Changing Ithaca’s Climate

In May, President Williams signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, pledging Ithaca to develop a plan and timetable to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and become “carbon neutral”. While we have two years in which to set our targets and plan of action, the National Wildlife Federation suggests a minimum goal of 2% annual reduction below current emission levels for ACUPCC signatories. This rate would achieve more than an 80% reduction in our emissions by 2050, in line with the recommendations of major climate experts to help curb average global temperature rise and hopefully mitigate the most negative impacts of climate disruptions. From the campus greenhouse gas emission inventories that Ithaca intern students have completed, we know the largest sources of our emissions are the energy used to heat, cool, and light our residence rooms and workspaces and power our office equipment, and our transportation impacts from commuting and institutional travel. A broad-based representative campus working team has been convened to begin to establish goals, strategies and timelines for Ithaca to achieve our climate commitment.

What can you do to help?

Beware the Phantom Load. This refers to the small amounts of electricity that most “instant-on” electrical appliances continue to draw, even if they’re turned off, as long as they’re still plugged in. This little bit of electricity draw adds up to big energy waste. How to stop the Phantom? Unplug unused electrical appliances or plug them into a surge-protector power strip and switch that strip off when you’re done using the equipment.

Recycle! Many paper, glass, metals, and plastic items can be recycled. Follow Tompkins County Solid Waste recycling guidelines: http://www.recycletompkins.org/

Purchase EnergyStar™ equipment to be sure to get energy-efficient, long-lasting items.

Buy environmentally preferable products like recycled-content office supplies. (more ideas pg. 4)

Campus Report Cites Sustainability as Core Institutional Value

Ithaca conducted a comprehensive self-study as part of our re-accreditation process by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Writing professor Marian MacCurdy and William Pelto, associate dean of the School of Music, co-chaired a steering committee comprised of faculty, staff and students. The committee developed a self-study design statement titled “Renewal, Growth and Sustainability” which guided the work of six task teams examining the College’s effectiveness in meeting certain standards. The task teams’ information has been synthesized into a report to be used by the Middle States team during its onsite campus visit in spring 2008. The report says this about sustainability:

Culture of Planning at Work: Sustainability

Although … nine priorities … form the basis of the College’s Institutional Plan, sustainability has become a core value for Ithaca College, starting publicly in 2001, when the President endorsed the College’s Comprehensive Environmental Plan, and continuing into 2007 when she signed the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment, a nationwide sustainability initiative of over 400 higher-education institutions.

The College strives to be at the forefront in integration of sustainability, as seen also in the College’s signing of the Talloires Declaration in February 2006. The signing of this declaration committed Ithaca College to a set of 10 action steps to achieve greater campus sustainability. The College has been very effective with its efforts to integrate sustainability thinking into the curriculum, college operations, including its building projects, and community outreach.

The College’s commitment to sustainability is infused in our educational mission and planning at all levels, including in our human resource values. In our mission to help students share the responsibilities of citizenship and service, in our goal to support the development of our employees, and in our efforts to commit to the environmental stability of the world, we are modeling for our students ways to contribute to long-term global solutions.
Provost introduces new faculty to sustainability

In her welcome letter to new faculty, provost Kathleen Rountree explained that according to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, education for a sustainable future should promote developing the ability to:
- respect, value and preserve the achievements of the past;
- appreciate the wonders and the peoples of the Earth;
- live in a world where all people have sufficient food for a healthy and productive life;
- assess, care for and restore the state of our Planet;
- create and enjoy a better, safer, more just world;
- be caring citizens who exercise their rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally.

Innovations in Sustainability-themed Curricula

Green Grrls and Earth Mothers: Women Shape the Future, an Ithaca Seminar offered by Vera Whisman from Women’s Studies, focuses on how women have answered the need for environmental action in times of historical and contemporary need. The course explores the connections between gender and the environment, from the already symbolic association of women and nature to the ways that global warming is already impacting the lives of women in developing countries. The course focuses on specific women who work to bring about a world that is ecologically sound and socially just such as Rachel Carson, Lois Gibbs, and Vandana Shiva. Ithaca College Distinguished Scholar in Residence Sandra Steingraber, author of Living Downstream, will participate in the class. Students will present a poster session on the media connections of women to the natural environment during Campus Sustainability Day. Whisman is a past recipient of a sustainability curriculum development grant from the Partnership in Sustainability Education program, the unique collaboration between Environmental Studies and EcoVillage at Ithaca.

During the Office of Minority Affairs Summer Institute, instructor Kenny Christianson guided a team of students that measured the “ecological footprint” of the Summer Institute program itself.

Instructor Patricia Dutt taught an OMA Summer Institute course on “Alternative Energy.” Sean Cahill, project manager from Gilbane, led the class on a hard hat tour of the business school construction project to show off the energy reduction strategies incorporated into this new high-performance sustainably-designed building, which is on track to achieve LEED™ Platinum certification.

The sixty residents in the newly expanded Sustainably Conscious Living Community in Terrace 2, with the support of two faculty fellows: biologist René Borgella and Kathryn Caldwell from the department of Psychology, must fulfill some academic requirements as they learn to live more sustainably within a traditional residence hall setting.

All sections of Ithaca Seminars for first-year students will come together during Campus Sustainability Week in October to hear a special evening presentation on climate change and campus sus-

Campus Sustainability Day 2007

Campus Sustainability Day will be held on Wednesday, October 24 in Emerson Suites. The main event for the day will be the Society for College and University Planning webcast: “Building a Durable Future: Community, the Campus, and Deep Economy.” The webcast, which runs from 12:00-1:30pm, features environmental author Bill McKibben. Environmentally-themed films will be screened all day and sustainability displays and demonstrations will be offered. Jeff Scott, director of dining services, will lead a “sustainability café” at 11:15am, with light lunch offerings featuring seasonal, local and organic foods.

Get “Spotted”! Reuse your beverage mug for refills of soda or coffee in retail operations on campus and you may be handed a “Spotted” card to reward you with a free refill for your effort to minimize waste.
Facilities groundskeepers have used the findings from the Alternative Landscaping research plot outside the Center for Natural Sciences to design and plant new alternative landscaped berms in the medians of “O” parking lot with native grasses, lilies, and sunflowers. Did you know? In 2006-07, Ithaca College recycled: 208 tons of office paper 99 tons of separated bottles and cans 66 tons of corrugated cardboard 353 tons of food waste were composted 726 tons of recycled material was diverted from the waste stream. But still, 903 tons of our trash were taken to the landfill. That’s a xx% recycling rate. We can do better than that!

Some great (sustainable) decisions
Yes, you CAN get there from here! The College underwrites 30% of the cost of student bus passes purchased in the Bookstore. A 10-ride pass is now available for $10.50. This pass is perfect for on-campus residents who just need to occasionally go shopping. For students who want to catch the bus from downtown or South Hill, a monthly unlimited ride pass is available for $30.50. But the best value for student commuters is the unlimited semester pass that sells at the Bookstore for only $120. Check out bus routes and schedules at www.tcatbus.com

Clean and Green! According to assistant director for operations Zach Newswanger, Residential Life has installed 5-minute timers in many residence hall shower stalls. Each waterproof “Shower Coach” timer is emblazoned with a label saying “ICare so I take shorter showers.” Also new are ICare laundry signs, encouraging residents to wash full color-separated loads, wash in cold water where possible, air dry clothing or remove garments when they’re dry instead of using the whole 1-hour preset dryer cycle.

You light up my life . . . Have you noticed the new light poles gracing the Quad? They’re much more attractive than the utilitarian lights they replaced, but “pretty is as pretty does.” According to Bill Bartnik, supervisor of electricians, the new fixtures use xx% less energy than the old fixtures plus the new light fixtures which focus light downward where its needed conform to the “Dark Skies Initiative,” reducing light pollution. Now, that’s beautiful!

Change is inevitable. Growth is optional. Positive growth is intentional.
Community Plunge is the opportunity for new students to get a head-start on volunteering in the Ithaca community with a variety of local service organizations. This fall, Plungers cleared trails, pulled non-native plants and spread woodchips for the Finger Lakes Land Trust. A team of seven volunteers, led by Plunge leaders Matt Pascua and Colleen McAllister assisted members of the South Hill Civic Association to landscape the South Hill Recreation Way trail and in Columbia Street park. In a “Laurel” sent to the Ithaca Journal, the Civic Association praised our students: “These remarkable young people whose enormous energy and enthusiasm made the clean-up and neighborhood improvement a memorable experience and a positive statement about student involvement in our community.”

Jason Hamilton, associate professor of biology, was invited to Wells College in August to speak to their faculty body about infusing sustainability into campus culture. According to Dr. Milene Morfei, “I’m so excited -- it looks like sustainability has a real chance of ‘catching hold’ here at Wells. [Jason’s] talk on the Day for Faculty seems to have just been the right catalyst for the powers-that-be to endorse the idea, and many faculty members have expressed their desire to get involved.”

Student Activities Board will show “The 11th Hour”, the climate change documentary narrated by Leonardo diCaprio, from Nov. 29 – Dec. 1st.

The “Health and Sustainability” conference was held on Saturday, September 15th in Hill Center. Co-sponsored by the Ithaca College School of Health Sciences and Human Performance and Sustainable Tompkins, this day-long symposium was intended to educate the health care community, explore healthy community infrastructure, and help to “green” medical facilities.

We’re offering a “baker’s dozen” of Sustainability Cafés this Fall. View the complete schedule: http://www.ithaca.edu/sustainability/outreach_cafes.php

“Drink in a new way to think sustainability.”

Respect the set points! In May 2006, Ithaca senior administrators approved a new thermostat set point policy. Please don’t complain to Facilities about the temperature of your office if it’s just a little warmer than you’d like or a little cooler than you might prefer. Each degree we don’t have to heat or cool a building saves thousands of dollars and tons of carbon. Wear layers so you can cool down or warm up as needed. And for goodness sake, please take that under-desk space heater or personal air conditioner back home.

Let your machine do it! Engage the highest level energy settings on your computer monitor and CPU. And don’t use 3D screen savers—they’re needless energy hogs! Even if you have powersaving settings engaged, make sure your computers, printers, copiers, and other office equipment are turned off overnight.

Switch off the lights! If you’re the last one to use the bathroom or the last to leave the office at night, flip the light switch. You may think you’re being considerate of the cleaning crew, but hey, they know where the light switch is too, and can easily turn the lights back on when they need them.

Ride smart! If possible, consider carpooling or taking public transit to commute, if not every day, at least a few times a month.

Sustainability isn’t a “what” - it’s a “how.”

News Briefs
Visit the “Exploring Positive Growth—The Sustainability Initiative” display at America Recycles Day at Pyramid Mall, November 3rd.

The Natural Lands Committee seeks additional members. More about the work of the committee and the meeting schedule can be found on the new website: www.ithaca.edu/naturallands/

We’re on the Web!
A pdf version of this newsletter can be downloaded from the Sustainability at Ithaca website at www.ithaca.edu/sustainability

This newsletter has been produced on recycled paper.