Minutes
Environmental Advisory Committee
October 7, 1999


NEXT MEETING: NOVEMBER 19, noon to 1:30. McKissick Museum

Dr. Coull welcomed the group and noted that he had heard Dr. Palms speak about the Environmental Advisory Committee in several settings. ("We’re on his mind, like it or not.") He also noted that the cardboard bailer installed at the Russell House was apparently saving the university about $1450/month as well as many dumpster dumping trips by a heavy truck. He also called attention to the fact that the newly installed composter was up and running. Liz Bohike noted that it recycled about 1/3 of the food waste at the Russell House facility.

Note: the following notes are somewhat more detailed than usual, for the benefit of key members who were unable to attend.

Environmental Management System: Dr. Coull then introduced two MEERM students from the School of the Environment who are exploring the development of an Environmental Management System (EMS) for the University in conjunction with students at Clemson and (eventually) MUSC. Francisco Cordero and Sara Sterle’s power point presentation was distributed, and is attached for those unable to attend. If you need a hard copy, please contact Trish at 777-7760.

The EMS effort is funded through the Sustainable Universities Initiative and is one of several projects designed to bring the three research universities together. A three-university EMS is the brainchild of Phil Barnes, ESRI, who presented the idea early in the planning process. Developing an EMS (modeled after the international standard ISO 14001, but not necessarily following it exactly) would put South Carolina ahead of the curve in responding to increased scrutiny from the EPA, as well as from industries who view the university as a “supplier” and under their own environmental management systems, must seek reassurances that the university is managing its environmental affairs well.

Comments which followed the presentation included expressions of enthusiasm and support from Ed Bass, cautions about time lines (Carpenter) and beginning with a manageable task (Cutter.) It was noted that the Board of Trustees has just approved the university’s energy plan, making energy management a potentially good place to start. Hanif Chaudry noted that we shouldn’t reinvent the wheel, and offered to serve as a link with the University of Valencia, from which he has an honorary doctorate, and Washington State University, where he has long-standing contacts.

Dr. Coull asked for downsides to proceeding. Dr. Cutter reiterated her concern for taking on too much too soon, and suggested that limiting the scope of the effort would mitigate any concerns raised by facilities management. She also noted the importance of buy-in
from upper management, and suggested that even a token amount of financial support would go a long way toward indicating their commitment.

Margaret Lamb asked who would monitor progress (students) and Ed Bass said that he would be most anxious to work with them, indicating an interest in better solutions and improved products.

Jim Sweigart noted that it was very important for the long-term success of the effort to share insights and information with the rest of the community. He suggested focusing on one area, reporting progress, and encouraging the process to spread throughout the campus.

Summary comments were made by Marge Aelion (“I don’t see how information gathering can have a down side.”) and Jim Sweigart (“The only down side is doing it in such a way as to alienate people—to not do it right.”)

- Environmental Policy: The group then moved on to a discussion of policies. Dr. Coull briefly reviewed the sample policies which graduate assistant Julie Bixby collected and forwarded to the members. John Carpenter and Susan Cutter noted that Rutgers built its policies on existing strengths, and suggested that USC do the same. When asked if USC should develop environmental policies of some sort, Margaret Lamb noted that it was a good idea for substantive, as well as PR-related reasons, John Carpenter, “risking sounding hokey” said it was the right thing to do. Other comments:
  - Policies need to be substantive, or they'll be worse than no policy at all. (Aelion)
  - Show who is taking the lead. (Carpenter)
  - They should show students that it is important. We're shaping the way the next generation perceives things. (Sweigert)
  - There needs to be a component to involve students. “You teach it to us...then we turn around and see the university doing other things.” (Selvig)
  - Students will be the leaders in industry and business, and we should show them the right way to think about things. (Lamb)

Several individuals commented on the Toronto model, and Jim Sweigert noted that the most important part was the focus on implementation and reporting. Michelle Alford reiterated the interest in student involvement and suggested for accountability, results of reviews or “progress reports” should be put in the Gamecock, or made accessible in some other way. Susan Cutter and others suggested a “state of the environment” web page, attached directly to the University’s home page.

Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be a lunch meeting on November 19, beginning at noon. We'll meet in McKissick Museum. (The Trustees are planning to use their conference room in Osborne that day!) Julie Bixby was asked to develop a draft policy for discussion, and at the request of some members for “bring us up to speed information,” we'll have a very brief presentation about proposed changes in parking and campus transportation from Derrick Huggins, Director of Vehicle Management and Parking Services.