Presidents Climate Commitment Committee  
December 5, 2008  
Present: Fabritius, Hamm, Jamison, Lubbers McNabb, Miles, Noltemeyer, Norwood, Nyerges, Perkins, Sweis, also invited, Richard Trollinger  

We received and discussed a memo from President Roush asking our group to take up the topic of “energy savings, strategies, and advice,” and asking that we identify practical matters that all of us can do.

Richard Trollinger described for us the origin, charge and recent activities of the Cost Savings Committee. Most recently, Richard, Stephanie Fabritius, Bill Breeze, and John Cuny conducted an open forum to solicit cost savings suggestions from the entire campus community. Several good ideas were brought up, including: motion sensors to control lights, reminder notes, low flow faucets, plumbing leaks, and holiday ghost load. In addition to their immediate interest in identifying cost savings strategies, the special committee sees our situation and their work as a means to establish in all of us, some new and good habits that will stay with us beyond the current economic situation. Richard offered to share with us a copy of all the suggestions their group has received.

Our group welcomed Mr. Roush’s invitation to become involved in promoting personal actions to conserve energy was very interested in being part of these discussions. Since our meeting, Clarence Wyatt as chair of Planning and Priorities, has requested a report from us by mid-January on recommendations.

There was a caution that though developing awareness of energy issues and building good habits of conservation are important these changes in personal behavior may have little impact overall on energy use and should not distract our committee from larger goals. As a balance we were reminded that in our pursuit of larger things we must not overlook the importance of personal responsibility.

Jamison mentioned the possibility of a “green pledge.” This would be a voluntary statement that campus organizations might endorse to promote energy conservation and waste minimization. Sammi will bring this up with Student Government Association.

Liz brought up the efficiencies of outdoor lighting on campus and light pollution. While recognizing the importance of security issues, there may be significant savings possible in this area.

Jamison brought up the opportunities we have for cost savings with our landscaping practices. The use of native plants and drought tolerant plants and compost made on campus are practices that other campuses have embraced. Planting deciduous trees on southwest of buildings and conifers on the northwest can positively affect energy costs and occupant comfort. Anne and Patrick are members of the Campus Beautification Committee. That group is working toward
reduced fertilizer and herbicide use and is positively disposed to these suggestions, bearing in mind the importance of a neat and attractive campus appearance. Hawthorn trees were suggested as food source for birds, and in our local area, conifers can be a haven for nuisance birds. This topic deserves further discussion.

At our last meeting the question was raised about best practices for fluorescent lighting. Sami pursued the question with some internet research. The short answer is: “Turn them off if you will be gone for more than about 15-20 minutes.” Source: http://www.lightingdesignlab.com/articles/switching/switching_florescent.htm. The old misconceptions about switching a fluorescent fixture are largely misconceptions. A copy of the background details was distributed. This is information that we should distribute widely.

On at least one recent occasion, the lights have been left turned on at the tennis courts long after anyone was using them. In the past similar reports have been made concerning the practice field behind Boles Natatorium. Miles will inquire about use policies.

Thermostat Policy. Elizabeth asked if our campus has a thermostat policy. Quickly a motion was made and seconded to recommend such a policy. There was some discussion about target temperatures, 68°F in winter and 76 °F in summer were recommended. With the clear acknowledgment that since HVAC systems in many of our buildings are uneven, that specific temperature settings should not be over-interpreted. Individual space heaters consume a great deal of energy and should be discouraged. And we recommend a more casual dress for individual comfort. Vote was unanimous and enthusiastic. We will communicate this action to Facilities Management and other groups as appropriate.

Patrick reported on projects currently under consideration: (1) cold water laundry, and (2) a program with Sodexho for check-out dinnerware as an alternative to disposables. Facilities Management has begun significant energy conservation efforts, including; (a) reducing the number of bulbs in existing fixtures in hallways and common areas of residential and academic buildings, (b) accelerating the replacement of incandescent bulbs with CFL’s, (c) timers on room vanity lights and bathroom lights. Additionally the College will again this year have a “winter shut-down” effort, turning back heating and turn off hot water in all campus buildings for two weeks in late December.

Climate Action Plan. We had a very productive (and at times challenging) discussion of our task in developing an overall campus climate action plan and carbon offsets. By the terms of PCC each campus has liberty to develop a plan that best fits their local situation.

Several comments that any targets we establish should be consistent with best advice on strategies that will avoid the worst of climate change impacts. Anne emphasized the need for a clear goal. Endre advance the discussion by suggesting a date: thirty years -- 2038. Steve reminded us that if we are to meet the goals of the ACUPCC, at some point in our pursuit of carbon neutrality -- carbon offsets will be necessary. In addition to setting an ultimate target date to achieve climate neutrality, we should establish intermediate milestones along the way. As one strategy to motivate ourselves to meet intermediate milestones, target dates might be linked to purchase of offsets if targets are not met.
We returned to the discussion of a campus forest. This attractive because: (1) could become a part of our academic programs, (2) nearby location would make this a visible part of campus life, (3) there might be small plots near campus, (4) do we get any credit for our campus urban forest? No, not under the present structure of ACUPCC, (5) supporting forest conservation in sensitive areas in other countries allows us to protect those critical habitats, (6) we could establish a field station, (7) biology program would welcome a local forest, but it would have to be managed and maintained, (8) we could establish a re-forestation project on Millenium Park property or near the Central Kentucky Wildlife Refuge, (9) this might help us appreciate our own campus, (10) we might work with Terry Cook, Kentucky representative of The Nature Conservancy to locate a place in Mexico that is a migratory destination of local birds and preserves the campus connection. Questions of offsets are complicated, Hamm and Fabritius volunteered to do more research and report back.

Teach In. Participation in the February 5 national Teach-In was discussed. Consensus was that this was too soon and should be considered for next year.

Next meeting: January 7. Anticipated agenda: personal actions and climate action plan.