

To: Carol Christ, President

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Subject: Strategic Planning – Support and Promote Environmental Sustainability

Background: Members of dining services, physical plant, and the Five College Recycling Coordinator are pleased that the college is promoting sustainable practices as a strategic goal. We have quietly been working towards improving our sustainable efforts over the years but haven't developed critical benchmarks for measuring progress towards a specific college goal. As addressed during the open discussion for this strategic goal, many folks on campus aren't aware of current sustainable practices within our departments. Our sustainable efforts have lacked a campus focus, effective communication channels, collaboration with other departments and funding sources.

Sustainable Goals:

Expand our purchase of local food - we currently purchase local produce and dairy products; for a few special meals, we have purchased beef and poultry and would like to have the funding to increase our ability to purchase these items and add sustainable seafood to our sustainable goals. Benefits of purchasing sustainable food:

- Protects environment
- Supports local community
- Improves food quality
- Improves food "security"

Food composting - we would like to establish a comprehensive waste program that would divert our food waste from the sewer system and local landfill. Benefits for food composting include:

- Diverts still-valuable resources from landfill
- Provides nutrients and amendment back to local soils

Biofuels – evaluate opportunities to divert foodservice waste, fats and oils, into an infrastructure that converts these wastes into biofuels. Ideally we would like to close the loop and utilize the foodservice wastes by providing a fuel source for the campus. More exploration is needed for the three main types of bio-fuel:

- Yellow grease – part of cooking grease processed and converted to fuel that is replacement for heating/boiler fuels (such as #6 oil)
- Biodiesel – cooking oils and vegetable oils processed and converted to fuel that is replacement primarily for transportation diesel fuels. Can also be used as replacement for home heating oil (as replacement for #2 oil)
- Methane from anaerobic composting – composting in controlled contained environment with goal of maximizing methane produced. Methane then captured and used as a fuel source.

Explore ways to reduce the use of “to go” containers and other foodservice disposables – we need to balance the popular dining options and use of “to go” containers with the negative environmental impacts. Food purchasing efforts will continue to purchase items in bulk or recyclable containers to reduce packaging waste. The annual distribution of individual reusable hot mugs has eliminated the use of hot and cold paper cups in the dining program. Efforts should include:

- Educating students of environmental benefits of reducing paper and plastic waste. An unexpected consequence of the new dining program has been the disappearance of glasses, service utensils and china from the dining facilities.
- Increase the purchase of biodegradable items to support “to go” dining options
- Examine house infrastructures and establish easier ways to collect disposables and recyclables as college houses and buildings are renovated.

We would welcome the opportunity to enhance and expand our sustainable practices as part of an overall campus wide effort to integrate sustainability into the Smith College culture. To realize our sustainable efforts, it is clear to us that campus life and academic and co-curricular programming must establish long term goals and practices to encourage a spirit of continuous environmental innovation for Smith College.