

CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION
FACULTY ASSOCIATES MEETING MINUTES

TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2005

3:00-5:00 PM

FLORIDA GULF COAST UNIVERSITY, LIBRARY 148

Faculty in attendance:

Rebecca Austin, Sharon Bevins, Tom Bevins, Lien Bragg, Joe Cudjoe, Win Everham, Peg Gray-Vickery, Bill Hammond, Ingrid Martinez-Rico, Megan Mcshane, Carol Newcomb-Jones, Morgan Paine, Donna Price-Henry, Maria Roca, Neil Wilkinson, Bonnie Yegidis

Staff in attendance:

Peter Blaze Corcoran, Director
Jim Wohlpart, Associate Director

Donna Roberts, Graduate Assistant
Graham Bearden, Student Assistant
Brandon Hollingshead, Student Assistant

I. Opening remarks

Director Peter Blaze Corcoran opened the meeting with a welcome and read excerpts from Rachel Carson's writings on science, nature, public policy, and education, citing her inspiration for the Center. Corcoran introduced the purpose of the meeting as a way to engage discussion of faculty association with the Center, and to actively begin to develop Goal IV of the Center, which reads, "To provide opportunities for faculty, administrators, staff and students from across the campus to engage in scholarly activity, teaching, and service related to environmental and sustainability education."

II. Mission and Vision of the Center

Associate Director Jim Wohlpart explained the vision and mission of the Center. He introduced the Preamble, written by world-class scholars and Board Co-Chairs David Orr and Mary Evelyn Tucker. Wohlpart placed special emphasis on the text, "working toward realizing a sustainable and peaceful future through scholarship, education, and action." Wohlpart invited faculty to join the Center in extending this work.

III. Report on Center activities in the past year

Wohlpart provided an overview of the scholarly work of the Center in the past, specifically the Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership Resource Project. Graduate Assistant Donna Roberts spoke briefly on the success of the Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecture Series. Student Assistant Brandon Hollingshead commented on his internship with the Center and noted the opportunities internship has provided him.

IV. Self-introduction of faculty and Center staff

V. Discussion of what it means to be an associate

Corcoran and Wohlpart opened the floor to discussion of ideas and questions of what faculty association with the Center means. Corcoran framed this discussion in two ways: ways faculty can serve as resources to help extend the work of the Center, and ways the Center can serve as a resource by supporting faculty research and faculty development. Corcoran and Wohlpart presented the Whitaker Center as a successful model of a University Center.

1. Maria Roca suggested formalizing the Environmental Communication relationship with the Center. The Center can prepare curriculum for courses in the track, such as Environmental Persuasion and Activism, and Environmental Public speaking. The Center can be a resource for providing students direction in writing environmental messages, creating documentaries, etc... The Center can also provide student internships for Environmental Communication students.

2. Sharon Bevins stated the Center is a model of interdisciplinary work and carries forward the Mission of the University. Bevins suggested that a mix of student and faculty talent come together for interdisciplinary research through the Center. Peg Gray-Vickery suggested the five-year plan for quality enhancement has money available for faculty and student research.

3. Carol Newcomb-Jones suggested the Center should work in local schools, not just the FGCU community. She mentioned Rick Tully of the Lee County Schools Environmental Education program. Corcoran noted that work with public school teachers was a strong notion in the Center Planning Charrettes.

Bonnie Yegidis suggested external funding might be available for outreach to public schools in environmental activism and literacy. Bill Hammond noted Pew has a whole arm in environmental civic engagement, and FPL is in its fifth year of providing seed grants and student scholarships to present at conferences.

4. Bill Hammond suggested the Center should become institutionalized and grounded in the southwest Florida region...what the Center has been doing on Sanibel Island should be extended regionally. He proposed the Center should think of bigger, more regional venues for the Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecture Series.

5. Maria Roca inquired if there is a useful role for the Center with Ricky Pires and Wings of Hope. Neil Wilkinson noted the impact of Wings of Hope is so big that it should be in the Center's thinking. Bill Hammond suggested the Center could create a strategy to do in-depth follow-up research on the impact of the program and create infrastructure to support Ricky and the program. Jim Wohlpart noted that assessment strategies are needed to capture the effects of the program, and that there have already been conversations about research in this area.

6. Joe Cudjoe suggested the Center has a useful role to reach out to minority communities that have been left on the periphery. This is of critical importance and should be in the front of the Center's thinking. Corcoran stated that the Center has wanted diversification from the beginning, and this is an area the Center is very interested in developing. Board Member Oannes Arthur Pritzker has pushed toward more diversity concerns and questions. Corcoran noted that the Center recently hosted youth-speaker Dumisani Nyoni from Zimbabwe. Corcoran noted the Center needs the faculty or contacts of the faculty to do work in underserved populations.

7. Ingrid Martinez-Rico suggested that it would be useful for the Center to translate literature to other languages to disseminate the Center's purpose. This translation could be incorporated into FGCU curriculum and service learning. She mentioned the high-level work her translation classes have done, such as the Campus Ecosystem Model.

8. Rebecca Austin mentioned her area of specialty is environmental justice. Environmental education outreach is important, but environmental and social justice need to be addressed, as well. Corcoran mentioned the integrated vision of the Earth Charter, and suggested the Center and University use the Earth Charter as a teaching tool. The Center has expertise in the Earth Charter.

9. Meagan Mcshane would like to work internationally, rather than regionally, to foster a network of scholars. International work brings options for other governmental grants. Mcshane also mentioned her interest in international service learning.

VI. The Whitaker Center as a model for University Centers

Donna Henry spoke to the success of the Whitaker Center in identifying and formalizing the "Whitaker Faculty" associates. Members of the Whitaker Faculty encourage best practices in science, math, and technology education. This association is formalized on Personal Development Plans. Faculty include activities that align with the Center on their PDP, with the approval of their supervisor, and forward these goals to the Whitaker Center. Faculty are expected to send an end-of-year report stating how these goals have been met. This system is not complicated, works fairly well, and is a formal association. It does not take away from the PDP, and gives status to faculty work.

Henry suggested that this model is a good one for the Center to follow. A letter of encouragement from the Provost would be helpful to institutionalize Center association across the University.

Henry mentioned Whitaker Faculty association can help with identification. For example, associates of the Whitaker Center are asked to mention the Center in publications, if appropriate.

Henry noted that travel funds, research funds, and support is available through the Whitaker Center. Access to this support is only open to Whitaker Faculty. Corcoran noted that often times

small grants mean a lot, so Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education research grants would be helpful.

Discussion then addressed creating listservs and development of faculty and student information resources that can be disseminated through e-mail or the Center website to establish Center visibility and focus. This education could extend to the Rachel Carson Distinguished Lecture Series, as many people are not familiar with lecturers.

Megan Mcshane suggested creating a database of professor skills and areas of expertise to promote interdisciplinary classroom experiences. For example, Win Everham delivered a lecture to her art class. Such a database would open familiarity between colleagues and create a diverse faculty learning community.

VII. Next steps and closing comments

The meeting was concluded with a discussion of next-steps to develop a critical mass of support for a Center faculty associates program and formalize such a program. Several specific ideas were mentioned. In particular, there was discussion of a summer meeting for faculty associates. We discussed a day long “retreat” on Sanibel Island, which would include discussion of Center business, but also topical discussions. An important example of Center business is the need for the Center to take up topics that would appeal to a diverse audience, and in general, to diversify participation in its activities.

Examples of topical discussions are “take-aways” or professional development activities for faculty. We discussed seminar discussions on integrating work of Center speakers in courses. Specifically, we might have discussions at the retreat of the work of Julia Butterfly Hill, Maxine Greene, Wangari Maathai, or Mikhail Gorbachev. Another idea that was specifically discussed was a professional development activity of “teaching the Earth Charter.”

It was proposed that such a meeting take place from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm on Tuesday or Wednesday, August 16 or 17, 2005.