



UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT & THE PROVOST:

Regarding: Environmental and Sustainability Issues

March 10, 2009

Dear President Harrison and Provost Pasquerella:

The Faculty Senate Environment and Sustainability Committee, made up of faculty, staff, and students, is concerned with the environmental and sustainability issues of our campus. This letter expresses our desire to work with you on the vision for the University as it is currently formulated in the new Strategic Plan.

We urge our entire community to recognize that as an institution of higher learning, we have the responsibility to educate our students, faculty, and staff into becoming citizens of the Earth, acting as stewards to protect her richness and beauty and enable sustainability. Being aware of the financial, spatial, and logistic limitations of the University, it is important to make the shift from consumerism to stewardship despite our limited resources.

With this in mind we recommend first focusing on consumerism-oriented and unsustainable *procedures* and *policies* while encouraging the development of sustainable and respectful cultural *attitudes* and *behaviors* among students, staff, and faculty. In addition to creating a more sustainable campus community, many of these changes can actually save money and resources.

We recommend that changes shall embody both education in terms of classroom offerings, and policies and practices applied in daily operation of the University. Thus, in agreement with the sub-divisions of the Strategic Plan of the University, we offer some suggestions below.

Academic

1. Building on the existing Minor in Environmental Studies and the Contract Major possibilities, develop an interdisciplinary environmental program through regular courses and independent studies, while also encouraging all disciplines and schools to engage their students in sustainable principles. This can promote a culture allowing our students to succeed in a world of diminished resources (food, water, energy, land, etc.) and escalating strife.
2. Use the above program and campus sustainability initiatives as a recruitment tool.
3. Sponsor sustainability grants for faculty and staff as well as for student contests.
4. Offer greening and sustainability courses in Summer Place.

5. Encourage the broader community (local magnet schools, Watkinson) to participate in the above programs.
6. Use campus greening projects as educational opportunities for our students (i.e., encourage students in all programs to change *their* campus by developing and implementing projects).
7. Provide our students with the tools to actively participate in the greening of their campus.

Business

1. Work with campus vendors, suppliers and purchasing to emphasize campus greening in a meaningful and relevant way.
2. Emphasize programs already in place and use these as a recruiting tool. Many environmental and sustainable activities are already happening on campus. A concerted effort should take place to advertise this to the campus community and beyond.
3. Emphasize work being done on campus with locally grown, sustainably harvested, and organic food products while also increasing our commitment to local, sustainable food. Educate our students about healthy cooking and eating practices, encourage the use of recyclable and biodegradable food packaging, and establish more vegetarian options, working closely with students and faculty in menu development.
4. Switch to green electricity, encourage grants for alternative energy usage such as solar panels.
5. Encourage the use of bio diesel for University vehicles and/or move toward converting University

- of Hartford utility vehicles to propane gas or hydrogen.
6. Support student/faculty/staff initiatives that recognize and combat an overt 'consumer lifestyle' and instead encourage more sustainable ones (e.g., recycling efforts, redistribution of furniture, dorm-damage prevention etc.).

Space

1. Take resource efficiency, occupant health, and the benefits of natural and sustainable materials into account when developing interior spaces.
2. Develop natural-surface bike paths, running/exercise trails and support/reward no-car on campus attitudes.
3. Recognize and advertise work being done on campus to manage open spaces without pesticides or chemical fertilizers. Encourage a chemical-free environment and low-maintenance native species. Allocate campus 'wild spaces' with native habitats, clearly delineating such spots as Eco-preserves to be visited during campus tours.
4. Budget green technologies for new buildings and constructions, and work to retrofit existing buildings to be more efficient and healthier working and living environments.
5. Develop a model green dorm to demonstrate sustainable practices at all cost levels to students (including advanced recycling practices, bike racks, outside laundry-drying lines, efficient appliances, etc.).

In order to evaluate the feasibility and to execute the measures that work best on this campus, we feel that the University should create an administrative position of a ‘sustainability coordinator’ to work with faculty, staff, the Environmental Committees of the Faculty Senate and the Student Government, as well as the Administration on specific areas of the greening effort. Specifically, such coordinator should work on a plan to implement short , medium, and long term goals into the strategic plan of the University and to *actively* publicize all campus greening efforts within the local community, as well as nationally and internationally. We should also work to enable our students whenever feasible to use the elements of campus greening as opportunities for engaged and active learning.

We sincerely believe that the “greening” of our lifestyle as a species is an obligation for humanity that has to be initiated by those who claim educational, intellectual, and moral leadership (i.e., the Academe). In addition, the fulfillment and promotion of environmental goals helps us fulfill our obligation to our local community and to the wider society as *A Private University with a Public Purpose*. While greening is a must from the standpoint of solid science it may be viewed by some as an assault on the *status quo*. We encourage the University of Hartford to recognize the absurdity of such a view, and instead join this burgeoning movement towards stewardship of the Earth.

Thank you for your support and leadership,

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