

HEASC Sustainability Workshop for ACUHO-I Summary

April 24, 2007 ♦ Columbus, OH

The following is a summary of the HEASC Sustainability Workshop that was held for the ACUHO-I staff on April 24, 2007. This summary includes the highlights, important ideas and action items that came out of the workshop.

I. Principles of Sustainability and How They Apply to Your Organization

Tony Cortese gave a presentation on the principles of sustainability. A PowerPoint version of the presentation can be found on the HEASC website at:

http://www.heasc.net/resources/ppt/HEASC%2011-07_V2-Cortese.ppt

(A text version of this presentation will be sent out soon.)

Major Points:

- ☑ In Nature, there is no such thing as waste – everything is recycled
- ☑ Nothing “goes away”. For example, when you drive the gas that is burned is converted into Carbon Dioxide which goes into the atmosphere, contributing to global climate change.
- ☑ We need to make the invisible, visible – for example, the CO₂ which is emitted from burning fossil fuels, or the energy that was used to transport food from across the county to your local supermarket.
- ☑ The American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment (ACUPCC): presidents committing to go carbon neutral on their campuses. This is an opportunity for higher education associations to help them reach this goal.
- ☑ Actions on campus (and in communities) that are reducing carbon output:
 - Reduction in the use of energy through building design, alternative energy resources, public transportation, redesigning communities to become less dependent on driving.
 - Use of “carbon offsets” to lessen impact of travel (see comprehensive report on offsets at: <http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org/ConsumersGuidetoCarbonOffsets.pdf>)
 - Example: Johns Hopkins University – paying for buses in Baltimore to be converted to bio-diesel.
- ☑ Another area where we can be more sustainable: purchasing. For example, the real cost of bottled water is 1000 times greater than that of tap water. The oil that was used to produce a 1-liter bottle would fill about half of it.
- ☑ With the population increasing we have to find a way to live more sustainably—will be at 9 billion people by 2050.
- ☑ We can expect a 3 – 10 degree increase in temperatures if we don’t do anything. Effects include:
 - Sea level rise (mostly due to rising water temperatures)
 - Increased wildfires
 - Decreased water supply, especially in the west where much of it comes from snow melt.
 - Lack of water for agriculture

- ☑ All glaciers are receding and at a much faster rate than was expected. If Greenland glaciers melt the sea levels will increase enormously by mid-century.
- ☑ Average temperatures are on an average 1.5 degrees higher, but this isn't uniform. Temperatures in Alaska have gone up 7 degrees, which is resulting in loss of ice. Less ice means that there's less reflection of the sun back into the atmosphere—therefore, heat is absorbed by water bodies, increasing ocean temperatures.
- ☑ Book recommendation on the true cost of food – The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan.
- ☑ The Four System Conditions for Sustainability are:
 - In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing:*
 1. Concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust (e.g., heavy metals)
 2. Concentrations of substances produced by society (e.g., DDT, PCBs)
 3. Degradation by physical means (sprawl, destruction of natural space, water pollution)
 - and in that society...*
 4. Human needs are met worldwide (in a sustainable way so that destruction is not necessary for survival)
- ☑ Mined substances - heavy metals (mercury, cadmium, lead) are dangerous to the health of living beings. We evolved as a species when these were sequestered in the earth.
- ☑ We don't always know the answers when examining a product or service using these principles, but we can ask the questions.
- ☑ Make the Invisible VISIBLE
- ☑ Your role as a Higher Education Association is to model sustainability for your members and constituents.
- ☑ Sustainability Initiatives:
 - Nike – no longer using PVCs in their shoes
 - Interface Carpeting (see <http://www.ifsia.com/>) - striving to have net zero impact by 2020.
- ☑ Note about green building: it is now possible to build a green building at the same cost as a conventional building. Added benefits:
 - Savings in energy costs
 - Enhanced productivity of employees, e.g., Herman Miller's building—see: <http://www.hermanmiller.com/CDA/SSA/Category/0,1564,a10-c608,00.html> also see US Green Building Council at <http://www.usgbc.org/>
- ☑ Biggest impacts for ACUHO-I:
 - Meetings/Conferences
 - Publications
- ☑ Conference Idea: put meeting agendas on back of nametags to reduce waste. Be sure to let people know what you have done and why – use the opportunity to educate!

II. "Vanity Fair" Exercise

Participants broke into three functional groups: publications and communications, meetings/events and training, and administration.

Each group was asked to apply the principles of sustainability to the Green Issue of Vanity Fair magazine, analyzing its:

- Production and physical attributes
- Content (i.e., articles and ads)
- Distribution
- End-of-Life

Observations:

- ☑ Materials – paper, ink and glue. Looked for mention of whether recycled paper was used or soy inks. No mention so we assume that the materials weren't green.
- ☑ Size of the magazine – very large at 312 pages plus covers
- ☑ Use of heavily coated-paper
- ☑ Irony in the type of products being advertised (e.g., perfume, jewelry)
- ☑ Publishing this one issue looks at sustainability as something extra rather than something that should be considered throughout the year in all its publications.

III. Group Breakout: Brainstorm how can you apply the principles of sustainability to your own work?

Participants, working in the same three functional groups as above, examined all the ways that they could make their own products, actions, programs, operations and publications more sustainable. Each group created a "laundry list", in no particular order to share with the rest of workshop participants.

Meetings/Events, Conferences and Education Group:

- Make sure materials are recycled
- Get condiments in bulk containers
- Ask hotels for sustainable food sources
- If creating conference bags, make sure that they are multi-purpose (e.g., grocery bags) and advertise their reusability/sustainability on the bags. Also encourage their reuse at future conferences.
- Ask for sustainable products, materials, etc. as part of contract negotiations with conf halls and hotels
- Don't distribute bottled water – have water bottle instead
- Create standard contract for concessions (e.g., water and food)
- Send all uneaten food to local shelters
- Make conference gifts sustainable (e.g., fruit)
- Provide recycling containers – everywhere!
- Sustainable table decorations – a tree that will be planted
- Move away from hand-outs—make materials available online
- Provide more distance learning – Webinars and Social Networking
- Establish a baseline footprint for events so assessments can be made in the future
- Provide clean transportation at the event (e.g., biodiesel)
- Assign someone to examine each conference for sustainability issues (looking for opportunities where ACUHO-I can offer a more sustainable conference or meeting)
- ACUHO-I Board Member Education and Initiatives:

- Provide a high-level training program for board
- Create a sustainability committee at ACUHO-I; possibly create a board position
- Create a webinar on sustainability
- Foundation program where it provides funds for a sustainability project
- Board should set sustainability goals for the whole organization
- Make sure sustainability is part of a board goal
- Incorporate offset costs into price of conference admission fees
- If offsets are optional, give participants a sticker that they can put on their badges stating that they are carbon neutral.
- Find ways to incorporate sustainability into training programs – use as much peer to peer learning as much as possible

Operations/Administration

- Go for the low-hanging fruit first
- Go to refillable pens
- Get a water-filtering machine instead of bringing in bottled water
- Possibly purchase an energy efficient (Energy Star) refrigerator with filtered water
- Have reusable cups, plates, silverware in the kitchen
- Buy recycled paper with post-consumer content (for internal use and for publications)
- Eventually get rid of membership cards – put membership online
- Change the copier to print 2-sided as a default
- Change lighting to compact florescent or low-mercury T8's (see <http://www.brite-lite.com/Products/T8.htm>)
- Set temperature controls in office to 72 degrees or higher in summer.
- Use safe, environmentally-friendly cleaning products
- Be vigilant about recycling paper and cardboard
- Turn off lights at end of day
- Encourage car-pooling
- When working with vendors—ask questions!
- When working with hotels—put sustainable requirements into the RFP
- Include sustainability as a topic at the weekly staff meeting
- Add a regular column on sustainability in ACUHO-I's "Talking Stick" magazine
- Have board consider sustainability as a goal
- Create a "sustainability" area on the website
- Turn computers off nightly
- Stress preferred communications method- email or use postcards instead of a mailing that requires more paper
- Always ask the question—do we really need it?
- Re green meetings/conferences—ask CHEMA and WHES to agree on a set of criterion
 - This could be a product of the "Sustainable Practices" committee
- Calculate carbon footprint for ACUHO-I's office.
See http://www.safeclimate.net/calculator/biz_calc_form1.php
- Need to educate everyone in sustainability so that they understand how to apply the lens of sustainability.
- Set goal for ACUHO-I to become climate neutral (set a timeframe)

Publications/Communications

- Look into using recycled paper with post consumer content for publications, preferably chlorine-free (demand has brought the cost down – you can get 30% post-consumer content at a reasonable price)
- Investigate use of eco-friendly inks
- Reduce size of publications
- Reduce waste – only order what we really need

- Publish supplemental material on the website instead of printing it.
- Send out smaller mailings and point to web for additional info
- Publish more articles on sustainability in Talking Stick
 - E.g., 2-way communications with campuses...let us know what your doing in terms of sustainability (for future articles)
- Add sustainability resources on our website for members
- Highlight members' achievements
- Examples of those who are doing great work:
 - Arizona State
 - South Carolina (Columbia)
 - Colorado (Boulder)
 - Oberlin

Keep in mind when looking at financial aspects of sustainability:

- Price does not equal cost
- Be sure to consider lifecycle costs vs. short-term costs
- Consider expense vs. Investment

IV. HEASC Overview

Tony and Mary gave an overview of HEASC (presentation will be posted on HEASC website)

- Purpose of HEASC is to get HEAs working together on sustainability—collaborate on projects and initiatives, educational efforts and programs, financial projects (e.g., financing sustainability)
- NACUBO may fund a Financing Sustainability project which will be for all HEASC members
- Tony is working to increase membership in HEASC
- Kent Blumenthal has created a joint statement of HEASC goals that will be signed by EDs of all HEASC member organizations. He will be circulating this soon. It will act as a document that can be given to board members to clarify the goals of HEASC.
- AASHE membership is included with your HEASC membership. Be sure to visit the AASHE website for numerous resources: www.aashe.org
- HEASC will only be successful if you participate.
- Need help? Contact us! We can help you find resources and put you in touch with others

V. Setting Goals and Priorities (notes from Josh Goldman)

The next exercise was for the three groups to look at their respective lists and agree on the top three things that they felt that they could take in the near future.

Operations Team

1. Discussion with building owners on recycling for entire building, safe cleaning supplies, and review of lighting systems.
2. Evaluate appliances for energy efficiency and evaluate our current water system
3. Add a sustainable message to our weekly announcements

Comments/Ideas

Review of purchasing practices and office orders

Communications Team

1. Research recycled paper for publications and confirm our use of sustainable inks
2. The missing link: communicate our sustainable practices
3. Evaluate use of print vs. electronic communication

Comments/Ideas

- Communication is to sustainability what location is to real estate
- Communicate, Communicate, Communicate it
 - This is what you are doing and this is why.

Education Team

1. Highlight presidents climate commitment. Assist them in being prepared to step up and contribute to the VP's agenda and the presidents/ chancellor's agenda. How to become climate neutral, etc.
2. Create the demand within the profession for sustainable products
 - ACUHO-I's 21st Century Project showcase
 - Other?
3. Product on how sustainability works from a business model, business practices. Our members cut to this in about 8 minutes in any conversation.
-Altruism will get us there, but financial incentive will get us there tomorrow.

Other comments ideas

- More sustainable, intentional ways to connect. Not always F2F.
- Using keynote time to communicate issues, weaving throughout conference.
- Always communicating the sustainable successes and things we do and our members do.
- Promote/create sustainable primer
- Carry books on sustainability in bookstore
- Mid-course correction?

Meetings & Events Team

1. Have recycling options at our events
 - a. Containers and give-aways (make sure they are recyclable)
 - b. Communicate it
2. Have person wear sustainability hat at ACE and conference series make notes for improvements, ideas for future years
3. Footprint ACE after-fact with generally accepted calculators to benchmark our current reality and implement reduction plan.