

7 February 2007

Dear EnviroAlum,

Last week the College Sustainability Report Card came out and Oberlin earned a C+ putting the College in the middle of 100 schools graded (summary and Oberlin's report card attached). We had 3 As (Climate Change & Energy, Food & Recycling, Green Building), 1 B (Administration), 1 C (Investment Priorities) and 2 Fs (Endowment Transparency and Shareholder Engagement).

Many people have worked hard to achieve our As and B. They deserve our thanks! The explicit reasons stated in the report card indicate the activities and projects that will need to be replicated across the campus, if we are to become more sustainable.

Our C and Fs relate to various aspects of investment policy. This situation reminded me of a passage in Wendell Berry's book, *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture* (pg 17-18), that spoke to me when I read it some 15 years ago.

“In July of 1975 it was revealed by William Rood in the *Los Angeles Times* that some of our largest and most respected conservation organizations owned stock in the very corporations and industries that have been notorious for their destructiveness and for their indifference to the concerns of conservationists. ...

“These investments proved deeply embarrassing once they were made public, but the [Sierra] Club's officers responded as quickly as possible by making appropriate changes in its investment policy. ... The difficulty is that, although the investments were absurd, they were not aberrant; they were perfectly representative of the modern character. ...

“There is no use pretending that the contradiction between what we think or say and what we do is a limited phenomenon. ... How could we divorce ourselves completely and yet responsibly from the technologies and power that are destroying our planet? The answer is not yet thinkable, and it will not be thinkable for some time—even though there are now groups and families and persons everywhere in the country who have begun the labor of thinking it.”

Much thinking and action has occurred, since Berry encouraged us to do so in 1977. Groups at Oberlin have labored hard, especially in the past decade. We know the challenges and opportunities we must seize, if we wish to bequeath future generations a livable planet.

Best regards,
Carl N. McDaniel
Chair, EnviroAlums