

EnviroAlums Steering Committee Notes (10/24/2020)
Meeting Via Zoom

In attendance:

Susan Bernat, Kristin Braziunas, Krista Egger, Walt Galloway, Aviva Glaser, Taiyo Scanlon-Kimura, Abe Kruger, Stephen Lezak, Harriet McSurdy, John Petersen, Paul Safyan, Molly Samuel, Howard Sinclair

Andrew DeCoriolis announced he would not attend in advance of the meeting.

Danielle Vath, Assistant Director of Alumni Engagement and Oberlin Affiliate/Charter Groups Liaison was present for introductions and a brief question and answer period.

Minutes recorded by Lauren Holmes, Environmental Alums Onsite Intern

- I. All members introduced themselves. Members Glaser, McSurdy, Samuel, and Sinclair were attending their first meeting.
- II. Danielle Vath notes
 - a. She works with the alumni office, planning events, works with Wisr, and other kinds of alumni engagement
 - b. Dates for possible fundraising activities: **mid to late November**
 - c. Paul asked: What steps do we need to take to prepare for fundraising?
 - i. Walk through communication plan (how and what you want to communicate)
 1. Alumni office has compiled several lists of alums data
 2. Recent email from Lauren went to the new, updated list of EnviroAlums
 - ii. Need to submit a physical communication plan for the fundraiser
 - d. Are members of EnviroAlums who are in Handshake advertised as being in Handshake?
 - i. Danielle is going to do more research on this
 - ii. From Taiyo: He was saying that if you are searching for a specific person on Handshake, it is usually an employer not only just alumni
 - e. 1,572 persons are members of EnviroAlums, based on combining several lists of majors, minors, donors, and those expressing interest in environmental issues
 - f. Question from Susan Bernat: What is Handshake?
 - i. Software adopted by the career development center a while ago to manage jobs, internships, and internal appointments
 - ii. A platform that connects students to job and internship opportunities
 - iii. Allows students to make appointments with the career office
 - iv. Essentially a job posting board
 - g. John Petersen asked if those who get the ENVS newsletter also get the EnviroAlums emails

- i. Those who are included in the EnviroAlums emails are anyone who majored or minored in Environmental Studies, filled out the interest forms, people who have jobs coded as environmental or sustainability related
 - ii. We should figure out who wants to be a part of the newsletter in hard copy or electronically. John may want to work on this after we have received the full list, i.e., inquire of people if they have interest in this departmental newsletter in hard copy or electronic form.
- III. Nomination of another perspective steering committee member
Elise Paeffgen'04 who:
 - iii. Overlapped with Abe and Krista at Oberlin
 - iv. Studied Environmental Science and politics in Oberlin
 - v. Has a law degree and an environmental master's degree
 - vi. Works at Alston and Bird Law Firm in Atlanta
 - 1. Large and corporate law firm
 - vii. She is in "big corporate world" doing environmental stuff
 - viii. Interested in connecting with students with internship opportunities
- h. Steering committee application is brief and may not capture all the information we want for people we like on the SC
 - i. **The nominating and membership committee is going to expand on that**
- i. There are 14 members on the steering committee currently
- j. Want to encourage more BIPOC members on the steering committee
- k. **Elise's nomination passes!**
- l. **Walt, John, and Krista have been appointed to the membership and nomination committee to work on the application and nominees for Steering Committee at March meeting or before.**
- m. John asked if steering committee members have access to the data base of EnviroAlums, which could help in the nomination process
 - i. How do we engage disenfranchised groups and connect meaningfully with BIPOC alumni and get them to the EnviroAlums?
 - ii. Maybe look in other alumni groups for communities of color and looking for any overlap of members between the groups
- n. **Susan asked about the formation of a Communications subcommittee. This was deferred, but Susan and Paul will discuss this after Susan's upcoming move.**
- IV. Fundraising
 - o. We want to make sure that we can support fellowships, internships, events on campus, efforts in the community, and the Environmental Studies Department.
 - i. We aren't setting a financial goal per se; we just want to see what we can do
 - ii. We don't necessarily know what to expect, we are hopeful, but we don't have any expectations

- iii. We want to put out a modest, short “ask” to circulate to the EnviroAlums that outlines what the organization does, what the fellowships that we funded did, and to ask for support from members
- iv. We want to use this opportunity to set a baseline to inform us in future years
- v. **Stephen is going to circulate the message around to the steering committee for notes and suggestions. John and Susan were named to pay particular attention to wording (See points below)**
- p. Are we asking current students to donate to the EnviroAlums?
 - i. Consensus is no, but communicate that this campaign is happening to current students
 - 1. Use this communication to refer students to resources that are available to them because of EnviroAlums
 - ii. We only want to ask people who have the financial capacity to be able to donate
 - iii. The only students who will probably get the email are Lauren, Harriet, and Howard
- q. People can donate to the college, but write in that they would want their contribution to go directly to the EnviroAlums
- r. We should emphasize that any contribution is welcome, small or large
- s. ENVS department really depends on donations from alums for speakers and that fund is depleted
 - i. There is concern that the ENVS department will also be reaching out to the same audience and also asking for donations
 - ii. Maybe in our communication we could tell members that they can donate to ENVS department and/or EnviroAlums
 - 1. Maybe Danielle could gather some data on who has been donating after the campaign (i.e. are the people who are donating only people who have donated in the past)
- t. Do we want to be the fundraising arm for the ENVS department?
 - i. See how much the ENVS organically gets year to year
 - ii. We could incorporate that into our fundraising initiatives
- u. We need to set a deadline on the note that we will be sending out
 - 1. **Howard can draft something that will go to students in other SC communications He will consult with Harriet and Lauren**
 - 2. Susan emphasized that we could definitely use Andrew’s perspective as well. He will be included on email to all SC members to edit
 - ii. Make sure that the letter that is sensitive to the current world situation that constrains people’s finances in many ways
- v. What is the difference between donating to EnviroAlums vs donating to ENVS department?
 - This is going to be addressed in email thread

V. Financial Report: Paul

- i. Operating expenses are expenses that we have access to and can spend over the course of the year including funding the EnviroAlum intern
 - ii. Current year operating budget is about \$18,600
- VI. Progress/Reporting of the summer fellowships: Kristin
 - w. This program supports current Oberlin students and recent grads financially while seeking out internships in environmentally/sustainability related fields
 - x. This past summer, we originally budgeted the top two candidates, but given the times, we ended up supporting 4 students
 - y. Lea worked with Oberlin community services, distributed to those in need through the Oberlin pantry
 - z. Santiago worked with Prof Janet Fiskio on oral history project
 - aa. Charlotte worked with Prof Karl Offen on a GIS project
 - bb. Harriet interned at the Cumberland River Compact in Nashville and focused on their education and outreach initiatives surrounding climate action through social media specifically
 - cc. Information on fellows is on the EnviroAlums website
 - dd. **Anyone who is interested could be on this fellowship subcommittee, contact Kristin. A couple of its member, including Kristin, may be rotating off. Current members are Krista, Abe, Stephen, and Kristin. Members not on the Steering Committee are welcome.**
- VII. Onsite Intern Activities: Lauren and John
 - Affordable housing panel with Abe and Krista (and a third alum) set for Nov 11 or 12. **THIS HAS BEEN FINALIZED FOR NOVEMBER 11 AT 7:00 PM EST.**
 - We wanted to split up the career focused events, so it wouldn't just be career day
- Lauren is working with the Alumni Office and the Career Center on some job aids for alumni to use Wisr and Handshake more effectively and to develop greater usage of both programs.
- VIII. College Carbon Neutrality Update: John Petersen
 - ee. We are working to achieve carbon neutrality by 2025
 - ff. The big remaining piece is the heating plant
 - gg. There is a sustainable infrastructure committee within the trustees and ENVS dept
 - i. Evergreen Consulting agency is working with the College/Conservatory
 - hh. Using trash incineration from Landfill Gas is no longer an option
 - ii. Two remaining options
 - i. Geothermal
 - ii. Biomass
 - 1. Kind of controversial, would need explicit commitment to making sure that we are doing this in the most environmentally sustainable way
 - jj. EnviroAlums could possibly contribute to this project down the line
- IX. Campus Update:

John, Harriet, and Lauren described their experience on campus

John is particularly concerned about the “cloistered” experience of first year students.

Harriet’s classes are mostly online, but she is glad to be on campus

Lauren has lots of in person labs and socially distanced lecture hall classes. These seem “odd”, but she is grateful for the interaction.

All 3 agree that Oberlin has done a tremendous job managing the COVID Pandemic with multiple layers of care.