

Work Group 4: Enhancing the Campus Community

Final Report: November 12, 2007

Sustainable personnel and environmental practices are at the heart of enhancing our campus community. We recognize that efforts to create a greener university and improve working conditions on campus are interrelated enterprises. All efforts on our campus should contribute towards the mission of making UW-Eau Claire the most rigorous, intellectually challenging and exciting university that it can be.

Our proposal is to promote a sustainability philosophy, to be represented in three core areas:

- **Our people;**
- **Our physical environment;**
- **Our curriculum.**

Part of the sustainability philosophy has to do with caring for and about place. Thus, this particular idea has to do with trying to create a place that outwardly reflects and fosters personal growth, intellectual exploration, and a commitment to maintaining what Yale president Bart Giamatti called the "space apart" of a university. Place is not separable from pedagogy. One's environment is part and parcel of one's philosophy and approach to learning. If a place has character, has identity, then it will resonate with and reinforce the character of its faculty and staff, and with the developing identities of its students. It will truly be a coherent *environment* that encourages an attitude of preservation and conservation among its students and its employees. In this way, focusing on place is inherently sustainable in intent and in outcome.

OUR PEOPLE

The people of UW–Eau Claire are our most valuable resource. We succeed as a university with practices that support our mission by sustaining our people. Work Group 4 proposes a variety of outcomes that will represent an ongoing revolution in the overall ethic that guides our principles, our policies, our procedures, and our decisions. We believe this begins with intentionally adopting the following assumptions about all university personnel and their work with us. Because every aspect of work life is open to questioning in order to move toward a more sustainable place, UW–Eau Claire will adopt and act upon the following official assumptions about our people:

- We hire talented, creative, diverse, capable people;
- We foster an environment that encourages invested and engaged participation;
- We trust our people to do good work, to be accountable for the quality of their work, and to take pride in what they do;
- Our work is guided by the abilities/dreams and commitments of our people;
- Our work changes according to the genuine best interests of students, the community and the mix of faculty/staff;
- Our work life is guided by ethical principles;

- Our work enhances our lives;
- Work is an important part, but only a part, of the whole human being;
- We recruit, admit and enroll top-quality students;
- Our students are the center of our mission; all procedures advance their education;
- Our administrators/leaders are committed to and model practices that are just and consistent;
- We always assume trust and encourage connection between and among divisions, departments and colleges.

Action Strategies

Create a work environment that supports the whole individual including providing birth-to-two-year infant care, providing options for individuals caring for family members, and providing flexible work schedules;

Create a work environment in which individuals are supported in their ongoing efforts to learn and to grow professionally.

Initiate a review of campus policies, procedures, and committees to assure practices that support the campus and personnel sustainability;

Create a UW-Eau Claire biannual climate survey to assure that the campus environment supports its employees and is in sync with the above assumptions;

Create institutes, centers and integrated programs that break down silos and facilitate collaborative work acknowledging and valuing the diversity of talents and contributions of all UWEC employees. These institutes and programs will support the contract between faculty, students and staff to create a place conducive to learning and to life.

OUR ENVIRONMENT

UW-Eau Claire's campus is widely admired for our beautiful natural surroundings. Campus decisions regarding energy, transportation, and buildings should reflect a deep sense of respect for place. Our classrooms, dormitories, dining areas, activity spaces, bookstore and walking paths should all contribute to and reflect our mission to make this university a vibrant center for learning.

Sustainability efforts are occurring nationally in higher education, reflected in the UW System Energy Independence Initiative, the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment, and in the creation of the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. On a regional level, our sister institutions UW Green Bay, UW River Falls, UW Oshkosh and UW Stevens Point are implementing sustainability practices.

In order to position UW-Eau Claire to do important work on environmental sustainability, we propose the creation of a sustainability coordinator position. Such a person would work with the campus to ensure that sustainability and integration will be a central part of the following:

Action Strategies

Ensure that the new building and remodeling projects, such as the upcoming work on the Davies Center, enhance sustainability;

Sustain current and develop additional green spaces, including the greening of Garfield Avenue: highlight the river, create a park, and significantly reduce automobile traffic;

Ensure that the campus reduces, reuses and recycles;

Install clean energy sources;

Build on the strong campus connection with Eau Claire transit and partner with other community efforts to provide alternative forms of transportation, e.g., bicycle garages and locker facilities for bicycle riders;

Initiate contracts with vendors to ensure environmentally and locally friendly practices. For instance, Portland State University's food contract with Sodexo details sustainability requirements such as the use of local and organic foods;

Expand the farmer's market for UW-Eau Claire.

OUR CURRICULUM

For sustainability to take hold it needs to grow among our people. Led by our faculty, all parts of this institution - colleges, departments, offices, staff, and students - can collaborate in broad-based efforts to develop a rich and interconnected curriculum. Reaching across disciplines and fields requires interconnection, and an intentional and explicit sense of shared purpose. It also offers new ways of seeing things, new energies for new ideas, and this in turn fuels a curriculum that can sustain itself and grow. A curriculum that is being infused with new ideas is a healthy one.

But this is a new kind of curriculum, not just the one that we have now with a few add-ons, but truly new. On one hand, it may have a traditional "environmental" focus, such as a study of region through science, history, philosophy, literature and the arts. But it's also "green" in its intention to bridge disciplines and fields, to foster growth and integration through shared mission.

The institution needs to commit ongoing resources to accomplish the following; without such commitment at the administrative level, these ideas cannot succeed.

Action Strategies

Encourage people to grow beyond their familiar fields;

Offer time reassignment, freeing an individual from part of his or her workload in order that s/he might pursue curricular and program development;

Support in meaningful material ways the work our people do to build a sustainable curriculum, including travel, research, and service conducted off-contract;

Ensure that the features of the new curriculum are part of the standard workloads, not added on.

A Strategy to Achieve a Sustainable, Integrated Curriculum

A College within a College: Institute for Integrated Studies

A free-standing entity within the university, with its own budget and infrastructure, drawing on the expertise of people across the campus, would lend authority to UWEC's commitment to integrating our people, environment and curriculum. It could also act as a magnet for both prospective faculty/staff and prospective students, those who are excited by opportunities for networks and interconnectedness (another version of the sustainable campus), for a truly liberal-studies experience that they can't find at any other institutions -what David Orr calls opening students, faculty and staff "to the world of ideas, the Great Conversation."

Institutes within universities generally have their own charter and are almost without exception cross-disciplinary in spirit and in fact, and often have their own executive directors and administrative offices. The Newcomb College Institute at Tulane University, for example, "is a dynamic interdisciplinary academic center designed to enhance undergraduate women's education at Tulane." Massey University in New Zealand has broken a number of its colleges into multi-disciplinary institutes: the Institute of Natural Resources, for example, within the College of Sciences; or the Institute of History, Philosophy, and Classics within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. These institutes often consolidate a number of departments under a single umbrella and thereby help focus faculty and staff on new research and teaching opportunities. Each entity has its own vision for what joins the disciplines within it, and each reaches across disciplines for interconnected expertise.

A UWEC Institute for Integrated Studies would rely at first on interested faculty and staff who are already here and who, with financial support (time and/or money), would be eager and willing to help create the vision and substance of the Institute. At the same time, hiring committees should begin looking for more broadly-trained candidates who would contribute to one or two Institute courses each academic year. Affiliation with the Institute must be part of our expected workload, not an add-on, and our Personnel Committees must therefore value and reward the work being done outside the disciplinary parameters of particular departments or programs.

The Institute could take advantage of ideas already put forth for truly collaborative teaching, with the faculty and staff in the same room at the same time, building on each other, challenging each other, modeling for students the different modes of inquiry as well as the ability to find common language. It could also, for example, promote cohorts of students (learning communities) who take the same pod of courses and are therefore encouraged to discuss ideas across those courses with each other. The proposed institute would be a showpiece of a much larger and overarching institutional vision, manifested in our people, our place and our curriculum. It would embody what we do in all our work here. It would be the campus community, physically and conceptually.