President’s Universitywide Sustainability Committee (PUSC) Minutes

Minutes of August 19 2010

Room 205, Bernhard Center

Members Present: Chris Caprara, Bill Davis, Mervyn Elliot, Harold Glasser, Matt Hollander, Pat Holton, Carolyn Noack, Paul Pancell, Mary Peterson, Joel Raveloharimisy, Anand Sankey, Kaitlyn Shields, Pete Strazdas (ex officio), Andrew Targowski, Barbara Wygant

Guests: Eileen Evans, Higher Learning Commission, Zach Waas-Smith, Student Sustainability Researcher

PROCEDURAL ITEMS

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Holton to accept the Agenda as presented; seconded by Peterson; Agenda approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Pancell to approve the Minutes as presented; seconded by Sankey; Minutes approved.

QUICK UPDATES

PETE: AZURE DYNAMICS TRANSIT CONNECTS & PHOTOVOLTAIC CHARGING STATIONS

WMU is engaged in an ongoing effort to purchase ten fully electric Azure Dynamics Transit Connect work vans. Western has been awarded a matching grant from the Department of Energy through the Clean Energy Coalition to purchase the vehicles, and additional grant funding from the DOE has been secured for solar charging stations. WMU now has roughly $500k in Federal grants to subsidize the project, which is budgeted at around $850k. The solar charging stations will be located around campus (locations yet to be determined). Any charging of the vehicles beyond the capacity of the solar panels will be done at night to utilize excess capacity from the Robert Beam Power Plant.

MATT: SUSTAINABILITY WEBSITE REDEVELOPMENT

The Office for Sustainability has been working with Auxiliary Enterprises and University Relations to find a strategy for a major re-development of the WMU Sustainability Website. After vetting several web developers Michael Gregor, a recent WMU grad, has been selected to design the new site. The site will utilize the open source content management system Drupal, and will feature a vast array of new pages and capabilities including web based application forms for Student Sustainability Grants, Wesustain Internships, Wesustain Ambassadorships, and Gibbs House Fellowships. The site will include multiple databases for collecting and organizing ideas for improving campus sustainability, information on projects, and more. Major redesigns are also being done to the calendar, news feed, and general page content. Ideas such as a database of courses with sustainability themes or focuses are also being discussed. Please send ideas for new content that you would like to see to Harold and Matt.

KATE: WESUSTAIN AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

The EcoRep program has been redesigned for 2010-2011 and is now called the Wesustain Ambassadors Program. Kate Shields has been managing the redevelopment and will run the program this year. She is currently recruiting thirteen students to represent each residence hall on campus. Ambassadors will attend regular meetings, tour various locations of interest, and complete objectives for points towards prizes. Objectives include conducting room energy audits, organizing sustainability related social events, recruiting other students to sign sustainability pledges, etc.

MATT: ECOMUGS

The EcoMug distribution system has been vastly improved for 2010-2011. The Office for Sustainability worked with a team from Auxiliary Enterprises to design a computer program that uses students Bronco Cards and a USB card reader to
wirelessly update a centralized list of new students. EcoMug staff can now track daily distribution rates and the office will be able to send out mass emails to students who have not picked up their EcoMugs. Distribution times will be every day during Fall Welcome and the first week of school, including Bronco Bash. Most distribution will occur in the WMU Bookstore’s Textbook Alley. Terry Hudson from the Bookstore has worked extensively to make this year a success.

**HAROLD: GIBBS HOUSE 2010 & BEYOND**

The Office for Sustainability has been given programmatic responsibility for The Gibbs House for Environmental Research & Education. Matt Hollander and Cari Delong, Natural Areas Coordinator for WMU Landscaping Services, have been assigned to the program. Changes to the program this year include the elimination of academic advisors and credit and the institution of a modest “rent.” Students living in the house will now work on their projects as paid interns of the Office for Sustainability at roughly 15 hours per week, and are required to pay a $1,000 “license to occupy fee” for the year. Money from these fees will be used to make improvements to the Gibbs House. Since the program was transferred several improvements have been made to the house, including the addition of a tier 3 CEE refrigerator, dual flush super-efficient toilet in the downstairs bathroom, a new real linoleum floor in the kitchen, and a low flow toilet in the upstairs bathroom. Maintenance and improvement projects will continue throughout the year.

**HAROLD: OFFICE FOR SUSTAINABILITY/SUSTAINABILITY BUDGET/UPHOLSTERY SHOP AS SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE**

As of July 1, 2010 there is a bona fide Office for Sustainability at Western. Funding has been secured from the Office of Business & Finance, Office of Academic Affairs, and the student Sustainability Fee. The Office for Sustainability will be hiring students and full time staff throughout the Fall 2010 Semester and will occupy temporary office space in the 1300 block of Faunce Student Services Building. Future plans for an office and lab location have not been finalized, but the former upholstery shop across Oakland Drive from the Physical Plant Building is currently the most likely spot. The building has been vacant since WMU eliminated its Industrial Design program, where it was most recently used as a woodshop. The building needs significant renovation and maintenance before it could be repurposed. Dr. Glasser will continue to work with the Space Committee to secure long-term space for the office.

**HAROLD: CAMPUS BIKE SHARE PROJECT**

The Office for Sustainability has initiated a project to bring a campus bike share to WMU. Bike shares, or “free bike” programs have grown in popularity in recent years, with major examples in Paris, Denver, Washington D.C., Montreal, and elsewhere. Due to the historical high start-up costs associated with these programs this has not been a serious option for WMU in the past. However, a start up company called Social Bicycles (SoBi) is currently prototyping and beta testing a new system in New York City this fall that holds promise for a lower priced alternative. The SoBi system is GPS enabled, has a built in lock, can be attached to any regular bike, and can be accessed by mobile device or computer. Tentative plans are in place to beta test the system on abandoned bicycles that WMU Public Safety has removed from campus bike racks. The Office for Sustainability is in regular communication with SoBi, but no agreement has yet been finalized.

**HAROLD: CONSUMERS ENERGY OPPORTUNITIES**

Bob Miller and Harold have been in initiated contact with senior staff at Consumers regarding the creation of a large PV research/demonstration project on WMU property. We will keep the PUSC informed as these discussions develop.

The August PUSC meeting adjourned at 5:00PM

**Upcoming meeting:** Bernhard Room 205 on Thursday, September 16 at 3:00PM. CANCELLED

Bernhard Room 205 on Thursday, October 21 at 3:00PM.