Advisory Committee –
American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment

Year Two Report, AY 2008/2009

For many years, Centre College has been attentive to issues of environmental impact, and energy and resource conservation. Now, our involvement with the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment serves as a focal point through which many dimensions of the organization can collaborate.

In its institutional operations, Centre College has long been concerned with the challenges of energy and resource conservation and has been an early adopter of innovations to reduce operational costs. Our frequent “best value” rankings are dramatic evidence of a high level of productivity. Simultaneously, our students, staff and faculty have been concerned about environmental issues for many years. They have taken actions as individuals to reduce environmental impacts, have made them part of courses, and have advocated for these important issues. Centre’s leadership in ACUPCC now serves to pull together the institutional and individual perspectives. The PCC advisory committee functions to inform the campus about important sustainability questions, identify opportunities to reduce the environmental impact of the institution, and ultimately, and bring Centre College to a position of climate neutrality. This account is submitted to report the accomplishments and activities of the past year and to articulate challenges and opportunities that members of this committee anticipate for the future.

This Advisory Committee was appointed on an ad hoc basis by President Roush to advise the President on issues relating to sustainability and energy and resource conservation and to lead the College’s participation in the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment. The committee is composed of staff, faculty, and students and represents most of the major operational functions of the College. (Mike Fabritius, Michael Hamm, Steve Jamison, Anne Lubbers, Elizabeth MacNabb, Scott Messer, Preston Miles (chair), Jennifer Muzyka (winter & spring) Endre Nyerges, Patrick Noltemeyer, Jamison Norwood, ’09, Elizabeth Perkins (fall) Sami Swei, ’10). We met eight times through the year (Sept 9, Nov 13, Dec 5, Jan 7, Feb 19, Mar 10, May 11, and June 9) and enjoyed consistent attendance and high enthusiasm. Notes were prepared from each meeting and are available electronically http://web.centre.edu/presidentsclimatecommitment/

Infrastructure Development Part of the work of guiding Centre toward climate neutrality involves setting up permanent systems that will execute recommendations from the Climate Action Plan and evaluate results from those actions. This year, Scott Messer brought us a long way toward that goal by setting up the SchoolDude utility direct software system. This involved verifying the meter and bill identifiers for every building on campus and setting up the program files to accept data entry. Facilities Management will take responsibility for entering each month’s gas, electric, and water bills into the SchoolDude program. This is approximately 110 electric bills, 105 natural gas bills, and 60 water meter bills each month! The SchoolDude program will allow analysis of utilities use in several ways - by building, by sq ft, and by
occupant. In addition to being absolutely essential for preparing the greenhouse gas inventory, the utility direct program will facilitate efficiency analyses and guide our decisions about building renovation. Our group has discussed whether our first priority should be to retrofit/remodel the least efficient buildings or whether we should first give attention to improving the efficiency of those buildings which use the most energy and resources.

The 2007/2008 greenhouse gas inventory was completed and reported to ACUPCC on Oct 17, 2008, one month beyond the requested target date. Last year we were concerned about obtaining reliable information about staff and faculty business travel. We addressed this challenge by distributing a survey to all faculty and staff. Though there was some confusion among faculty respondents, the 25% response rate we received suggests the information is adequately reliable. Other institutions have also reported difficulty collecting business travel data and most have used either survey approach or a limited sampling of expense reports. One institution (Northern Kentucky University) used student workers to review all expense reports for an entire year and then compiled actual costs and miles traveled. The 07/08 GHG inventory was useful to the committee in its discussion this year, but we were unsuccessful in communicating that information widely across campus.

Work on the 2008/2009 GHG is proceeding on schedule. The 2008/2009 report will be submitted under a newest version of the Clear Air/Cool Planet Campus Carbon Calculator (version 6.0). These documents will be important guidance as we begin development of the institutional climate action plan.

Student Activities. The involvement of students as members of the Advisory Committee and the enthusiasm and commitment that students bring to our work, both as individuals and through campus student organizations, continues to be a major source of inspiration and leadership. Bethany Pratt,’10, of the Environmentally Conscious Centre Organization (ECCO) and Conner Egan,’10, from Centre Outdoor Recreation and Education (CORE) jointly organized a field trip and picnic at the Mother Ann Lee hydrostation on October 26. David Brown Kinloch and associates from Soft Energy have an in-depth tour of the dam and generator facility to about 25 participants.

A waste stream inventory conducted by ECCO in November showed that of the sampled waste; about 40% was bottles and cans, 40% was paper and cardboard, 10% was compostable, and only 10% was trash appropriate for landfill disposal. These results are poorer than a study led by Professor Nyerges in 2000 and suggest that we have great potential to increase recycling.

The major ECCO event of the spring was a two-week dormitory energy competition. Jamison Norwood,’09, worked with Sarah Hall in the Student Life Office to promote the event through the Resident Assistants. A Dark-Dodgeball tournament was held shortly after spring break to kick off the competition. The north side dorms (Acheson, Caldwell, Cheek, Evans, and Yerkes) were pitted against the old Quad dorms (Cooper, Ganfield, LaMotte, Tyler, Stevenson, and Vinson). The competition generated considerable attention and enthusiasm, particularly in Yerkes. Cody Buell,’09, provided the technical assistance for the competition as one of the projects in his spring-term internship.
Campus Involvement and Collaboration Our group was consulted by the special committee for Campus Cost Containment appointed to identify cost containment strategies. We met with Richard Trollinger and conveyed suggestions through him. The committee has encouraged adoption of policies on campus that will encourage sustainability. We worked with the Study Abroad committee suggesting an addition to that committee’s guidelines for selection of proposals for off-campus programs. We communicated to the Planning and Priorities Committee of the College Council suggestions for energy and resource conservation policies that should be included in our Strategic Plan. Members of the PCC have served on the planning committee for the Campus Center and the Science Center.

Recycling Centre’s recycling efforts continue to be an area of success. This year Scott Messer negotiated a partial mixed-stream recycling policy with Danville/Boyle County Solid Waste. This allows us to mix plastics, aluminum and steel cans and save campus man-power. We anticipate a significant increase in tons recycled, but possibly not as much as the 10% annual increases we enjoyed the last few years. We continue to monitor total tonnage of solid waste and anticipate a modest increase.

The PCC and ECCO cooperated in purchasing and posting small placards in classrooms that promote material conservation. The placards are 4 in x 3 in with the green rotating arrows and the legend, “Please Recycle”.

Though it was one of our original three tangible commitments to the PCC, our committee chose not to participate in the RecycleMania program this year. The concern was the balance between staff time needed to record and report data relative to the publicity value of the program.

Campus and Community Awareness A major task of the Advisory Committee is to bring awareness of climate and energy issues to the campus community. This effort is aided by articles on the College’s website. This year there were eight web articles (7/17, 8/14, 9/25, 10/30, 12/11, 12/18, 4/8, 5/14), and three convocations (FLOW, 10/1; Tom Fitzgerald, 11/19; Sergio Pallaroni, 1/14) that addressed issues of sustainability. The PCC committee participated in the community Earth Day event sponsored by Clarks Run Environmental Education Corporation (CREEC) with a booth describing Pearl Hall and Mother Ann Lee. Representatives of the PCC also made presentations to groups both on-campus and around the state (Alumni College program, Oct 26; Energizing Kentucky conference, Lexington, Apr 16; Campus-Community Partnership for Sustainability conference, Bowling Green, Apr 25; campus Managers Institute, May27). The committee thinks that developing a strong WEB presence is an important format to communicate to all stakeholders, especially to prospective students. This should be a web-link that reports accomplishments and connects to all the various activities and programs on campus.

Climate Action Plan The most important task of the committee for this year has been developing a Climate Action Plan (CAP) for the college. The CAP must set out the College’s goal for achieving climate neutrality, establish interim targets, and develop a comprehensive plan for achieving those goals. The goals established by the Advisory Committee are:

- 2020 -- 25% reduction from 07/08 levels
- 2030 – 50% reduction from 07/08 levels
2040 – Climate neutrality

The plan will serve as both an internal planning document and as a means to communicate our goals and objectives to external stakeholders. The CAP must be sufficiently comprehensive to provide the reasoning behind the recommendations, and at the same time be sufficiently brief that it will be widely read. Our intention is to prepare a draft CAP in late summer in order to allow time for internal review and adoption before the ACUPCC target date of Sept 15, 2009. It will be important that the Climate Action Plan be interlaced with the College’s Strategic Plan.

Sustainability Pledge Sami Sweis, ’10, and Patrick Noltemeyer developed and the committee adopted a brief statement that will guide our work. We anticipate transmitting this Sustainability Pledge to the Student Government Association, Faculty and Staff Congresses, and the College Council for their consideration and endorsement. The pledge is below:

Acknowledging Centre College’s Statement of Purpose “to prepare students for lives of learning, leadership, and service,” the College pledges an unwavering commitment to Environmental Sustainability as a requisite of purpose. We recognize fully the fragility of our delicate planet and the effects of irresponsible human behavior and wasteful consumption culminating in dramatic climate shifts, destruction of ecosystems, endangerment and extinction of species, and human loss of life through natural disasters. As an institution of higher learning, we will strive for climate neutrality through environmentally conscious behavior and decisions, and seek to actively fulfill our responsibility to the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment. The College shall seek new ways to capitalize on the intelligence, wisdom and creativity within our community, and where necessary, seek outside help and resources. To accomplish these goals, the College will continue to prepare our faculty, staff, and students to be Global Stewards, promoting environmental responsibility and awareness through education and practice at Centre and beyond.