Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
April 29, 2005

In Attendance: Bruce Coull, Tom Knowles, Kirstin Dow, Michael Scheffres, Laura Pergolizzi, Michael Koman, Marj Aelion, Alicia Wilson, James Sweigart, Chris Howard, Tom Syfert, Drew Cutright, Laura Sima, and Whit Ashley (with Student Government and SAGE)  
Guest: Chris Watson  
Staff and Students: Trish Jerman, Elaine Durr

Next Meeting: TBA in the fall

Announcements:
Bruce Coull: He was recently at the University of Tennessee as an invited guest. Individuals at UT are quite impressed with USC’s accomplishments regarding environmental stewardship, especially the West Quad. A group from UT would like to visit USC and tour the West Quad. UT does have a substantial recycling program but would like to expand upon its environmental initiatives.

Chris Howard: Furman University was recently in the news for having a system that makes biodiesel from used cooking oil. He would like for USC to start a similar program to provide the biodiesel for the shuttle buses. Bruce Coull has presented this idea to the Chemistry department, but the Chemical Engineering department should also be made aware of this idea. Chris also informed the group that E-85 is currently cheaper (~$1.84 per gallon) than regular gasoline. Individuals with newer vehicles (2000 onward) may be able to use E-85. One can find out if his vehicle is compatible by looking at the inside of his gas door, his gas cap, or in the front wheel well for a flex-fuel or ethanol sticker or logo. One could also consult his vehicle’s owner manual. The Committee discussed ways to publicize this information to the student body. Using the campus radio station (WSC) was identified as an efficient method.

Whit Ashley: Student government passed a resolution commending Energy Facilities and other departments and individuals involved in securing the Johnson Controls Energy Performance Contract.

Issues:
Goal Setting and Reporting Part I, Bruce Coull: Following Jim Demarest’s suggestion at the previous meeting, it is probably appropriate to re-visit the goals and plans outlined in the original Environmental Policy. Bruce asked the members of the Committee to review the policy and think about changes that might need to be made to provide the Committee with a new direction and focus for the coming years. This will be the primary topic for the first meeting in the fall.

Tom Syfert suggested sustainability be built into the University’s core curriculum. Several members of the Committee replied that this is currently being done in a limited fashion through particular classes and programs. U101 incorporates a section on sustainability, and professors can request an “Introduction to Sustainable Living” presentation through the SUI.

Kirstin Dow informed the Committee that an undergraduate environmental studies major is being formulated and considered. The Bates Complex will also house a learning community centered upon the ideas of sustainability for new students in the fall.

Summary of Key Findings from Annual Assessments, Elaine Durr: Conducting annual assessments is part of the University’s environmental policy. The idea is to identify successes and improvements as well as areas that need further improvement. Since the policy was adopted in 2000, each department has completed three survey assessments in 2000-2001, 2002-2003, and 2003-2004. Upon completing this last survey, it seemed appropriate to review the process and collected information to identify ways to improve the process as well as evaluate trends that may be present. Elaine has prepared a summary of each department’s successes and improvements as well as future plans and goals and questions regarding further improvement. She presented the highlights of this document to the Committee. The presentation can be accessed via the web at www.sc.edu/EAC. Elaine asked the Committee for suggestions on how to improve the process: make it easier, quicker, etc. She is particularly interested in identifying a way to obtain quantitative data from the departments including cost.
information. Do the departments need help with collecting and calculating these figures? This is the type of information that we need to show improvement and cost savings and will draw attention. If we can illustrate that environmental stewardship does not have to cost more, we will have won a large portion of the battle! Ideas, comments, and questions can be directed to Elaine via e-mail edurr@environ.sc.edu.

Trish Jerman reminded the Committee of the “Bragging Points” document created a few years ago, which included figures and cost savings from various department’s environmental initiatives. Dr. Sorenson requested this type of information after hearing such values from the Housing department. This type of data would be ideal for the annual departmental survey assessments.

Summary of Stormwater/Rocky Branch Investigation, Chris Watson: Chris conducted a study to determine how the University and Rocky Branch creek would be affected by the new NPDES permit system, which includes two phases (I & II). He found that there is substantial confusion surrounding this issue. The City of Columbia does not yet know how the new system will affect the University’s requirements. Chris suggested that the University take a pro-active approach to the issue. Stormwater management is not addressed in the University’s environmental policy, even though it has a substantial impact on the campus and surrounding environment. The River Alliance applied for a grant to construct a path along Rocky Branch creek but was not successful. The primary focus of this grant proposal was to conduct the necessary studies prior to constructing the path. Chris suggested that the University consider conducting these studies via student projects, which would reduce the burden on the River Alliance. After the preliminary work is completed, perhaps the River Alliance could submit another grant application for the actual construction of the path, which might have a better chance of being awarded.

Submitted by Elaine Durr