

EnviroAlums
Steering Committee Meeting
Lewis Center, 2nd floor conference room
2 March 2013: 12 noon to 2:00 PM

Present: Kristin Braziunas, Carl McDaniel [in Lewis Center] and Tim Ballard, Susan Bernat, Anders Ferguson, Walt Galloway, John Petersen, John Schaefer [via teleconference].

Absent: Lewis Gilbert, Meredith Dowling, Pat Cobb Tarnow, Andrew Barnett, Andrew deCoriolis, Maggie Zimmer.

Guests: Kyle Aungst, Cate Battey, and David Roswell, students from Responsible Investing Organization (RIO), gave a presentation on RIO's projects on campus and discussed with E SC divestment from fossil fuel investments by the College and other sustainable investment options.

Continuation of Chair and Vice Chair appointments

Because E SC didn't meet in September 2012, SC, Chair and Vice Chair were not elected. E SC voted unanimously to reappointed Chair Carl McDaniel and Vice Chair Tim Ballard to serve until E SC meeting on 28 September 2013.

Appointment of E SC members to serve from September 2012 to Septemeber 2015

Because E SC didn't in September 2012, SC members for the next 3 year terms were not appointed. Susan Bernat, Meredith Dowling, and Anders Ferguson were appointed unanimously to serve on E SC from September 2012 to September 2015.

McDaniel asked SC members to identifying E members and other alumni who might be effective SC members and want to serve Oberlin in this capacity. Please send suggestions to the Chair and Vice Chair before the September 2013 SC meeting.

Support for student professional development

John Petersen reported how the Environmental Studies Department used the \$1,000 provided by E for student professional development in academic year 2011-2012 (attached), The SC voted unanimously to continue this level of support for the current academic year. Petersen indicated more support could be used effectively. SC will consider increasing the amount of support at its September 2013 meeting in light of Petersen's report on the use of this year's support.

Support for E alumni speaker program

Carl McDaniel reported that two alumni have/will speak on campus this academic year: Aaron Birk '01 with majors in English and Visual Arts was on campus Oct 9-11, 2012, talked to three classes on his book *The Pollinator's Corridor: A Graphic Novel* (Philadelphia: Black Willow Productions, 2011). Abe Kruger '04 with majors in Environmental Studies and History will be on campus April 11-13, 2013, to give a campus lecture and give a presentation to Rumi Shammin's Energy and Society class related to his book *Green Building: Principles & Practices in Residential Construction* (Clifton Park, NY: Delmar, Cengage Learning, 2013; coauthored with Carl Seville).

E SC unanimously approved \$500 for EnviroAlums alumni speaker program this academic year.

Sustainable investing and divesting from fossil fuel companies

Susan Bernat suggested E SC consider the pros and cons of divesting from fossil fuel companies in the College's endowment and provided SC members with several articles to read for comment. She invited Kyle Aungst, Cate Battey, and David Roswell, students representing Responsible Investing

Organization (RIO), a student group advocating for Oberlin College to bank and invest more socially and environmentally responsible.

A wide-ranging, 30-minute discussion followed concerning a wide range of topics from 1) the complexity of having colleges divest from fossil fuel companies, 2) investing a portion of the endowment in socially responsible companies, 3) banking at institutions that provide loans for local projects, and 4) creating a fund that will invest in local sustainability initiatives.

Anders Ferguson stated that college investment committees are concerned with the risk taken by excluding a class of investments such as fossil fuel companies. The sustainable investment company at which Ferguson is a partner is currently assessing this risk for Middlebury College, and he thinks the risk will turn out to be quite small for fossil fuel companies. Ferguson also noted that colleges like Middlebury and Oberlin have reputations for sustainability that are important for many reasons and that divesting from fossil fuel companies will have a significant positive effect on the college's reputation for sustainability.

Although a number of reasons make it problematic for E as an Alumni Association Affiliate Group to take a policy position, individual alumni can advocate a particular policy. John Schaefer will draft a letter supporting the RIO student group and circulate the letter among other E SC members for comments. Schaefer can then decide to send the letter to the editor of the *Oberlin Alumni Magazine* and other alumni can sign the letter if they choose to do so.

Susan Bernat, Anders Ferguson, and Anrew deCoriolis will work to identify those things related to sustainable, socially-responsible investment that would be possible for E to do easily and make a difference. One possibility mentioned is for E to ask the College to put E's endowment funds in socially responsible, sustainable investments. This ad hoc committee will report its recommendations at or before the 28 September 2013, SC meeting.

Update on the Gateway Project

At the December 2012 Trustees Meeting, they approved funding with enthusiasm the final construction documents for the Gateway Project (hotel, conference center, admissions and development offices) thereby basically approving the project. The total cost will be about \$30 million. The Trustees consider it a significant, bold project.

Update on The Oberlin Project (TOP)

Kristin Braziumas, TOP Assistant Director, gave a detailed update on TOP. A significant accomplishment is the major revision of Oberlin City's Climate Action Plan now before the City Council. This document, along with the College's Climate Action Plan, will be submitted to the Clinton Climate Positive Development Program. When accepted, Oberlin (City and College) will move from "Candidate" to "Participant" status. About 35 Oberlin students over the last year have been interns at TOP making TOP an excellent "learning laboratory". A major focus this year is on food and agriculture. See TOP website (www.oberlinproject.org).

It was noted that David Orr will begin a terminal one-year sabbatical on 1 July 2013. His resignation will have ramifications for the organizational structure of TOP that are yet to be determined.

Anders Ferguson commented that, because so much has been accomplished, it is the time to step back to see the big picture and ask, "What is strategic for the College to do to be truly sustainable? What are we to do in education to achieve sustainability locally and beyond?" In this regard, replacing the central heating plant provides significant educational opportunities that should be taken.

John Petersen's and his students' projects have significantly enhanced the college's and community's capacity to observe real-time resource use. Dashboards across the campus provide current and past electricity and water use that has been successful in reducing use by students. Bioregional dashboards in several locations at the college and in the community track community-wide electricity and water use.

Community Voices Dashboards at several locations in Oberlin display videos and images of Oberlin citizens and students doing a diversity of environmentally appropriate things—this has been very successful at engaging people who then talk with others about what they have seen and learned.

It was noted that Rob Lamppa, Director of Sustainability and Energy Management, just left Oberlin to be Director of Physical Plant at University of Wisconsin, Madison. Ben Jones is the chair of the search committee for Director of Energy and Sustainability Management. E members can contact Jones with input to the search.

Friends of the Oberlin Project (FoTOP)

Anders Ferguson, Chair of Friends of TOP, provided an update of FoTOP. He indicated FoTOP has about 50 friends who have given between \$150,000 and \$200,000. He expects that over the next year the number of Friends will exceed 100 and the dollars given will be significant. Anders has interacted with the president of this year's 50th year class (1963) and he is very enthusiastic about TOP. Carl McDaniel noted that one the three projects of his 50th year reunion class is the Gateway Project. It is hoped that future 50th year reunion classes will be inspired to participate in TOP.

Ferguson stated that a major challenge will be to craft TOP's story so as to enable the College and other stakeholders to know how important and relevant TOP is them and the wider community.

Steering Committee Members

Timothy Ballard; Andy Barnett, Andrew deCoriolis, Walter Galloway, Pat Cobb Tarnow (expire in 2013); Kristin Braziunas, Lewis Gilbert, Carl McDaniel, John Petersen, and John Schaefer (expire in 2014); Susan Bernat, Meredith Dowling, Anders Ferguson (expire in 2015).

Next SC meeting

Saturday, 28 September 2013, time TBA, Lewis Center Conference Room.

Respectfully submitted
Carl N. McDaniel '64
Chair, EnviroAlums

Report on EnviroAlums Support for Student Professional Development 2011-2012

Submitted by John Petersen

During this year EnviroAlums granted \$1,000 to Oberlin's Environmental Studies Program for use in supporting student professional development. Funds were used to support the following activities:

- 1) EnviroAlums contributed \$500 (matched by \$443 from the Dean's Office) to support eight students who presented papers at the 9th "Greening of the Campus" conference at Ball State University, March 18-20, 2012. This is the oldest regular national meeting focused on Campus Sustainability. Talk titles and participants are listed below. Presentations were made to packed audiences in two special sessions proposed by John Petersen who accompanied students to the meeting and moderated the sessions. Research reported and the preparation for these talks was conducted in two upper level *Ecological Communication* seminar courses". At the meeting students received extensive praise for the quality of their presentations from the audience and fielded numerous questions.

Organized session. "From 'Building Dashboards' to Campus Conservation Nationals to Environmental Orbs: Using real-time feedback in the built environment to engage, educate, motivate and empower college students to conserve resources". *Greening of the Campus IX*, Ball State University. March 18-21, 2012, Muncie, Indiana.

- Myers, N., E. Tincknell, and J.E. Petersen. Development and assessment of "empathetic character gauges"
- Heraty, M., A. Sullivan and J.E. Petersen. Use of local and national competitions as a mechanism for engaging students
- Myers, N., E. Tincknell, E. Sakach and J.E. Petersen. Barriers and benefits to conserving water and electricity in the context of campus competitions.

Organized session. "The development, implementation and early assessment of the 'Bioregional Dashboard': Using real-time feedback on whole-city electricity and water flows as a mechanism for building a culture of environmental stewardship". *Greening of the Campus IX*, Ball State University. March 18-21, 2012, Muncie, Indiana.

- Canning, C., D. Rosenberg and J.E. Petersen. Integrating environmental messaging into the bioregional dashboard
- Rosenberg, D., C. Canning and J.E. Petersen. Bioregional dashboard in the public library and downtown businesses
- Taylor, J., E., Tincknell, N. Myers and J.E. Petersen. Integrating the bioregional dashboard into public education

- 2) EnviroAlums contributed \$500 (matched by \$500 from the Dean's Office and \$425 from the Environmental Studies Program) to support three students who presented papers at the Association of Literature and Environment Conference held in Alaska, June 9-12 2012. Students Sophia Bamert, Lucia Anne Kalinowsky, and Erin Swenson-Klatt presented papers that they first drafted in Assistant Professor Janet Fiskio's class, *American Agricultures* in a panel that titled "Toward a Wider Vision of Food Justice" that Janet

proposed. The students met up with Janet in Bellingham, Washington, to board the Alaska Marine Ferry, where they spend three days on deck traveling to Juneau for the conference. Janet reports that other faculty attending the meeting complemented her and them on the exceptional job that they did presenting. While at the conference they also volunteered to work in a soup kitchen.

- Bamert, S., “Food Justice and the City: From Urban Food Consumer to Urban Food Citizen.”
- Kalinowsky, L.A., “Victory Gardens, Nation Making, and Violence.”
- Swenson-Klatt, E., “Think Global, Think Local: Slow Food’s Philosophy on Place as a Model for the Food Movement.”