

EnviroAlums Update

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Climate change is now getting broad-based national coverage with the success of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* and most recently with Bill McKibben's Step It Up 2007 events on April 14. Many Obies across the country have done their part to bring attention to the climate change issue.

Over the last year, EnviroAlums (E) has taken its own steps to encourage climate change awareness within the Oberlin community. Last June E purchased 30 copies of Tim Flannery's book, *The Weather Makers: How Man Is Changing the Climate and What It Means for Life on Earth* and gave them to selected Oberlin administrators, faculty, and staff to stimulate discussion and to educate. Susan Bernat, a member of E's Steering Committee, also coordinated sending DVDs of *An Inconvenient Truth* to all Oberlin Trustees last November.

E's Steering Committee organized a mock Climate Justice Challenge Campaign (CJCC) last November based upon the believe that it is time for Oberlin's core mission and values of human rights, social justice, and worldly awareness to be fully viewed through the lens of the greatest challenge of the 21st century: climate stabilization and environmental sustainability. The CJCC was used as an alumni poll to gauge the level of new internal financial support that could be expected if Oberlin were to commit to placing environmental sustainability front and center in both the upcoming capital fundraising campaign and the new presidential search.

CJCC was unanimously supported by E's Steering Committee with total pledges of \$35,905. In November, the CJCC was sent to all EnviroAlums and other alums with stated environmental interests. Twenty-seven alumni responded with an additional total pledge of \$22,075 for a grand total of \$57,980. The CJCC statement and the campaign results were provided to President Nancy Dye and Trustees at their December meeting. Oberlin has a grand tradition in leading the way to a more fair, just world. We can make this one of Oberlin's finest hours, if together we seize this opportunity to create a more just world through visionary environmental leadership.

John Petersen, ENVS faculty and member of E's Steering Committee, began an environmental careers seminar series last fall. E, the Alumni Office, and the ENVS program all provided funds to bring to campus five Oberlin alums with environmental careers this academic year. Each alum gave a seminar on his/her particular expertise and had lunch or dinner with interested students. The alums and talk titles were as follows:

- Susan Ubbelohde ('75), Architecture, Energy & Light
- Claire Jahns ('03), Chicago Climate Exchange: Building a U.S. Carbon Market from the Bottom Up
- Sylvia Hood Washington ('80), Ball of Confusion: African Americans and Environmental Engagement in Modern and Postmodern America

- Chris Brown ('79), *Managing Water as if People and Science Mattered*
- Karen Florini ('79), *Tales from the Trenches: Twenty Years as an Environmental Advocacy Lawyer in Washington DC.*

We hope to continue the program next year. If you have an environmental career and want to participate, or know an alum who does, email John Petersen with details so he can put you on the list from which students choose participants.

This past year has seen many changes on campus that position Oberlin to move aggressively on the sustainability agenda. President Nancy Dye signed in December the “American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment” that obliges Oberlin to achieve climate neutrality in a timely fashion. Nathan Engstrom, Oberlin’s first Sustainability Coordinator, started work in February. The College will make all future buildings at least LEED silver, and the Trustees have committed to making the new jazz center LEED gold. Oberlin’s presidential search is well underway and the aforementioned commitments indicate that the successful candidate will have sustainability on her/his agenda.

As you have read in this ENVS Newsletter and in the Alumni Magazine, environmental sustainability is generating more and more interest within the Oberlin community. E can play an important role in the greening of Oberlin and in advocating for substantive environmental education and actions on campus and in the larger community. The task is unbounded. We need your help! Please join E and become active. See our web site for complete information on E and a membership form (www.oberlin.edu/envs/oceaa).