

Cornell Sustainable Campus Initiative

Spring 2005 Final Report Overview

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The 2004-2005 academic year has been a very productive time for campus sustainability at Cornell. There have been many highlights, including President Lehman's announcement of sustainability as one of three critical challenges Cornell will address, the new Sustainable Campus Website (www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu), a database of over 1,000 key stakeholders, Provost Martin's Sustainability Task Force, Campus Sustainability Month at Cornell (April 2005), and most recently, the certification of Alice Cook House as the first LEED™ green residence hall in New York State. Though classes are over, the momentum for a sustainable campus continues. We have much to celebrate, but there is still plenty of work to be done.

This overview describes three reports from the Cornell Sustainable Campus Initiative:

- 1. Campus Sustainability in Higher Education**
- 2. The State of Sustainability at Cornell**
- 3. Campus Sustainability Summit Synthesis**

These are briefly described below. For copies of these reports, please contact Alex Hollinger, the new Sustainable Campus Web Intern (anh24@cornell.edu) in the Environmental Compliance Office, or visit: www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/org-policy-sustainable-campus-initiative.htm

1. Campus Sustainability in Higher Education:

A survey of 28 leading institutions with recommendations for next steps at Cornell

Garrett W. Meigs, Campus Sustainability Intern

An analysis of what other institutions have achieved regarding campus sustainability

This report summarizes a survey of campus sustainability progress at 28 peer institutions. The survey was conducted during the Summer of 2004 with three goals: 1) compare environmental sustainability programs; 2) recommend improvements at Cornell; 3) and establish connections between active individuals and institutions.

Results are presented in quantitative, qualitative, and case study formats. Campus sustainability progress at peer institutions is impressive, and there is a very active network of sustainability professionals. Many schools are clearly demonstrating their commitment to sustainability goals, with public policies, full-time staff, high level councils, substantial funding, and various best management practices. The case study institutions, Colorado University at Boulder, Duke University, Harvard University, University of Michigan, and University of Vermont, have emerged as strong leaders in the field, with very effective campus sustainability programs.

Cornell University has achieved many campus sustainability milestones and has implemented many of the common best practices. In order to emerge as a unique leader, however, Cornell should adopt more of the most innovative and serious commitments, particularly in terms of permanent staffing for sustainability.

2. The State of Sustainability at Cornell:

Current status and recommendations to meet the global challenge

Dean R. Koyanagi, Masters Candidate in Environmental Education

An overview of past and current campus sustainability efforts at Cornell

This report presents an overview of current progress of campus sustainability efforts at Cornell University and recommends next steps for sustainability on and off campus. There are many areas in which Cornell, as a prominent institution of higher education, can make significant and lasting contributions toward the goals of sustainability.

In the report, four scales of sustainability efforts are examined: education and curriculum, campus operations and culture, community and regional integration, and transnational leadership. Each section describes past and current efforts and includes a prioritized list of recommendations. In addition to the specific recommendations within each section, three overarching recommendations are included in the conclusion. These are 1) Full-time staff for campus sustainability, 2) Increased support of interdisciplinary collaboration around sustainability, and 3) Full engagement of the Cornell community around sustainability.

3. Campus Sustainability Summit Synthesis:

Stakeholder recommendations for a sustainable Cornell

Garrett W. Meigs, Campus Sustainability Intern

Robinne L. Gray, Masters Candidate in City and Regional Planning

Alex N. Hollinger, Sustainable Campus Web Intern

A snapshot of the collective expertise and enthusiasm of the Cornell community, focused on campus sustainability

This report summarizes discussion and recommendations of the Spring 2005 Campus Sustainability Summits. The April and May events brought together over 100 faculty, students, staff, and community members for discussion and input to the Cornell Sustainable Campus Initiative. Professional facilitators at the first summit used the “World Café” format to define campus sustainability at Cornell and brainstorm next steps. The second summit featured “Open Space” discussions regarding eight distinct focus areas: Education and awareness, Cornell’s leadership role, Structures of collaboration and coordination, Communication, Funding, Indicators, Campus Life, and Research.

The report presents the main ideas and recommendations from each focus area, and recommends five overall strategies for a sustainable Cornell campus: 1) full-time coordinating staff; 2) an institutional definition and policy commitment; 3) a formal structure of collaboration; 4) sustainability as a fundraising priority; 5) a required sustainability literacy program.

These recommendations, distilled from hours of discussion between over 100 stakeholders, provide a very specific blueprint of steps Cornell can take to advance its Sustainable Campus Initiative. Some of the action steps are tasks that every Cornellian can accomplish in daily life, while others can only be achieved by bold leadership from the Central Administration. Building on the momentum of these summits and other recent progress, the Fall 2005 Semester should be a very exciting time for sustainability at Cornell.