

Recommended Changes to the Campus Environmental Policy Committee Submitted by the Strategic Planning Committee and Revised by the Executive Council

Background:

During the past several years at Berea College various committees, administrative officers, and student groups have been involved in a variety of environmental and sustainability issues. Although the CEPC currently is charged with “monitoring policies and procedures relating to the campus physical environment,” *there is no one office or group nor any systematic policies and procedures to address the wide range of environmental issues and concerns that continue to present themselves at Berea.* Based on the fact (1) that practical environmental issues continually present themselves on our campus that we must address; (2) that curricular initiatives are underway that provide new opportunities for linking theory and practice; and (3) that the CEPC currently is neither constituted nor appropriately charged to take on the task of connecting environmental policies, goals, and practices, this past fall the Strategic Planning Committee convened a Subcommittee on Sustainable Practice that was charged with the task of exploring these issues and providing recommendations for the Strategic Planning Committee’s consideration. Specifically, the Subcommittee on Sustainable Practice was tasked with (a) identifying in a systematic way the *applied areas and issues* that Berea College should address as it seeks to establish good ecological and sustainable practices; (b) formulating a new charge for the CEPC whose scope and membership would be able to address the ongoing needs and areas identified by the Subcommittee; (c) recommending positions, offices, and people who would be best suited over time to membership on such a newly defined CEPC; and (d) recommending an appropriate way for the activities of the CEPC to be connected to the ongoing SENS program and other academic areas/programs where the study of environmental issues might be desirable. The Subcommittee on Sustainable Practice presented its recommendations to the Strategic Planning Committee January 3, 2000.

Proposal

After consideration of the Subcommittee’s recommendations and conversations with Subcommittee members regarding their recommendations, the Strategic Planning Committee decided to narrow the scope of the recommendations and submit the revised recommendations to the faculty for consideration (a brief description of the Strategic Planning Committee’s changes is included in the rationale section). The current charge is listed below followed by the Strategic Planning Committee’s proposed changes. Under this proposal, the current CEPC would disband at the end of this academic year, and the reconfigured CEPC would begin its work at the beginning of the next academic year.

The CEPC’s current charge is listed as follows:

The CEPC monitors policies and procedures relating to the campus physical environment and makes recommendations on policy to the General Affairs Council. Suggestions related to operational decisions are made to the appropriate vice president. In performing this task, the committee keeps abreast of environmental safety issues (such as radon gas, second-hand smoke, exhaust emissions, and hazardous materials) and security arrangements (including appropriate lighting, building location and use, and patrolling/monitoring of buildings and grounds). It also monitors building use, construction, replacement, and renovation, and makes recommendations on architectural style and design, quality of workmanship, color, equitable space allocation and appropriate landscaping.

The Committee is composed of two members elected from the General Faculty, one member of the General Affairs Council, the Facilities Management Director, a designated member of the Student Life Staff, and two students. The committee should call on other members of the campus community for necessary expertise not represented on the Committee itself.
[See Berea College Faculty Manual (p. 22)].

The Strategic Planning Committee recommends that the following charge replace the current CEPC charge:

The Campus Environmental Policy Committee (CEPC) coordinates the monitoring and promotes the progress toward ecological sustainability of Berea College’s physical campus and environmental practices. It will work with other relevant to promote best ecological practices.

The responsibilities of the CEPC include:

- Recommending practices and/or policies or adjustments to existing practices and/or policies that promote the progress of Berea College toward ecological sustainability.
- Developing a suite of indicators of sustainability for Berea College in the areas of energy, materials, water, ecological capital, and facilities, and, where linkages to the physical campus and environmental practices occur, in the areas of social capital and economics.
- Prioritizing goals and proposing targets for each indicator or set of indicators, and criteria for evaluating the College's progress toward sustainability in terms of the full suite of indicators.
- Overseeing the regular measurement of the indicators and overseeing the preparation, at least bi-annually, of a summative report. The report will describe the status and trends of the indicators and, based on the evaluation criteria, assess the College's progress toward sustainability.
- Periodically reviewing the indicators to assess their usefulness and appropriateness.
- Performing other work as needed when relevant to its overall charge to promote best ecological practices on campus.

The Committee is expected to determine the most appropriate and efficient process for collecting and synthesizing indicator measurements, and will work with various groups within the College to accomplish these goals. The CEPC is composed of two elected members of the Teaching and General Faculty, the Director of the Sustainability and Environmental Studies Program, the Vice President for Business and Administration, the Compton Chair in Ecological Design, the Director of Facilities Management, and two students designated by members of the Committee. The committee should call on other members of the campus community for necessary expertise not represented on the Committee itself. To encourage continuity, one of the faculty members elected at the startup of the reconfigured CEPC (i.e., in the fall of 2000) will serve a two-year term, and the other elected faculty member will serve a three-year term. Once these initial membership terms expire, all subsequent members who are elected will serve three-year terms.

Rationale

The sustainability areas identified (e.g., water, energy, and materials) and the criteria for developing indicators of sustainability were derived from the Subcommittee on Sustainable Practice's review of environmental assessments and indicators developed by other academic institutions and communities of various sizes. Using the sustainability areas and associated indicators as a framework to monitor sustainability will provide continuity to the CEPC's mission even as the specific membership of the committee changes through time. The use of measurable indicators will allow the College to track its progress toward sustainability in an objective manner.

The present CEPC was established before current campus conversations on the environment and the creation of the SENS program; thus, there is currently no formal linkage between them. Establishing a link between the CEPC and the SENS Program will provide mutual benefits including experiential learning opportunities for students and research support in monitoring, evaluating, and interpreting indicators. The Subcommittee on Sustainable Practice deemed inclusion of the SENS Director and the holder of the Compton Chair in Ecological Design as members of the CEPC as an effective and adequate means of establishing a working relationship between the CEPC and the SENS Program. Further links could be made by selecting students who are working toward a SENS minor to fill the student membership component. The designation of the Vice President for Business and Administration and the Director of Facilities Management as members provides a necessary link between the CEPC and the physical management and operations of the College. Also, the two elected members provide representation for the faculties at large and a connection to the faculty governance system.

While the Strategic Planning Committee is recommending many of the Subcommittee on Sustainable Practice's proposed recommendations as drafted, the Strategic Planning Committee narrowed the Subcommittee on Sustainable Practice's proposed charge by limiting the reference to social capital and economic indicators. Since other groups are currently charged with coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating these areas, the SPC felt it would be confusing and inappropriate to include them in the CEPC charge.

Timing of the Proposal

The recommendations should be implemented by the start of the upcoming academic year (fall 2000).