

To: President Russell Osgood, Dean of the College James Swartz

From: Campus Advisory Committee on Environmental Concerns (the EcoCampus Committee),

Date: 29 August 2003

Re: 2002-2003 Annual Report

Active Membership

Faculty: Gail Bonath, J. Montgomery Roper, Royce Wolf, Vince Eckhart (Chair)

Staff: Mike Burt, Steve Larson, Brian Turner

Students: Katie Casas, Shelby Hayhoe, Josh Rosenbluh, Eli Zigas

Building and campus planning

Campus-planning issues dominated EcoCampus' work over the past academic year. Our committee members participated on building committees (Campus Center, Science Phase II, and Athletic Facilities), in this way providing advocacy and information about environmental sustainability and exchanging environmental information among building projects. Four members (Burt, Eckhart, Turner, Zigas) participated in Grinnell's green-design Charette, hosted by the firm "The Green Roundtable." Meanwhile, our committee researched (1) LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certification; (2) energy commissioning (hosting a presentation by Roger Hill of Summit Blue Consulting), (3) composting, (4) environmental coordinator positions at colleges and universities, and (5) sustainable design of parking facilities. We summarized our recommendations in research areas 1, 2, 4, and 5 in memos to the College Administration and Facilities Management. Specifically, we advised that

- all present and future building projects pursue LEED certification, facilitated by additional independent commissioning
- the College hire a permanent, full-time Environmental Coordinator
- the College act with greater restraint in expanding parking facilities and consider environmentally sensitive parking area designs (e.g., pervious paving surfaces)

Communication

The Committee allocated considerable effort to increasing its visibility on campus, communicating its mission, and soliciting input from the campus community. For example, in a letter to the *Scarlet & Black* in November, 2002, the Committee advocated that Grinnell and Grinnellians adopt the following principles:

Develop environmental awareness and responsibility

- make decisions that consider environmental impacts as well as educational and economic ones
- educate the College community (students, faculty, staff, administrators) and our broader community about environmental sustainability
- lead by example, and form partnerships in environmental stewardship with our local and global community
- communicate our successes in environmental stewardship

Reduce inputs of energy and materials

- conserve energy and consumable resources (e.g., paper, water)

- employ energy- and material-efficient buildings, appliances, tools, vehicles, etc.
- acquire energy and materials from sustainable sources
- acquire natural resources in ways that leave them available for future generations, in environmentally sound, socially just, ethically acceptable ways

Reduce outputs of materials

- employ practices (e.g., composting) and technologies (e.g., low-emissions vehicles) that reduce generation of atmospheric, liquid, and solid waste

Recycle

- adaptively re-use and recycle materials

Cultivate biological diversity

- share the campus landscape with a diversity of organisms appropriate to our location

The Committee also initiated the design of an informative Committee website, a project spearheaded by Gail Bonath.

Findings and prospects for environmental sustainability at Grinnell College

Grinnell College made important moves in the direction of environmental sustainability in 2002-2003. Brian Turner made substantial, unprecedented contributions as Environmental Coordinator for the College. It is hoped that the East Campus dorms will earn LEED certification. Green-design considerations are expected to be integral parts of future construction projects (e.g., Science Phase II [especially the CERA portion]). Campus recycling of paper products, plastic, and aluminum has maintained its momentum. Two Grinnell students are working in summer, 2003 as interns on city-of-Grinnell projects focused on environmental sustainability (a project on solid waste disposal and recycling, and a project on education about the Arbor Lake Watershed Project).

At the same time there are obstacles to environmental progress at the College. Brian Turner's term position has ended, and the Committee received no response to its recommendation that a similar, permanent position be created. The timetables for parking and Athletic-Facility design were too abrupt to allow judicious deliberation about green alternatives.

Sustained progress requires commitment from diverse stakeholders on campus, including students, faculty, administrative offices, and Facilities Management. The committee reiterates that a full-time environmental coordinator would facilitate communication between these groups and enable comprehensive attention to environmental sustainability.

Committee priorities for 2003-2004 (recommended by last year's committee)

- continue research on sustainable campus operation
- advocate environmental coordination and planning
- continue monitoring and advising building projects
- promote solid waste reduction (encourage recycling, possibly write a composting grant)
- gather and centralize baseline data on Grinnell College's ecological footprint
- continue website development