

Executive Summary Sustainability Audit 2011

Scope:

The operational audit includes a review of the Creighton University Sustainability Committee evaluating its accomplishments. It includes a review and assessment of the on-going initiatives and activities. These areas include land, water, energy, food, material, education, promotion and social justice. The audit reviewed the various areas for activity and general effectiveness. The purpose was not to rate the various activities in a pass/fail method, but to provide a general broad picture of how the Council performs both negatively and positively.

The audit was conducted by Ken Reed-Bouley and Joe Zaborowski. The audit focused on the period 2007 to the present.

Land – There have been positive accomplishments over the years on campus. The most impressive endeavors have been the landscaping efforts of the University. Involvement in Arbor Day and Earth Day has occurred on a regular basis. Most notable achievements include Tree Campus USA designation, receiving a national award from Professional Grounds Management Society and obtaining \$10,000 worth of trees through the Arbor Day Foundation and Toyota through Tree Campus USA. The reception of the award led to students and other volunteers planting trees along Wareham Parkway. The completion of the greenhouse gas inventory by the Brendel Group was the capstone achievement in this area.

Water – Other than a few presentations nothing significant to report has occurred in this area. The restoration of the on campus pond is the only real landed activity to report. More emphasis needs to be placed on this going forward.

Energy – The activity in this arena are commendable. Almost all activity produced a real impact on the environment. The solar panel and wind turbine initiative not only contributed positively to the university's energy usage but allowed for a positive learning experience as well. Other items of note include creation of the Zip Car program, participation in the Metro RideShare program, introduction of a long term goal of all of Facilities' fleet vehicles be powered by electricity when possible, a consistent effort to make the campus bike friendly and a multitude of other initiatives.

Food – Although the actually initiatives are few in number the real impact is quite positive. The efforts with the local Gifford Park Association in the creation of a closed loop garden and the recent inauguration of a community garden on 18th St. have had impact beyond the campus community. Engaging Sodexo and their sustainable food initiatives promises to further strengthen this category.

Material – The majority of the enterprises center on recycling initiatives. These include single stream recycling, recycling batteries and cell phones, RecycleMania, Habitat ReStore promotion and series of other undertakings. Purchasing has also added sustainable language to its policy and has benchmarked major suppliers on their green initiatives. The next step for this area would be to move past recycle and emphasize reuse and reductions going forward.

Education – As an educational institution, Creighton has presented itself well from an educational perspective. Numerous workshops and forums have taken place. Those of substantial note would be the Conversations Conference on Nebraska Environment and Sustainability in the fall of 2010 and the forum to develop the Climate Action Plan on April 1st. Many of the educational programs went beyond the campus boundaries and involved the local community. This fit well in the overall Creighton mission. The next step would be taking the educational experience and tuning into action. The creation of a new Energy Technology Major is a major step at the university.

Promotion – The Sustainability Committee has done an outstanding promoting the idea of sustainability on campus and in the greater community. Items of note include creation and leadership of Midlands Educational Sustainability Forum, receiving a high score from “The College Sustainability Report Card”, being the only school in Nebraska chosen to be in The Princeton Review's Guide to 268 Green Colleges and numerous articles in local publications highlighting the many sustainable efforts taking place at Creighton.

Social Justice – The importance of the social justice aspect of sustainability should not be missed. The Creighton Center for Service and Justice has a clear understanding this and has incorporated this into their mission. This is verified by the creation of sustainability service trips and their commitment to “fair trade.” The aspect of social justice seems to be in the background of the areas previously commented on. There is an opportunity for huge gains here.

Recommendations:

The Sustainability Council is positioned to enter into a new level of commitment and action on campus. There are some gaps that need to be analyzed. The next step should to do a SWOT analysis to have a firm understanding of where the Council perceives themselves to be on the sustainability continuum. From that member analysis priorities can be set and a more focused strategy developed.