

EnviroAlums
Steering Committee Meeting
Lewis Center, 2nd floor conference room
28 Sept 2013: 11:50 a.m. to 1:25 p.m.

Present: Kristin Braziunas, Walt Galloway, Carl McDaniel [in Lewis Center] and Tim Ballard, Susan Bernat, Andrew deCoriolis, Meredith Dowling, Walt Galloway, Lewis Gilbert, Abe Kruger, John Schaefer, Maggie Zimmer [via teleconference].

Absent: Andrew Barnett, Anders Ferguson, John Petersen, Pat Cobb Tarnow.

Guests: Paul Safyan '68 (Interested in Social Responsible Investment), Nathaniel (Tani) Colbert-Sangree '13 (Working at The Oberlin Project to launch the Carbon Management Fund and institutionalize it within Oberlin College)

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair:

Carl McDaniel and Maggie Zimmer were elected Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively, for one year terms.

Election of E SC members:

Timothy Ballard, Andy Barnett, Andrew deCoriolis, Walter Galloway, and Abe Kruger were elected to serve on E SC from September 2013 to September 2016.

Pat Cobb Tarnow '49 decided not to accept another term on the SC. She hoped to attend this meeting but she was unable to. She was a founding SC member and served continuously from September 2002. She quietly gave her perspective in various ways, always assisting E's agenda. Her steadfast participation and financial support are gratefully and appreciated.

Support for student professional development:

McDaniel provided Petersen's positive recommendation. EnviroAlums unanimously approved providing the ENV Department with \$1,000 for student professional development in this academic year.

Support for E alumni speaker program:

McDaniel recommended that E approve \$500 for E's alumni speaker program this academic year. Unanimously approved.

Updates:

The Gateway Project: McDaniel reported that the Gateway Project is going forward. Ground breaking is expected before the end of this year. The new hotel is expected to be opened in spring 2015.

The Oberlin Project (TOP): Braziunas stated that David Gard assumed the position of Executive Director of TOP on 24 September 2013. David Orr has moved from Executive Director of TOP to Co-chair of the TOP board of directors with Lester Allen as co-chair. Orr is on a terminal year sabbatical and will retire at end of this academic year from his teaching position at Oberlin College. He will continue to be special advisor to President Marvin Krislov. See attached report by Braziunas.

Tani Colbert-Sangree '13 reported on the Carbon Management Fund being launched by TOP. See attached report by Colbert-Sangree.

Friends of The Oberlin Project (FoTOP): Galloway stated it took a long time to get the Gateway Project started but it appears to be close to ground breaking. The hiring of a new executive director for TOP is a big milestone. FoTOP is now in a position to assess how it can best serve TOP. In the next several months the TOP council will formulate the next steps for FoTOP.

New business:

Use of E's Endowment Income: E has been and is financially sound for three major reasons:

- 1) We have a sufficiently large number of members who pay membership dues to cover housekeeping expenses and to support E's student fund.
- 2) E established in June 2008 an endowment fund with \$50,000 in donations from SC members and a few others. The endowment has increased from donations and growth to \$115,523 (invested). The endowment annually yields about \$5,000 for E use.
- 3) E SC has been thoughtful and conservative in financial decisions resulting in \$2,677 (general account balance) and \$24,317 (cash from E Endowment available to spend).

McDaniel asked for 3 or 4 SC volunteers to consider how E might use its spendable funds to advance the goals of E as stated in its charter and make recommendations at our next E SC meeting, 8 March 2014.

Tim Ballard, Kristin Braziunas, Andrew deCoriolis, Lewis Gilbert, and John Schaefer volunteered. The ad hoc committee was asked to have a draft of their proposal sent the entire SC by 1 February 2014 for input prior to the 8 March 2014 SC meeting.

Socially Responsible (Impact) Investing (SRI) and College's divestment from fossil fuel companies: At E SC meeting in March 2013, we with student input discussed these topics. As a result, several E SC members with John Schaefer's leadership drafted a personal letter that was published in the spring Alumni magazine. Bernat continued the discussion with writers of the letter and SC members in response to a letter from Lawrence Siddall '52 on the College's lack of interest in SRI 10 years ago. A few weeks prior to our meeting, Paul Safyan '68 contacted Bernat about his interest in SRI at the College and asked to attend our meeting. de Coriolis gave a brief history and update on SRI indicating its complexity. SRI and divestment from fossil fuels are in the process of being clearly defined and standards established (i.e., What qualifies as a SR investment?; Does divestment mean only fossil fuel companies or mutual funds that own fossil fuel companies?; Does SRI reduce portfolio performance?). de Coriolis reported on what some other colleges and Oberlin College are doing. Safyan presented his interactions with the College on SRI.

Because these are a complex topics, and it is not clear what role E might and should play, deCoriolis was asked to work with Ferguson, Bernat, and Safyan to investigate the topic further and prepare recommendations for the SC to consider. A draft of their recommendations is to be sent to the SC by 1 February 2013 for input prior to the 8 March 2014 SC meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Steering Committee Members

Kristin Braziunas, Lewis Gilbert, Carl McDaniel, John Petersen, and John Schaefer (expire in 2014); Susan Bernat, Meredith Dowling, Anders Ferguson (expire in 2015); Timothy Ballard; Andy Barnett, Andrew deCoriolis, Walter Galloway, Abe Kruger (expire in 2016).

2014 SC meetings

Saturday, 8 March 2014 and 20 September 2014, times TBA, Lewis Center Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted

Carl N. McDaniel '64

Chair, EnviroAlums

OBERLIN PROJECT UPDATE
EnviroAlums Steering Committee
Sept 25, 2013

The last few months have been a time of transition for the Oberlin Project culminating in the hiring of a new Executive Director, David Gard, in September 2013. David is a Navy veteran with degrees in engineering (Northwestern University), natural resources (University of Michigan), and an MBA (University of Michigan). He has eleven years of experience in energy and climate policy with the Michigan Environmental Council. He brings vision, managerial skills, competence, and great experience to the Oberlin Project. We are very excited to work with him.

Other notable accomplishments and updates from the past six months include:

- Oberlin has achieved Climate Positive Participant Status within the Climate Positive Development Program. It is the first city in North America to achieve this designation with the submission of the Climate Action Plan to serve as Oberlin's Climate Positive Roadmap.
 - o Press release: <http://news.oberlin.edu/articles/oberlin-recognized-climate-positive-participant/>
 - o Climate Action Plan: www.cityofoberlin.com/images/omlps/2013%20cap%20online%20pdf.pdf
- Establishment of a new, diverse, community-based Oberlin Project Board. David Orr has transitioned from his role as Executive Director of the Oberlin Project to Chair of the Board. Part of the role of this board and the new Executive Director will be reassessing and refining priorities with a focus on community impact.
- Renewal of operational funding from the major supporting foundations, which will sustain core activities through 2017.
- Founding role in an emerging regional initiative around the Lake Erie Crescent from Flint to Youngstown that will serve as a platform for replication.
- We are on schedule to break ground soon on the Gateway building—a major economic driver for a sustainable and prosperous Oberlin economy. The Gateway will be a Platinum-rated entirely solar powered complex including a hotel, conference center, commercial space, culinary school, and restaurant featuring local foods. It will be the site for major conferences focused on the large issues of our time pertaining to rapid climate change, sustainability, resilience, and justice. It will also be a catalyst for downtown economic revitalization in a community with a 25% poverty level. The Gateway building is the keystone for the Green Arts District that includes one of the premier art museums in American higher education, a distinguished performing arts center, a commercial theater, and the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.

A comprehensive, project-oriented Progress Report on activities of the Oberlin Project staff was created through February 2013 and is available for download here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/s75h0r3e3sr9tr3/OberlinProjectProgressReportFeb2013.pdf>

CARBON MANAGEMENT FUND

The Carbon Management Fund is a student-driven effort to create a local carbon offset program that will allow Oberlin College (and in 2050 the City of Oberlin as well) to achieve its sustainability goals, while exuding positive benefits to homeowners and farmers within the Oberlin Community. Over the previous school year, Oberlin College students with Oberlin Project support engaged in initial tree-planting projects on campus (see <http://oberlinreview.org/article/trees-offset-carbon/> and <http://www.oberlinreview.org/article/trees-planted-carbon-offsetting-initiative/>), as well as in long-range planning as part of a grant application to the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. In August 2013, the Oberlin Project brought on OC'13 graduate Nathaniel (Tani) Colbert-Sangree to launch the Fund and institutionalize it within Oberlin College.

The Carbon Management Fund combines a number of goals of the Oberlin Project, including reducing greenhouse gases below zero through “Climate Positive Credits”, building relationships with local farmers, supporting the wider community through energy efficiency projects, and developing educational opportunities that integrate sustainability into the College curriculum. Guiding principles and key features of the Carbon Management Fund (CMF) include:

- **Carbon offsets are an immediate, short-term, and cost effective solution to achieve climate neutrality *now* while we work toward permanent solutions in the future.**
 - Conservation and efficiency alone are unlikely to get us to carbon neutrality without a very high upfront capital investment; advances in technology, creative solutions, and planning for a gradual transition to low- and no-carbon sources of electricity, heat, and transportation fuels will be necessary to achieve this goal.
 - In the interim period, carbon offsets offer the opportunity to achieve our goal of carbon neutrality while working toward these long-term zero carbon emissions solutions.
- **A student-driven effort, the creation of a carbon offset fund was supported by a majority of respondents on two recent student referendums (Spring 2012 and Spring 2013).**
- **Carbon Offsetting Projects provide benefits to local community members in addition to carbon credits for Oberlin College**
 - Partnering with local farmers on soil sequestration projects will improve soil practices and water quality, reduce the need for and cost of fertilizers, promote cost-effective sustainable agricultural practices, and foster relationships that can support a local foods economy
 - Working with POWER to increase home energy efficiency will improve Oberlin’s housing stock, lower energy bills, and support local workforce and economic development in energy efficiency

- Planting trees on College and City grounds will improve community aesthetics, air quality, water retention and erosion control
- **The creation of a Carbon Offsetting Program, brings us on par with peer institutions:** Brown, Duke, UC Berkeley, Yale, the University of Illinois @ Urbana Champagne ect...yet we differ from these other institutions by having the decision making power of these projects in the hands of students.
- **The Carbon Management Fund will facilitate partnerships with governmental entities, organizations, educational institutions, and individuals.**
 - Partners who have expressed interest in collaborating include Lorain County Community College, Oberlin City School District, the City of Oberlin, the Oberlin Project, Oberlin College, Providing Oberlin With Efficiency Responsibly (POWER), and Western Reserve Land Conservancy.
- **Carbon offsetting projects will be rigorously and reliably quantified by leveraging outside expertise and utilizing commonly accepted accounting protocols.**
 - Environmental Consultants will lead teaching sessions and aid in establishing the methodologies for accurately measuring the value, and monitoring the results, of offsetting projects.
 - The accounting of projects will be done in house.
- **CMF enhances students' educational experience through curricular opportunities and applied research.**
 - Faculty will work with students, advising on project creation and including carbon offset related research projects within their curricula. Interested faculty partners include David Orr (ENVS), John Petersen (ENVS/BIOL), Roger Lauschman (BIOL), Amanda Schmidt (GEOL), Rumi Shammin (ENVS), Janet Fiskio (ENVS), and Simanti Banerjee (ECON). CMF-related projects have already been integrated in some Fall 2013 classes.
 - Students will gain valuable experience for a growing sector of the global economy.