President’s Universitywide Sustainability Committee (PUSC) Minutes
Minutes of January 19, 2012
Bernhard Center - President’s Dining Room

Members: Pat Holton, Bill Davis, Meghan Walsh, Harold Glasser, Matt Hollander, Kate Binder, Paul Pancella, Mary Peterson, Sarah Pratt, Fredah Mainah, Abolaji Samson Olanipekun, Paul Farber

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Motion by Matt to approve the Agenda as presented; seconded by Sarah; Agenda approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
Motion by Paul P. to approve the Minutes as presented; seconded by Mary; Minutes approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The meeting was delayed until 3:13 p.m. due to inclement weather.

Harold welcomed Jeff Spoelstra, the new Office for Sustainability (OfS) Coordinator and PUSC secretary, and Fredah Mainah, a new OfS Graduate Assistant supporting the SusTainability Across Research and Teaching (START) Initiative.

Harold requested that PUSC members encourage faculty to complete the online survey for the START Initiative. The survey will be available through 31 January 2012. Early response numbers are encouraging - with 80 responses to date. Survey data will inform the structure and focus of the spring semester START Luncheons for Faculty.

January 20, from 1-3 p.m. in 210 BC – awards ceremony for the First Year Seminar pilot project. Five of eighteen video teams will be recognized with awards.

A recent Western Herald article about the Sustainability Fee was discussed. The OfS identified errors in the article and Meghan Walsh indicated that she was misquoted. A student quoted in the article called into question the use of the Sustainability Fee to date and the availability of information. Though several members had not read the article, the PUSC members are comfortable with the OfS’s effort to share information through the online minutes, Year One presentation, and OfS YouTube videos. The OfS will discuss the article during an “all staff” seminar on 20 January 2012 to gauge the level of understanding about the Sustainability Fee and Sustainability Grant programs. The importance of a thoroughly redesigned OfS website to help with providing additional transparency was re-raised and re-emphasized.


PUSC MEMBERSHIP POLICY

PUSC members agreed that establishing more formal membership terms would be valuable. Members agreed that it is important to have regular representatives from key WMU units (e.g., every college). A member could be responsible for sending an alternate representative from their unit when they cannot attend. Mary noted that the PUSC is at a critical point, and we need minds and bodies present in order to accomplish tasks. Harold indicated that he often meets with PUSC representatives individually, especially when members cannot make our meetings, but this can be very inefficient.
On paper, we have representatives from every college, but many representatives miss meetings regularly.

It was suggested that a request should be made once per year asking representatives if they would like to continue to serve on the PUSC (an annual check off process). Regularly reaching out to retain or dismiss representatives also is valuable because it can remind all units to nominate a representative and it encourages inclusiveness. The PUSC could publicize “at large” seats and ask for nominations. Larger units could be encouraged to have a second or third representative. The PUSC could then choose candidates if the candidate pool is large. This annual process will also increase the chances of identifying individuals with a strong interest in sustainability, especially new faculty.

Paul F. suggested that the “annual check off” should come first, to identify open slots by March. April and May could then be used for nominations and candidate selections. Paul P. characterized the membership as in informal, one year term without limits.

It was suggested that there would be value in sending an annual checkoff reminder immediately, then starting the annual program cycle. Harold indicated that he has already reached out to current members that have been unable to attend.

Harold indicated that we will need to work with University Relations to get the word out on this. The OfS is also working to establish a newsletter. Harold will send a reminder to PUSC contacts with all of the meeting dates for the remainder of the year.

Jeff suggested that it would be valuable to point out the projects that are ongoing or recently completed (e.g., student, staff, or faculty driven). And then our outreach efforts could emphasize that there are opportunities for faculty to create new opportunities or further ongoing efforts.

No formal decisions were made. The OfS will draft a PUSC membership policy and annual guidelines for PUSC consideration.

WEBSITE AND CONTENT MANAGEMENT
Participants discussed the ongoing challenges of website management and the possibility of implementing an OfS content management system (CMS). Facebook is a challenge when you don’t have your own up to the minute web content online (e.g., project fact sheets, photos, documents, video). One risk is that if we do it too soon, we may need to do it all over again. We are working with Lisa who is converting all WMU Auxiliary Enterprises websites to Drupal. Currently, we cannot modify or load our own content on demand. The OfS is also researching a multiplatform communications portal for simultaneous web updates, newsletters, and social media notifications.

Harold asked, “While we wait for possible University leadership on a CMS, should we be looking for lower tech solutions in the interim?” Matt indicated that the OfS would like to send HTML email/newsletters. Pat stated that good email/newsletter messages are brief and have a link to more online content, so that if you are interested you can go there right away. Pat suggested that recipients rarely have time go back later and explore content.

Bill gave an example of his students recording podcasts about their artwork as content. Benefits include professional development, recruitment, and retention. People that do not have time to read often use Podcasts.

PERSONAL INTERACTIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA
Matt emphasized that the technology is useful, but that face-to-face interactions help to build strong, lasting relationships within the university community. Faculty should be encouraged to get to know those colleagues they rarely see. Some possibilities were shared. The farm and garden project will give away free basil and other herbs to the university community. The PUSC could take basil and information handouts to give to colleagues. Worm castings, a compost product, could be distributed in a similar way. There is value in giving to grow relationships. Mobile phone photo contests could be arranged for the campus community (e.g., photograph the Water Bottle Monster or the Transit Connects). Kate indicated that other universities often use Facebook for photo competitions.

BILL DAVIS – EXAMPLES OF OUTREACH EFFORTS AND A STRATEGY FOR EXPANSION (FYE AND ADMISSIONS COLLABORATIONS)
The typical PUSC format has involved open brainstorming discussions with other offices, but when guests leave the meeting there has often been limited, structured follow up. One form of outreach involves finding a connection outside of your “unit” and meeting face to face on sustainability issues. For example, Bill touched base with Harold then met with...
admissions. The First Year Seminar (FYS) had actions (student videos) that followed from these interactions. Other offices have not presented to the PUSC, but it is likely that others may be waiting to hear from us.

Bill does not promise anything in outreach meetings, but instead calls the meeting a “search and discussion” on sustainability. Equipment, supplies and materials purchasing strategies were discussed, and Bill directed admissions to Mike Strong at Total Tech. They discussed the use of QR codes to reduce information that they would otherwise put on paper. Bill suggested that you must have the right frame for your outreach. For example, admissions is about recruitment and retention. As an example of success, admissions asked Bill to loan them “someone” who could make sense of sustainability for the incoming students. Meghan was mentioned and may get a call to participate in admissions monthly meetings with executive staff and students. They also discussed bringing on a blogger. Paid student bloggers have been used in some situations such as “ask Jeremy” about art, or “ask Sarah” about paper science. Bill mentioned www.zinch.com, a new resource matching prospective students with admissions and scholarship opportunities. This site is an example of a place for people to identify what is interesting to them. Admissions is interested in ways to track students interest in sustainability.

Bill suggested that in negotiations, you must be prepared to offer things like: 1) results of recent sustainability surveys; and, 2) examples of sustainability actions at other institutions. Bill learned that admissions was interested in sustainability scholarship opportunities and a discussion on hydration stations and reusable water bottles continues. Their office sees over 200 people per day during heavy rotation.

Harold suggested that Bill has “adopted an office” in his outreach to date. We need other PUSC members to “adopt” Athletics, Diversity and Inclusion, and Multicultural Affairs.

INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR MEETINGS
Bill would like to see other PUSC members reporting on “the labor” they were doing for the PUSC, similar to what he reported today. The job is not done after the first meeting (for example, Athletics visited the PUSC recently). More outreach or “labor” should be part of PUSC membership within, but more importantly, outside of your own department.

MARY PETERSON – BUILDING A FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY AROUND SUSTAINABILITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM.
Mary shared her experience at the AASHE Leadership Conference on Sustainability Across the Curriculum (Jan. 10-11, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia). This was a faculty development workshop. Thirty-five people attended from different size institutions. A number of concepts were explored. An example was the idea that sustainability is more than just technology. It is also a sense of place, and a responsibility for that place. Justice, inclusion, sustainable economic development, and diversity are also part of sustainability. The group discussed framing sustainability issues without using the term sustainability in order to avoid the perception some have that sustainability is part of a politically charged agenda. People often think sustainability is an end state, but it is not. It is an ongoing and adaptive process. Progress is made by taking small steps. Top-level administrative support is crucial, and WMU senior leadership has expressed formal support for sustainability, diversity, inclusion, and improving the global outlook (quality of life). Mary indicated that meeting participants discussed sustainability concepts that students would take away from simply being at their institutions for several years.

Faculty own the curriculum. They need to be informed, inspired, encouraged, and supported to introduce and integrate sustainability into their curriculum. One challenge is that busy faculty need strategic suggestions on how they might change their course material/curriculum. Mary gave a few examples about incorporating soil depletion and deforestation into archaeology and medieval studies respectively, and then relating this information to contemporary concerns. Faculty need a place where it is safe to explore these ideas. Tenure and promotion guidelines must be accepting of these contributions. Incentives and resources must be created to support these activities.

At the conference a food banner indicated that the food met the criteria of the host Sustainability Committee. The Committee/Sustainability brand was present and attention was called to it. Compost collection was included. These efforts to model sustainability made their message visible in indirect ways.

CREATING SUBCOMMITTEES
Though it was not discussed, Harold acknowledged Paul P.’s ongoing work on the Climate Action Plan and sustainability research initiatives. He also acknowledged ongoing contributions by PUSC members evaluating Sustainability Grants. Harold asked, “should membership include something beyond just attending two hour monthly meetings?”. Bill
Suggested that members consider signing up to do “subcommittee of one” activities. Larger teams could also be considered. In this way, members can follow their own interests or build teams. Bill suggests that we can and should be “tenacious and polite”.

Samson shared an example from his department of a weekly research colloquium series. Attendance is mandatory.

Pat indicated that early successes can start at home, as in your home department or office. A list of things that departments/offices could do would be helpful to encourage action toward sustainability in your own department/office first. Tasks could include improving personal interactions with your colleagues. Matt agreed that there is value in internal and external outreach.

Fredah shared challenges she faced when trying to educate about HIV/AIDS. She suggests looking for plug-in points including off the cuff conversations or plug-ins. It does not have to be an agenda item. When it becomes part of daily conversations, the actions do follow.

Bill suggested that he is helping Fine Arts when he does outreach to admissions. Because the PUSC is a University Committee, it helps add emphasis for the outreach. Bill suggested that one must build assessment into the conversation and commitment.

Pat asked for a list that documents ongoing campus efforts to infuse sustainability into curriculum. Harold indicated that there is no list currently, but it has been part of a long running conversation. The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System™ (STARS) requires such an assessment of the entire curriculum with respect to sustainability content. A small committee is being created to consider the full costs of participating in STARS. Harold indicated that based on the START survey so far over 40% of participating faculty indicated that they “already incorporate sustainability into their teaching/curriculum”.

**Campus Sustainability Asset Map**
Harold pointed out that the OfS is exploring ways to create a campus sustainability asset map to identify who is doing what on campus to facilitate ongoing discussion and collaboration.

**What Does the OfS Need to be Doing to Support Such Efforts**
Harold thanked the group for a valuable conversation about “building a culture of sustainability”. The group agreed to continue this conversation in this same open style at the next PUSC meeting. Ideas for the next conversation include lists of what is happening, what could be done, further discussion of the faculty survey, STARS, and key leverage points. A key outcome will be a prioritized list with commitments to actions. The OfS has a long potential project list and it can be shared. Mary would like to see a list of “WMU’s most wanted” to improve/incorporate targeted sustainability efforts. The largest needed areas would likely require larger, more strategic subcommittees.

Matt Hollander made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Sarah Pratt, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

The next PUSC meeting will be on February 16, 2012, in BC 205 from 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Deferred Topics**
- Creating an Annual Conference
- Creating a Group to Review Campus Policies in Relation to Sustainability – Researching Purchasing, Transportation, etc.
- Discuss How the PUSC Has Influenced its Members’ Decision-making, Campus Activities, or Personal Lives

**Key Goal of Next Meeting**
- Prioritized action list with commitments to action