

Green Week: A Proposal to Attain and Maintain Sustainability at Everett Community College and in the Everett and Snohomish County Communities

Team Members: Roger Berger, Anne Brackett, Debbie Sarich

Introduction

Everett Community College, like any other institution of higher education, faces many challenges, but we would like to focus on two important ones: first, the College's lack of a significant public presence in the Everett and Snohomish County communities, and, second, its contribution to local and global environmental issues. In viewing these two challenges together, we see an opportunity to address both of them—for the betterment of the College and the community *and* the world. To enhance the College's public profile and to address issues of sustainability, we propose a Green Week, a series of College and community events over the course of a week that are intended to heighten awareness about the environment and sustainability concerns, offer solutions to the environmental and sustainability issues that confront us, and encourage members of the College and community to take specific action to become part of an environmentally sustainable institution and environment. These events highlight what we do best as an educational institution and include a college and community fair, contests, college and public library lectures and discussions, seminars, movies, volunteer work groups, and plans to sustain momentum beyond the week itself. We believe that sponsoring a week of campus and community events will both educate ourselves and our community about the realities and seriousness of the environmental problems confronting us and help sustain efforts beyond the week. At the same time, this week will help the College take a major step towards becoming a true community institution—a visible educational leader providing a model for sustainable practices and a center for transforming entrenched habits and behaviors at the College and in the community at large. In a recent New York Times Magazine essay on the imperative to take local action to address the grave environmental issues facing our planet, Michael Pollan (2008) writes:

For us to wait for legislation or technology to solve the problem of how we're living our lives suggests we're not really serious about changing—something our politicians cannot fail to notice. They will not move until we do. Indeed, to look to leaders and experts, to laws and money and grand schemes, to save us from our predicament represents precisely the sort of thinking—passive, delegated, dependent for solutions on specialists—that helped get us into this mess in the first place. It's hard to believe that the same sort of thinking could get us out of it. (p. 2)

One lesson that has been driven home to us during this inaugural Leadership Academy has been the notion that everyone at the College is a leader, and this is precisely what Pollan urges upon us in his essay. It is up to us to take intelligent and measured action and demonstrate that we are serious about questions of human survival. Our plan will require committed people, organization, time, energy and, yes, some money and commitment from the College, but we believe that it constitutes an important and necessary first gesture towards making our College and community into the kinds of places that support human aspirations and environmental sustainability.

Sustainability at Colleges and Universities

“At its simplest,” Tim Egan (2006), a New York Times reporter writes, “sustainability means taking as little as possible from resources that cannot be renewed” (p. 2). That is, “Sustainability [is] an interdisciplinary concept incorporating values, systems and activities that are ecologically sound,

socially just and economically viable” (Steptoe 1). According to Ann Rappaport (2008), a Tufts University scholar who writes about issues like the environment and higher education, sustainability has become particularly important at many American universities and colleges—wealthy and resource-laden or not (see also Steptoe, Egan and Hattam). Contemporary sustainability campaigns at some American institutions of higher education, as Rappaport (2008) continues, now “emphasize energy and climate concerns,” specifically focusing on buildings and the systems that heat, cool and power them” as well as “transportation, land use and water” concerns (p. 8) in a sustained attempt to achieve “carbon neutrality” (p. 11). Indeed, any effort to create a more green campus tends to include obvious and easier activities like encouraging members of a college community to turn off computers and lights overnight or even making use of building roofs for an assortment of plantings to more difficult ones like changing entrenched attitudes and behaviors and even generating electricity on one’s own—all of which takes expertise, initiative, planning, funding, and leadership. The payoff, however, is impressive: “The value of campus greening,” writes Rappaport (2008), “goes well beyond resources saved [and thus budgets improved]; greening generates interest and invites members of the academic community *to think differently* about societal values, goods consumed, and the infrastructure for shelter and mobility, raising questions about how human needs can be met in new ways” (p. 15, our italics). In particular, it is the potential of emphasizing sustainability to encourage a change in thinking—both on campus and in our community—that caught our attention: changing how students think is, of course, a core mission of our college. Indeed, “Students . . . relish the opportunity to use their classroom knowledge to make a difference outside the ivory tower” (Steptoe, 2007, p. 1). Here, however, it’s not just an academic mantra but an imperative for both the college and the surrounding community and a way to connect what we do here at Everett Community College to what occurs in our community. What is more, less wealthy schools like ours will likely be “disproportionately affected by the increases in electricity, fuel, and insurance costs, and [our] limited access to capital means that [we] will be less able to invest in energy efficiency and renewable technologies that will save money in the long run” (Rappaport, 2008, p. 15). That is, economics, and not merely virtue or an ecological consciousness, compels us to address issues of sustainability at EvCC.

That an institution of higher education—and in our case, Everett Community College, the only significant academic and technical college in our own immediate area—ought to be a leader in educating not only students but the entire community about important issues like sustainability should go almost without saying. Indeed, sustainability is a specific goal towards which educational institutions like Everett Community College have a cultural and social, even moral, obligation to provide leadership and knowledge. Yet, perhaps even more importantly, our college mission statement and our strategic plan already commit us to address issues like sustainability here on campus and to be a leader in educating our community. Part of the College’s Mission Statement asks us to “collaborate with regional businesses, agencies, schools and universities to create mutually beneficial partnerships” (Everett Community College Mission, Vision and Strategic Initiatives, p. 1) and one of our strategic Initiatives seeks to “support educational programs that result in a more globally aware and diverse student body and workforce” (EvCC, p. 2). Addressing sustainability clearly offers one obvious and effective way of meeting these objectives. At the same time, the realities of our own carbon footprint are equally as obvious to see—and this doesn’t even refer to the rise in gas pump prices, seemingly a partial reflection of the end of the age of oil in our time. In 2007, for example, our annual average use of electricity was 6, 228,665 kilowatt hours (an increase from 4,111,470 KWH in 2006—with most of the increase coming from the addition of Whitehorse Hall). These kilowatt hours must be generated somehow—sometimes in environmentally sustainable ways, sometimes not. Everett Community College also spends approximately \$2,400 per month or \$28,800 per year to send our garbage to landfills. “If EVCC Students, Faculty and Staff recycled 75% of the waste products produced at EVCC, our campus could keep up to 2,520 YARDS OF GARBAGE OUT OF OUT LANDFILLS,

AND SAVE UP TO \$2000.00 PER MONTH! [sic]" (It Pays to Recycle at EvCC). These costs, in particular, prompted one of the suggested student volunteer activities. As Timothy Egan (2006) points out, "Because living lighter can save money, [schools] can—as the old line about prosperous missionaries has it—do well while trying to do good" (p. 2).

A Green Week at Everett Community College and Beyond

To this end our Leadership Academy Team has planned out a week of activities to raise awareness of issues of sustainability at EvCC and in Snohomish County. We want to have an entire week of activities, events and speakers to highlight the importance of sustainability, to interrupt campus and community business as usual, and to allow opportunities to reach out into the surrounding community. What follows is a chart of planned activities:

Location	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
EvCC Campus	Sustainability Fair: *vendors *volunteer and advocacy organizations	Keynote Speaker: Ann Rappaport	Movie: Community-Planet Neighborhood Followed by Roundtable discussion	Speaker: Paul Roberts Author of <u>The End of Oil</u>	Movie: Deconstructing Supper
	Volunteer Sign-up for Campus Clean Up Day	Seminar with Ann Rappaport	Speaker: Jennifer Hayward	Campus Clean-Up Day	
Everett Public Library		Speaker: Ann Rappaport		Speaker: Paul Roberts	

Devoting an entire week to campus and community events signals our interest in changing how we do business. The events listed above reflect our sense of the need to offer a variety of events that will provide different levels of participation. The week kicks off with a Sustainability Fair hosted by EvCC that will bring together volunteer organizations, advocacy groups, and other groups interested in educating the populace about various themes associated with sustainability. The Team has made initial contact with several organizations (see list in Appendix A) informing them of our event and asking about their level of interest in participating. At the Fair, attendees will have the opportunity to sign up for a Campus Clean-Up Day scheduled for later in the week. The Clean-Up Day brings home to EvCC the responsibility each of us as a community member carries for maintaining a beautiful campus. Activities will include weeding, trash pick-up, and a Trash Sort in which trash cans are emptied and

sorted for recyclable materials. The amount of recyclable materials recovered will be reported out to the campus community via e-mail the following day. (The Trash Sort was suggested by Jennifer Hayward, the Sustainability Coordinator at Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, a campus that is one of the leaders in sustainability activities and efforts in the nation. Hayward is also a potential campus speaker). Ideally, the second day will also include a presentation by Dr. Ann Rappaport, a Tufts University professor and the author whose article started our conversation in the Leadership Academy on sustainability. Dr. Rappaport may also give a smaller seminar with a group of faculty, students, and community members who have read some of her additional works, later in the afternoon. This day's activities will culminate with an additional presentation by her at the Everett Public Library (and possibly at several Sno-Isle libraries the next day). The third day of the week will focus on a community viewing of the movie Community Planet Neighborhood, a film addressing novel techniques communities are employing to become more sustainable including "transforming a toxic waste threat into a revenue generating eco-enterprise . . . and experiments in sustainable technology where one industry's waste becomes another's resource" (Bullfrog Films). A roundtable discussion of the topics raised in the film will follow—as well as a visit by Hayward of Lane Community College. The fourth day of the week will include a presentation by award-winning Washington state journalist Paul Roberts, author of The End of Oil (a book about oil depletion and its consequences for the future of our society) and the forthcoming The End of Food (a book about how the energy crisis will affect food supplies in the world and also how our current food system simply is unsustainable). (Note: we have included email addresses for these potential speakers in Appendix B.) This fourth day will also include the campus and community Clean Up, activities involving students, faculty and staff who volunteered on Monday to engage in an hour's worth of effort. The week will end with another film—Deconstructing Supper: Is Your Food Safe?—about global food production and the politics and ethics of food. Community members will be invited to participate in a discussion following the movie about the ideas raised in the film. A panel of campus experts may be assembled to comment on global food production, genetically engineered food, and other topics relevant to the film. (See Appendices B, C and D for further contact information about speakers, films and contacted organizations.)

Budgets

These activities will require some campus funding. While we hope to share expenses for speakers with the participating community organizations, paying travel, housing, food and a small honoraria for speakers will probably run about 2,000 dollars. The films will also cost 120 dollars each (and would become part of the Library's permanent collection). So, in all probability, the College would need to allocate approximately \$2,400 dollars to fully fund the activities planned for this week—about the equivalent we pay each month to send our unsorted garbage to a landfill. The reality is this: Everett Community College, according to some community agencies, has a reputation for not picking up the tab for shared events—or at least not picking up its share of the tab. We fully believe that we could share expenses with Everett Public Library and the Sno-Isle libraries—as well as with any other public agency that might be interested in working with us—but we believe we ought to be willing to go ahead and shoulder the costs for this week, if necessary, on our own. As Sonja Steptoe suggests, these sustainability "programs and policies can give a school instant cache as a cutting-edge institution, which can be a competitive advantage in student recruiting. They also contribute to society's overall environmental literacy and can lead to important research breakthroughs" (2). An investment now will, we think, pay off in the future.

Conclusion

Our team suffered from some attrition during the course of this Academy. We nevertheless want to thank and acknowledge team members Dotty Bock and Judy Frost for their early contributions to our team. We also want to say that more planning and organizing will have to be done to make this Green Week a success. For example, we urge any future planning committee to make use of existing campus expertise in the form of faculty and staff knowledge. It would especially be important to find ways of infusing sustainability into the College curriculum, especially into specific classes, beyond the usual though helpful giving students extra credit for attending or participating in campus events. Also essential would be the active participation of and even leadership by our students. A recent newspaper article talks about how “while previous generations focused on recycling and cleaning up rivers, [today’s] students want to combat global warming by figuring out ways to reduce carbon emissions in their own lives, starting with their own colleges” (Rimer, 2008, p. 2). Our proposal, we think, offers our students a great opportunity to address sustainability issues in the world they are going to inherit. But now the focus and burden fall on the campus decisionmakers. We believe that our proposal could have a galvanizing impact on the EvCC campus—its students, faculty and staff—but without leadership from those who have the ability to allocate funding and oversee campus and community activities, our proposal will remain an interesting though lost opportunity to fundamentally alter our school and our surrounding community. Admittedly, at Everett Community College, we don’t have the need, funds or opportunity to build green dormitories—or engage in some of the truly impressive other large scale activities that exist at other college and university institutions. However, we do have the obligation to highlight the *community* part of our name, and in the spirit of sustainability, in our case, *small is beautiful*. Thus, with all due respect, we place this proposal in your hands.

References

Bullfrog Films. Community planet neighborhood. Retrieved from

<http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/atalog/pn3.html>

Egan, T. (2006, January 8). The greening of America’s campuses. *The New York Times*, p.

4A.20. Retrieved from ProQuest database.

Everett Community College Mission, Vision, and Strategic Initiatives. Retrieved from

<http://www.everettcc.edu/visitors/index.cfm?id=150>

Hattam, J. (2007, November/December). *Go big green*. Retrieved from

<http://sierraclub.org/utilities/printpage.asp?REF=/sierra/200711/coolsschools/index.asp>

Pollan, M. (2008, April 20). Why bother? *The New York Times*. Retrieved from

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/20/magazine/20wwln-lede-t.html?_r=5087&em=en=d.

Rappaport, A. (2008). Campus greening: behind the headlines. *Environment* 50(1), 7-16.

Rimer, S. (200, May 26). How green is the college? Time the showers. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/26/education/26green.html?ei=5087&em=&em=780d7f8>

Stephoe, S. (2007. August 10). Getting schools to think and act green. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/time/specials/2007/printout/o,29239,1651473>

Appendix A:

Places we have either sent a letter or emailed asking if they are interested in joining a Green Awareness Fair:

Waste Management
 Trader Joe's
 QFC Corporate Office
 Sno-Isle Natural Foods Co-Op
 WSU Snohomish County Master
 Puget Sound Energy
 PUD
 Cascade Natural Gas
 Everett Parks and Recreation
 Everett Farmers Market
 Community Transit
 Van Pool Services
 Everett Transit
 Ride Share
 Skagit Transit
 Skagit Transit/Van Pool
 Snohomish Farmers Market
 Edmonds Museum Summer Market
 Lake Stevens Farmers Market
 Mukilteo Farmers Market
 Sharing Wheels Community Bike Shop
 1000 Friends of Washington
 21 Acres Center for Local Food and Sustainable Living
 Adopt a Stream
 Cascade Land Conservancy
 Earth Corps
 Greater Seattle Climate Dialogues
 Institute for Consumer Responsibility
 Seattle Tilth Association
 Sierra Club
 Stillaguamish Tribe Natural Resource Department
 The Foundation for Sustainable Community
 The Nature Conservancy
 Transportation Choices Coalition

Appendix B: Names and Emails of Potential Speakers with Communication

1. Dr. Ann Rappaport, Tufts University

Hi Prof. Berger,

I'm very interested in talking with your group and giving a seminar! I'm going to be on sabbatical next spring so I won't have to work around classes, which is definitely a plus, but on the other hand I'm going to be doing research in Australia and Vietnam during some portion of the semester which could be problematic. Let's keep in touch as your plans evolve.

best wishes, Ann

Roger Berger wrote:

> Professor Rappaport: I'm an English Instructor at Everett Community College located in Everett, Washington, about 20 miles north of Seattle, and I'm also in a campus wide Leadership Academy that is addressing issues of sustainability. Part of our reading included an essay you published, "Campus Greening Behind the Headlines," Environment 50.1 (2008): 7-16, a text we found quite informative and compelling. At any rate, in this Leadership Academy, we have been divided into smaller groups, and each group has been asked to assemble a project for addressing sustainability issues on our campus. Our group is trying to put together a "green awareness" week to take place in Spring 2009, something that we hope would function on several levels: a green fair, volunteer campus work groups, environmentally themed movies, and speakers, among other things. As we found your essay so relevant and helpful, our group was wondering if you might be interested in coming out to our school to give a talk and possibly a 2-hour seminar for interested faculty, students and staff. We would, of course, pay for your travel, meals and housing, and I think we would be able to offer you a small honorarium. I want to make it clear that I cannot right now formally ask you to come out to our school, but I am just trying to ascertain your interest and willingness to come out here. I appreciate your response. Thank you.

>

> Roger Berger, English Instructor

>

>

>

2. Jennifer Hayward, Lane Community College

Sure. Let me know when you decide and we can work out the details.

>>> "Roger Berger" <rberger@everettcc.edu> 5/6/2008 11:23 AM >>>
Thank you so much for replying. Actually, we may be interested in inviting you (or someone else from your school) to come up here to talk about how you go about organizing these events, etc. Would anyone be interested in doing something like this? Of course, we could pay travel, housing, food expenses--maybe even a small honorarium.

>>> "Jennifer Hayward" <haywardj@lanecc.edu> 5/6/2008 9:53 AM >>>
Hi Roger,

Sorry it is taking me a few weeks to get back to you. That is great that you all are working on sustainability projects. Attached is the flyer that we used to promote the Global Action Movie Day that took place here in January. The flyer shows the movies shown. A few other events that we have done include:

- 1) For Focus the Nation (Jan 31, 2008), we organized 4 faculty and me to do brief (5-10 minute) presentations on sustainability from their discipline. We had religion, economics, climate science, health, and campus sustainability.
- 2) Usually during Earth Week, we do a trash sort, where we take all of the garbage from one day and sort through as much as you can recording what you've sorted into different categories like recyclable paper, recyclable glass, paper cups, etc.
- 3) We've also done things like a sustainable vendor fair and "Green Bag" lunches. The green bag lunches are where we have a free lunch time seminar on a sustainability topic. Popular ones have been biodiesel and composting. It helps to have raffle prizes and some snacks and to promote things really heavily.

Some tips:

-Try getting students involved by getting lots of faculty to offer

extra credit for them if they attend an event and write a short paper on what they learned.

- Get students involved by allowing them to volunteer for events to fulfill service learning hours.
- Promote, promote, promote! to the point where you almost feel you're being obnoxious about it.

Good luck. Feel free to let me know if you have any more questions.

Jennifer

Jennifer Hayward
Sustainability Coordinator
Lane Community College
4000 E. 30th Ave.
Eugene, OR 97405
PHONE: (541) 463-5594
FAX: (541) 463-4199
E-MAIL: haywardj@lanecc.edu
WEBSITE: <http://www.lanecc.edu/sustainability>

>>> "Roger Berger" <rberger@everettcc.edu> 4/4/2008 11:55 AM >>>
My name is Roger Berger, and I'm an English instructor at Everett Community College in Everett, Washington. I'm in our campus Leadership Academy, and I've been assigned to a group that is investigating some possible sustainability projects at our school. Your institution seems to offer a model of what kinds of things can be done. In particular, we're interested in putting together a sustainability week to occur next year (around Earth Day). Any advice that you have about these kinds of projects would be invaluable. In particular, I noticed on your web site that you offered a series of environmentally-themed movies. Could you send me the names of some of these films--or give me a contact whom I could email about them?

!SIG:4820a25a244431153042039!

3. Paul Roberts, award-winning Washington state author

Hi, Roger (if I may)

Thanks for the inquiry. Sounds like an interesting event. I've got new book out this month on the food industry, which might also apply. Spring of next year might be possible for me, but I'm going to be super busy so we'd need to limit it to a single day--preferably, an afternoon--so I could drive in that morning and get home that evening. Sorry to be so persnickety, but life has goeen pretty jammed lately.

Speaking of, I'm going to be gone for most of this week, but perhaps we could touch base next week.

Regards,

Paul Roberts
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
509-548-0993 (office)
509-679-2383 (cell)
proberts@nwi.net
www.the-end-of-oil.com
http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2008/05/19/080519crat_atlarge_wilson

----- Original Message -----

From: Roger Berger
To: proberts@nwi.net
Sent: Monday, May 12, 2008 11:05 AM
Subject: Inquiry

Dear Mr. Roberts: I'm an English Instructor at Everett Community College located in Everett, Washington, about 20 miles north of Seattle, and I'm also in a campus wide Leadership Academy that is addressing issues of sustainability. Part of our reading included sections of your book, The End of Oil, which we found quite informative and compelling. At any rate, in this Leadership Academy, we have been divided into

smaller groups, and each group has been asked to assemble a project for addressing sustainability issues on our campus. Our group is trying to put together a "green awareness" week to take place in Spring 2009, something that we hope would function on several levels: a green fair, volunteer campus work groups, environmentally themed movies, and speakers, among other things. As we found your book so relevant and helpful, our group was wondering if you might be interested in coming out to our school to give a talk and possibly a 2-hour seminar for interested faculty, students and staff. It's also possible that we could arrange programs in area libraries, including the Everett Public Library and the Sno-Isle library system, so you would be able to reach a very large audience--both here at our school and in the large, surrounding community. We would, of course, pay for your travel, meals and housing, and I think we would be able to offer you a small honorarium. I want to make it clear that I cannot right now formally ask you to come out to our school, but I am just trying to ascertain your interest and willingness to come out here. I appreciate your response. Thank you.

>

> Roger Berger, English Instructor

Appendix C: Contact Information for Films

Bullfrog Films <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/catalog/>

Appendix D: Examples of Community Letters and Emails of Support, Interest

See attached communication.