

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL TASK FORCE

AUGUST 2001

BACKGROUND:

In April 2000, President Victor Boschini appointed the Environmental Task Force (ETF) to assess the extent of the campus' environmental impact and make recommendations to the President and the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate for minimizing that impact. Institutions of higher learning must exercise leadership to promote and reinforce environmental responsibility and incorporate ecological values of environmentally sustainable development into institutional policies and practices. Universities have the opportunity to demonstrate that a new model for environmental stewardship is possible.

CHARGE:

Conduct a University environmental impact assessment and needs analysis, including:

1. an examination of methods to achieve a reduction of campus waste, including all outflow products generated by university operations, and pollution
2. an examination of energy sources and efficiency, with the intent to seek greater efficiency and reduction of environmental impact
3. an examination of all natural resource usage, with the intent of enhancing environmentally sensitive usage
4. an examination of purchasing policies with the intent of enhancing environmentally responsible purchasing of supplies and equipment

The assessment will be guided by at least the following sources of information:

1. collection of relevant campus-wide data
2. review of national literature
3. examination of models in peer universities and other relevant organizations
4. current local, state, and federal programs and policies
5. identification of necessary resources for recommendations and implementation

MEMBERSHIP:

The task force consisted of 12 voting members (faculty, staff, and students) appointed by the President plus two ex-officio members. The four faculty members were: Dr. Angelo Capparella, Biological Sciences, Chair of the ETF; Dr. Timothy Kelley, Health Sciences; Dr. Shannon O'Lear, Geography-Geology; and Dr. Paul Walker, Agriculture. The five staff members were: Ms. Maureen Blair, University Housing Services; Mr. Steve Eddington, Environmental Health and Safety; Mr. Mike O'Grady, Grounds Services; Mr. Jim Rogers, Recreation Services; and Mr. Chuck Scott, Facilities Management. The three student members were: Ms. Amy Bishop, Student Environmental Health Association; Mr. Michael Freeman, Student Environmental Action Coalition; and Mr. Scott Kording, Student Government Association (SGA). The non-voting ex-officio members were: Dr. Curtis White, Chair of the Academic Senate and Dr. Richard Dammers, Assistant to the President.

OUTCOME:

The Task Force divided into six subcommittees: Chemicals, Education, Energy, Purchasing, Recycling, and Water. Each subcommittee produced a report addressing the aforementioned charges. Afterwards, the full ETF met to develop recommendations that included the need to institutionalize the move towards environmental sustainability into our campus culture and university decision-making.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation 1: Assign each of the four Vice Presidents the charge of doing an environmental audit that will be due in one year. The objective of the audit will be to evaluate their unit using the four aforementioned charges, develop official policies and procedures, and explore future administrative structures for accomplishing campus sustainability goals. Each Vice President will appoint a staff member to devote 1/4 time to this effort and those staff members will function cooperatively as a Green Team. The Environmental Task Force will make available copies of the six subcommittee reports to the Green Team. The Green Team will meet with the ETF before launching their audit.

Recommendation 2: Initiate discussions among the President and Vice Presidents to become a signatory of the Talloires Declaration and member of the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future. The Talloires Declaration serves as a framework of action outlining the role and responsibilities of universities in supporting environmentally sustainable development. Some 270 universities world-wide have signed, including Ball State University, Bowling Green State University, George Mason University, and Southern Illinois University.

Recommendation 3: Establish an environmental initiative award to be given annually to an individual, group, or unit in the university. We suggest naming this after the famous Illinois State scientist, who was an early advocate of environmentally appropriate development, John Wesley Powell: the John Wesley Powell Environmental Initiative Award.

Recommendation 4: Continue the ETF with its current charge. The representation of members drawn from staff, students and faculty brought together a valuable blend of individuals already involved in moving the campus to environmental sustainability.

Recommendation 5: Build and maintain a comprehensive website through the President's Office addressing all aspects of campus sustainability efforts.

Recommendation 6: Send appropriate representatives to conferences on moving universities to environmental sustainability, especially the Greening of the Campus conferences at Ball State University.

Recommendation 7: Explore extramural funding sources (e.g., Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs; environmental foundations) to support campus sustainability initiatives.

