Year-End Report (2008/2009 Academic Year)

Special Committee on Sustainability

May 15, 2009

1 As requested by ACC # 08-46
Preface

This report summarizes the work\(^2\) of the Special Committee on Sustainability for the 2008/2009 academic year. Some of the highlights included: Participation in AASHE 2008 (November 2008), the Sustainability Earth Day Fair (04/22/2009), and significant operational sustainability improvements in the areas of recycling and food services. However, it is important to note the entire fall 2008 semester was effectively ‘lost’ due to a lack of committee members.

Sustainability at Westfield State College remains largely limited to operational practices, promoted and enhanced by the Campus Sustainability Coordinator within the Facilities and Operations Department\(^3\). Sustainability in Higher Education, however, requires a cultural shift across the full spectrum of our curriculum, research, outreach, and campus activities. Sustainability has to be integrated into the curriculum and become an integral part of the college experience here at Westfield State College.

Special Committee on Sustainability (2008/2009 academic year)

- Caitlin Barry  Student member
- Aviva Berezin  Student member - recording secretary
- William Bickley  Campus Sustainability Coordinator
- Carsten Braun  Geography and Regional Planning - chair
- Marijoan Bull  Geography and Regional Planning
- Rosemary Dowling  Residential Life
- David Harris-Fried  Marketing
- Nicholas Langone  Student member
- Ethan Michaud  Student member
- Jane Mildred  Sociology and Social Work
- Curt Robie  Facilities and Operations
- Michael Young  Physical Science

\(^2\) [http://www.wsc.ma.edu/garp/sustainability.html](http://www.wsc.ma.edu/garp/sustainability.html). This Web site contains a complete set of meeting minutes.

\(^3\) [http://www.wsc.ma.edu/facilities/staff.html](http://www.wsc.ma.edu/facilities/staff.html)
Fall 2008 Semester

As previously noted, the entire fall 2008 semester was effectively ‘lost’ due to a lack of committee members.

The Special Committee on Sustainability is supposed\(^4\) to consist of:

1. Four faculty members appointed by the MSCA Chapter President.
2. Four staff members (representing Residential Life, Marketing/Public Relations, Facilities and Operations, and the President’s Office) appointed by the College President.
3. Four student members appointed by the SGA President.
4. The College’s Sustainability Coordinator.

The four faculty members were appointed in time for the start of the fall 2008 semester committee work. The Student Government Association (SGA) finally appointed two student representatives (as opposed to the required four) to the committee on 10/22/2008. The President’s Office did not appoint any staff members to the committee during the fall 2008 semester. As a result, it was mathematically impossible to reach quorum and the committee never came into formal existence. However, informal meetings of the committee continued throughout much of the fall 2008 semester and resulted in the organization of / participation in a series of notable events:

- The Special Committee on Sustainability hosted a Faculty Center Coffee Hour\(^5\) on 24 September 2008.
- Carsten Braun represented Westfield State College at WGBY’s\(^6\) *Party of Ideas* about energy and sustainability issues (Saturday, 4 October 2008).
- Campus Sustainability Day, organized by MASSPIRG\(^7\) (10/22/2008). The event included a visit by State Representative Donald Humason (R-Westfield).
- Carsten Braun, William Bickley, and two students (Emily Leveille and James Maxwell) represented Westfield State College at the 2008 Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education Conference\(^8\) in Raleigh, N.C. (November 9-11 2008).
- Marijoan Bull and Trudy Knowles organized a Faculty Center Brown Bag Lunch Discussion entitled *Integrating Sustainability into the Curriculum* (12/04/2008).

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\(^5\) [http://www.wsc.ma.edu/facultycenter/F08_calendar.doc](http://www.wsc.ma.edu/facultycenter/F08_calendar.doc)

\(^6\) [http://www.wgby.org/](http://www.wgby.org/)

\(^7\) [http://www.masspirg.org/](http://www.masspirg.org/)

\(^8\) [http://www2.aashe.org/conf2008/](http://www2.aashe.org/conf2008/)
Spring 2009 Semester

Dr. Robert Hayes (Vice President of Academic Affairs) convened the first committee meeting of the spring 2009 semester on 02/10/2009. The first regular committee meeting occurred on 02/26/2009. Committee meetings continued on a more-or-less weekly basis for the remainder of the semester. The committee conducted its work during the spring 2009 semester without a representative of the President’s Office. A complete set of minutes can be found on the committee’s Web site at http://www.wsc.ma.edu/garp/sustainability.html. This Web site is also included on the Quick Links Web page, accessible from the college’s Web home page.

The work of the committee over the course of the spring 2009 semester was limited due to scheduling conflicts and prior commitments of the committee members – a direct result of the situation during the previous semester. As a result, the committee decided to focus its efforts on the Sustainability Earth Day Fair (04/22/2009, Fig. 1, 2). In this regard we were fortunate to have the active participation of two members of the community (Maureen Belliveau and Amy Stiles) which facilitated campus-community connections.

The committee spent some time discussing and formulating focus themes for the upcoming academic year (Fig. 3). The responsibility for implementing most of the ideas and initiatives listed in Figure 3 falls under the auspices of the Campus Sustainability Coordinator with the committee providing support and guidance.

The following is a non-comprehensive list of other relevant initiatives currently in progress on campus related to sustainability:

- **Facilities and Operations**
  Implementation of Single-Stream Recycling across campus, Procurement and deployment of new recycling stations across campus, grant-funded test installations of new energy-efficient lighting fixtures using LEDs, completion of the campus greenhouse gas emissions audit.

- **Food Services**
  Implementation of Trayless Dining. The goals are to a) reduce food waste, b) reduce the use of chemicals, and c) increase the overall food quality and presentation. Trayless Dining has been implemented successfully in many colleges and universities across the U.S. Local examples include Springfield College and Keene State College.

- **Alternative/Public Transportation**
  Development of a comprehensive bicycle plan for the college and the community as part of Professor Marijoan Bull’s *Land Use and Natural Resource Planning* class. The bicycle plan in its entirety (including maps) can be found at http://www.wsc.ma.edu/garp/faculty/mjb.html or on the committee’s Web site.

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10 [http://www.greenirene.com/](http://www.greenirene.com/)
Outlook

The college finds itself at a crossroad with respect to Sustainability in Higher Education.

We can continue on the path we are on, gradually and incrementally ‘greening’ our campus operations as funding becomes available. Or, we can truly embrace Sustainability in Higher Education to redefine the college experience here at Westfield State College. Such a strategy, however, requires collaboration between all members of the campus community as well as active and visible leadership from the senior campus administration.

In this context it is important to remember that the college is facing a series of specific commitments and obligations with respect to sustainability, energy conservation, and climate change as reviewed in the report presented by the former Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability entitled Sustainability in Higher Education at Westfield State College: A Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability (05/14/2008). The full report, as well as a shortened version, can be found on the committee’s Web site.

Our obligations are indeed daunting, especially given the current economic situation of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Sustainability often comes at a short-term cost – but so does ‘unsustainability’, except those costs are usually transferred to other parts of the world and to future generations. At the same time, our efforts and investments in Sustainability in Higher Education can be used to measure and publicize the success of Westfield State College and to distinguish us as an attractive and forward-thinking institution of public higher education.
Our Annual Sustainability

Earth Day Fair

Wednesday
April 22
11a.m.-4p.m.
Tekoa Patio off of the DC
Adjacent The Green
In case of inclement weather
we will move inside to the
Scanlon Banquet Hall

Figure 1.
Figure 2.
Figure 3.