

Environmental Stewardship Committee

Recommendations and

Annual Report

Augsburg College

February 2014

Augsburg College is deeply committed to what it means to build a sustainable urban community. Our location in a diverse urban neighborhood in a region known for its environmental conservation work and on the banks of the Mississippi River facilitates our exploration of the interconnectedness of urban life with both its human and natural contexts. These relationships with our neighbors, the urban environment, and with the wider world are opportunities for learning, for civic engagement, and for faithful service. We are proud of what we do to honor sustainability, but also deeply aware of the need for ongoing vigilance and wise stewardship of the gifts of the world.

– Augsburg College Climate Action Plan

The Environmental Stewardship Committee (ESC) is comprised of a cross section of stakeholders in the College, including staff, faculty and students. The committee has been operating for more than a decade and counts numerous areas of growth and development in that time. The ESC reports to the president of the college. This is the second annual report of the ESC.

This annual report summarizes the major accomplishments of 2013, catalogues areas in need of continued efforts and investments, and suggests ways in which the college might improve its over-all progress toward carbon neutrality as well as integrate sustainability into the culture of the campus community and steward students toward the college mission.

Climate Commitment

In 2007 Augsburg College became a charter signatory to the American College & University Presidents' Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). In signing this agreement,

President Pribbenow affirmed the college's commitment to sustainability. In 2009, a "Green by 2019" committee was charged with developing a feasible climate action plan for Augsburg's Minneapolis campus to become carbon neutral by 2019, the year of the college's sesquicentennial. Augsburg's Climate Action Plan has 5 focus areas: energy, transportation, residence halls, culture, and curriculum. Each area is measured annually and becomes a part of the campus Greenhouse Gas Inventory (GHGI). A measurement tool that helps us assess our progress towards our goal. Augsburg College submitted its first Greenhouse Gas Inventory to the ACUPPC in January 2009.

The 2013 GHGI is currently under study as data collection is being transitioned to the new Office of Planning and Effectiveness. Due to this transition Augsburg was granted an extension by the ACUPPC with a new due date for the report, May 15, 2014. See the 2013 annual report for the most recent figures.

Campus Greening Initiatives

The following summary briefly describes on-going efforts of the ESC in 2013.

I. Energy Reduction & Conservation

To reduce our carbon footprint we purchase carbon offsets through Xcel Energy. This is a shared cost between student government (via a student fee) and the college. While this is a notable effort, it does not actually reduce the carbon produced by our campus. In order to light, heat, cool our buildings, run our ice rinks, and transport ourselves, we produce approximately 21,000 tons of CO₂ equivalent. Offsets actually increase rather than decrease our annual operating expenses because we are paying for our energy twice (once for the non-renewable energy, and then again, for the renewable energy).

Current plans are to transition to a deeper reduction in our energy consumption. More direct and visible energy reduction programs on campus will offer a greater attraction to potential students, provide educational opportunities for our current students, reduce energy costs to the college and reduce carbon emissions. The ESC is working with student government to transition the currently used student fee funds to purchase offsets to invest in energy conservation and renewable energy projects, such as solar. Student government is favorable of the transition of student fee's from offsets to renewable energy.

II. Waste Reduction & Conservation

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- The College implements an active recycling program that includes cans & bottles, paper, cardboard and electronic equipment.
- Trayless cafeteria has been institutionalized and normalized.
- Composting of organic waste in Nabo, the dining hall, and Einstein's is now integrated into the waste removal for students and in using all compostable containers. Improvements can be made in signage, education of consumers, and assurances of proper disposal by facilities.

III. Transportation

- 50% discount on transit passes for all faculty, staff and students continues, including bus and rail.
- Student bike sharing program continues with the addition of a new bike fix it station set for a spring 2014 installation.

IV. Community Garden & Urban Agriculture

- Community garden shared by faculty, staff, A'viands and neighborhood residents has been thriving and has expanded membership.
- We continued as sponsor and site of West Bank Farmers Market during the summer (organized by Campus Kitchens).
- Campus Kitchens continues serving hot meals to local community members from food that could be considered waste.

VI. Curriculum, Research, and Other Educational Opportunities

- The Environmental Studies program is now in its sixth year, with active involvement from faculty from 12 academic disciplines across the campus, including: political science, chemistry, history, math, English, social work, communications, economics, biology, history, sociology and urban studies.
- The Environmental Studies Program and the Biology Department are in the midst of a new hire, 50% time for each program. This will be the first faculty member for Environmental Studies.

- Assessment plans for Environmental Studies are in line with the college with efforts this year aimed at course sequencing and student input on proceeding through the major.
- There are currently 24 majors with new efforts in outreach and enrollment just beginning. In May 2014 we expect to graduate 6 ES majors.
- Plans for a full river semester, to be launched Fall 2015, are under way. This program will model best practices for a low-carbon, sustainable education. With students traveling the length of the Mississippi River almost entirely under their own power, it would be both an incredibly rich educational experience with, at the same time, a minimal carbon footprint. We see this as a showcase for how to provide students with a low-cost, low-carbon, and highly educational experience.

VII. Cultural Transformation

Cultural transformation is a main goal of the ESC. Cultural transformation is slow but continuous work, and we do see impact when we review over the long arc of our work together. Nonetheless, the campus is ripe for a push forward in its urban environmental sustainability work, and we suggest a stronger commitment to the recommended action steps below. In light of the aim for cultural transformation that pushes forward the work of environmental sustainability, the ESC recommends 4 key action steps to address this year.

ESC Recommended Action Steps

- 1) Creation of an Environmental Sustainability Resource Center** with 1 allotted faculty FTE. Encourage linkages between Environmental Studies and ESC, to harness and shape campus initiatives.
- 2) Require departments on campus to include campus greening efforts as part of their annual reports.** This provides an avenue for measuring changes and acknowledges savings in actual dollars and in carbon emissions.
- 3) Dedicate an annual fund to energy and resource conservation.** The college has used funds for energy conservation projects and experienced reductions in operating expenses as a result. A dedicated annual fund would help us continue investments in energy and resource conservation, such as solar initiatives, and supports the work of student government in allocating dollars for energy conservation.

4) Review and improve waste, recycling and composting bins to assure proper implementation and closely align with campus structures. Waste, recycling and composting structures are the most visible symbols of campus greening efforts to our community members and visitors. A review and alignment of the implementation of these systems to update and assess compliance is warranted.