. The sub-committee had initially discussed dates even further in the future.
    - Paul used the fact that most campus buildings have a 50-60 year lifespan as a reference point. Campus cannot be climate neutral until most of its building stock is replaced.
    - Harold additionally pointed out the CAP includes much more than buildings and may prescribe changes with longer timelines. Also, during a best practice review, only 22% of the first 100 signatories actually included target dates in their CAP.
    - An argument can be made for setting a very realistic target date and reducing it as accomplishments are made and a reduction can be justified. Once created, the document can living and dynamic. As new strategies, policies, technologies, and funding mechanisms become available the target date can be lowered.

**Section 2: GHG emissions (demand)**

- This section will summarize historical and recent campus trends along with projections for the future.
  - An initial graph show that campus energy use per square foot of floor area has decreased over the past 10 years.

**Section 3: Reduction Strategies**—This section will emphasize demand-side reduction. We’ve been reducing energy use by roughly 2% per year, further demand-side reduction strategies will ensure that this rate is maintained and accelerated.

- **Power Plant**
  - Future long-term efficiency upgrades (adjustability of turbines, exhaust recovery).
  - Eventual energy storage methods will allow the storage of energy created during off-peak hours for use during peak times, allowing us to minimize purchased energy.
  - Other ideas include retrofitting both turbines to operate on biomass.

- **Purchased electricity**—constitutes all power campus uses outside of what is produced at the power plant.
  - The GHG’s from this purchased power are much higher than from the electricity we produce (Consumer’s power plants mostly use coal). However, Renewable Portfolio Standard legislation requires this electricity to become cleaner over time and thus our purchased electricity (Scope II), will likely see a reduction in GHG/kWh too.

- **Commuting**—including staff, faculty, students
  - A large behavior change component is necessary in this area.
  - Recommendations include possible programs that would add space to res halls, increase online course presence, and provide carpooling encouragement.
    - **Discussion:** Many PUSC members expressed concern over an increase in online courses.
      - Comments included the concern that online classes do not provide the same quality instruction as face-to-face interaction.
      - It was also mentioned that with the rise of video technology, at some point it might be possible to have the same quality professor-student interactions without the necessity of being in the same room.
      - It was generally decided that further consideration is needed before a strong recommendation for increased online course offerings is made. Additionally, other strategies should be considered, such as further utilizing satellite campuses.
    - **Discussion:** In light of the fact that faculty/staff comprise roughly half of the commuting GHG, behavior change programs targeting them should be considered.
      - Matt suggested incentivizing living closer campus, possibly through discounts for purchasing local housing.
      - Harold suggested that the committee consider efforts to facilitate non-motorized transit and the impact that this might have by reducing the use of passenger vehicles.
o Campus Vehicles
  ▪ Represent a very small slice of campus GHG’s.
  ▪ Recommendation is that as vehicles need to be replaced, they will be replaced with electric vehicles.

o Air travel, including study abroad
  ▪ All GHG from travel should by offset by 2017.
  ▪ Recommendations include:
    ▪ Increased tele-presence, negating the need for travel
    ▪ Policy changes regarding the purchase of offsets
      ▪ **Discussion:** There are three options for the purchase of offsets, purchase along with tickets, taxing tickets, and investing locally. Harold mentioned Yusuke’s review of these options and Paul mentioned that purchasing offsets along with tickets seems to be the easiest. Harold mentioned that this is likely true, but this offset strategy is less likely to have a positive impact locally, which Yusuke’s research recommend

o Solid Waste
  ▪ Includes landfill and wastewater.
  ▪ This represents a relatively small percentage of campus GHG emissions.
  ▪ Recommendations include increased composting and recycling.

o Investing in an off-campus renewable energy source.
  ▪ The possibility of operating a university that requires no energy is unlikely. As a result, it is necessary to have a focus on renewable energy sources.
  ▪ However, WMU’s location does not lend itself to the current technologies that are carbon neutral such as solar or wind.
  ▪ Discussion is ongoing about what recommendations to make in this area.

o Absorption and Sequestration - mitigating carbon after it’s produced
  ▪ Natural areas that we own and maintain serve this purpose – future plans include avoidance of destroying these natural areas. Recommendations could include increasing plant life or taking over other natural areas.
  ▪ Geologic sequestration of power plant emissions is another option.

o Purchased Offsets
  ▪ A formal recommendation is yet to be made. It’s possible that the best option is to use them only when interim CAP goals are not met. However, other, better methods should be considered first.

o Educational Efforts
  ▪ Further discussion and recommendations will be developed after the PUSC report on the integrating sustainability across the curriculum brainstorming session.

o Research Efforts
  ▪ Focused on areas that already have local research opportunities.
  ▪ Additional effort should focus on the feasibility of technologies for our campus
  ▪ **Discussion:**
    ▪ Andrew suggested that if the research topics have the potential to save the university money they should provide research stipends to reward people for researching and implementing the technology.
    ▪ Harold suggested developing research priorities.
      ▪ Add behavior change to the list of research topics.
      ▪ Exploration of other creative funding strategies.

o Community Outreach
  ▪ A recommendation is being made to work through campus groups such as OfS, SSE, LHC to make connections with community.

**Financing**

  ▪ **Recommendations include:**
    ▪ Policy changes would need to be made to support very large projects or those with longer pay back times.
      ▪ WMU currently operates under a quasi green revolving fund and 5-year pay back policy.
    ▪ However, many projects that have a longer pay back time have the potential to pay back for a much longer time and save much more money.
Implementation of measurement and control technologies and the utilization of this data to optimize rate structures may result in real financial consequences.

Tracking Progress
- This section will include a schedule for tracking progress toward interim goals and a schedule of who is responsible for implementing particular sections of the plan.
  - A simple GHG inventory should be done every year using data that is easy to track and is typically collected through facilities management.
  - A full GHG inventory should be completed every 3 years and assess more difficult to measure emissions such as commuting.
  - A 6-year cycle is recommended for tracking progress of pronounced targets and developing progress reports in accordance with the CAP.

Graph Overview
- The last portion of the CAP that was discussed is a graph that depicts the projected decrease in carbon emissions to zero by 2072.
  - The graph is divided into scaled sections of GHG contributors according their percentage of overall emissions.
  - The pace of the decline starts out slow, accelerates through the middle and flattens out near the end.

General Discussion
- How will the plan roll out through campus in order to make it an official document and what committees will it need approval from?
  - Harold and Paul will be setting up series of meetings beginning in October and November. President Dunn will need to give it ultimate approval.

- How do we account for campus population changes in relation to decreases in energy use? What implications does the plan have on goals for bringing on new staff/faculty/students?
  - Paul—Enrollment goals are not substantial enough to make an effect and we’re not anticipating a large growth spurt.
  - Harold—One of the largest increases in building space is intended to be student housing, which should have positive impacts on commuting.

- Structure of CAP suggestions and goals
  - In order to allay concerns about the target date and variety of suggestions for GHG reduction, it was suggested that the CAP include more than one track and associated target date for becoming carbon neutral. An optimistic track could include a closer target date and radical ideas for reducing emissions. A pessimistic track could include a distant target date and easier, simpler ideas for reducing emissions more slowly.
  - Harold stressed that having data to back up recommendation options is extremely important and if the recommendation is to study a variety of options, there must be a number of other options available and a plan in place for the research.

- How can the PUSC contribute?
  - Contact Paul to provide input, there is still much room for innovative ideas.
  - If anyone is interested in delving deeper into the CAP process, contact Harold for general CAP information.

Closing Announcements
Carolyn: Clean Commute Competition is next week Monday 19th – Friday 23rd. Staff, faculty, students can go online to record any one-way commute. This includes walking to meetings on campus. Round trip counts as two commutes. cleancommute.org

Mary Peterson made a motion to adjourn, Harold Glasser seconded, meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.