



People and Nature: Our Future is in the Balance

National Wildlife Federation

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Ball State University Muncie, Indiana Spring 2002, Environmental Literacy

BACKGROUND

Campus Profile

Ball State University, situated on 940 acres in Muncie, Indiana, serves approximately 19,000 students (45 percent male, 55 percent female). Seven academic colleges offer 120 undergraduate programs, 80 masters programs and 20 doctoral programs in 46 departments and schools. Some 750 faculty, 550 professional staff and 1,500 support personnel comprise the employee base.

Group/Class Profile

The Office of the Provost and the Assistant Provost of University College underwrite this program; faculty from the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management coordinate and instruct the workshop.

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GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

An annual summer faculty development workshop, “Green for Green”, was initiated in 1994 to increase the number of faculty who are literate in environmental issues. This was a response to recommendations in the Final Report of the Green Committee (Green Report), issued in December 1991.

The Committee recommends that summer funding be provided to enable faculty to modify course syllabus materials, engage in readings and conduct research necessary to find a more inclusive environmental view in course offerings. A designated number of summer slots should be set aside per college to encourage a broad base of such course work development.

Rationale: Faculty finds it difficult to make time to step outside their discipline to investigate environmentally related materials as they might impact course content. Moreover, such initiative tends to go unsung and is without corresponding support among colleagues. Assembling a group specifically supported to undertake such work would not only eliminate the sense of risk and uncertainty but would build the cadre of faculty needed to engage the collaborative potential.

Another recommendation called for a “Faculty and Staff Reward System for Contributing to Environmental Improvements on Campus.” Thus was born the financial “green” reward for

faculty to gain skills, training and expertise to develop ideas that benefit the campus with environmental “green” outcomes.

Since its inception, “Green for Green” has been directed toward faculty; a mechanism for routine and continual support of professional staff remains to be attained. Although open to all campus faculties, typically it is those applicants from disciplines conventionally outside the environmental fields who are given the strongest encouragement to participate. The “green” they receive is a \$500 stipend for attending the 15-20 hour workshop; the “green” they return to the university or local community is: 1) incorporating some environmental focus in one or more classes they instruct (greening of curriculum); 2) helping their department or academic unit have lower environmental impacts in its operations or policies (greening of campus operations); or 3) carrying the message of environmental sustainability to a broader audience through community outreach projects (greening of the community). This three-part focus of “Green for Green” fulfills, in part, the mission statement adopted in 2002 by the University’s Council on the Environment (COTE), which includes statements to “promote communication and education about sustainability issues and achievements” and to “promote outreach and educational activities that encourage sustainable practices in the broader community” (see www.bsu.edu/cote). Annual funding of the workshop supports participation of up to 20 persons, plus a stipend customarily divided between two instructors-coordinators.

During its first seven offerings, the course content was tailored for a broad introduction to environmental issues, patterned in ways that resembled the course content of an introductory environmental science class. That is, the focus of “Green for Green” was to expand environmental literacy among the faculty population. With greater urgency by the end of the first decade, increasing integration of personnel from outside the university contributed to the learning experience, drawing expertise from resource management agencies to help enliven the workshop and provide increased linkages between the university and surrounding communities. This was a response to a growing university commitment to service learning.

With the 2001 and 2002 offerings, the focus of the workshop was directed more toward sustainability, emphasized by a new workshop title, “Lighten Up! A Workshop in Sustainable Living”. This redirection was in response to a campus-wide sustainability initiative, the implementation of the Talloires Declaration by the newly constituted Green Committee 2 (Green-2; see www.bsu.edu/g2). Thus, a new focus of the workshop included strong emphasis on the ecological footprint of the university through all its operations, thereby addressing a third point of the COTE mission statement, to “increase awareness of the environmental and social implications of university operations.”

Accomplishments

Through June 2002, 164 faculty had completed the “Green for Green” workshop, representing more than 20% of all faculty at Ball State University. These participants represent 40 out of 46 academic departments or schools and each of the university’s seven academic colleges. Additionally, two participants from the university’s laboratory (K-12) school and three professional staff members have participated in the workshop.

Challenges and Responses

Despite initial excitement about this faculty development opportunity, demand began to wane after several offerings of the workshop when fewer than 20 applications were received in two successive years. This declining interest may have been due, in part, to reaching a saturation of faculty interested in learning about environmental issues and to an ever-increasing competition for faculty to participate in other faculty development workshops in many other areas of focus that is offered during the summer months. In response to a decline in applications, the workshop was re-tailored in 2001 toward sustainability (rather than strictly environmental) issues, and marketed under the title “Lighten Up! A Workshop in Sustainable Living.” During the first year of this reincarnation, the workshop was advertised via e-mail announcements across campus under the subject line “\$500 Reward”; some sixty persons responded with inquiries and over 30 applications were received. Screening of applications was necessary, and those persons with the least background in environmental or sustainability issues were given priority; also, their expressions of how they envisioned implementing what they learned on campus or in the community were factored into the screening.

“Lighten Up!” introduced participants to the role of consumers in sustainability with the video, “Affluenza,” then built on the sustainability implications of every-day living throughout the workshop. “Lighten Up!” was well received, and inspired a second year of sustainability focus in 2002. Although fewer applications were received, the workshop closed out (and attracted one volunteer who participated without receiving a stipend). Evaluations from the workshop suggest that it retain great interest for sufficient numbers of faculty to warrant its continuation and that the learning experiences were life transforming. In future years, its emphasis may need to shift toward professional staff or be tailored toward under-served departments and schools. Currently, no discrimination is made in favor of tenured or tenure-line faculty, with many participants holding indefinite contract appointments. The degree to which the long-term “green” return to the university is served by this practice may need to be evaluated in light of the emergence of the university’s Council on the Environment and its sustainability mission.

An ongoing difficulty in higher education is assessment and accountability, and the outcomes from “Green for Green” are no exception. Only anecdotal evidence has been available from early offerings of the workshop to support the claim that participants implemented their workshop learning in ways that have direct benefits to the university or the community. In early years, participants were asked to supply some evidence of the way in which they incorporated environmental learning in their classroom activities, but no systematic collection has been made. More recently, follow-up inquiries have been sent to participants several months following the conclusion of the workshop, to inquire about their success at implementation. To date, the results have not been promising in that few participants responded and those that did often cited difficulties of course assignment or devotion to other professional activities as barriers to implementation. In the most recent offering, accountability was stressed to participants by way of inviting the entire membership of COTE to a final workshop day in which participants gave mini-poster presentations about the implementation they envisioned; eight COTE members attended that session. Funding via a campus-wide assessment grant was received by the two instructors from the 2002 offering and

will be used, in part, to contact all previous participants with an assessment mechanism to learn the extent of implementation.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Stakeholder Engagement

Key individuals who brought “Green for Green” into existence include Provost Warren Vander Hill and B. Thomas Lowe (currently Assistant Provost, and an early workshop instructor). Continued support via departmental leadership in Natural Resources and Environmental Management was also essential. Finally, ongoing support from Robert Koester, Director of the Center for Energy Research/Education/Service (CERES) and currently Chair of COTE, has been essential for this and other campus greening projects. Several workshop participants have later been successful applicants for CERES Fellowships, which are full-year awards that encourage interdisciplinary projects involving the environment and sustainability.

Funding and Staffing

A budget of \$13,000 is allocated annually toward direct costs associated with faculty stipends; incidental expenses (teaching materials, refreshments etc.) have been borne by instructors or modest departmental allocations, while in-kind expenses have been supplied by guest speakers (or their agencies) and overhead expenses have been absorbed by the university. Customarily, two faculty members from Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management are given the opportunity to lead the workshop each summer and paid stipends of \$1,500 each; since its inception, a total of six faculty members have led “Green for Green.”

Policies

Other than policies regarding who is eligible for participation in the workshop (currently faculty only) and supportive statements from the COTE Mission Statement, no policies have been developed to affect the “Green for Green” workshop.

National Wildlife Federation’s Campus Ecology Program

During the most recent two years of its offering, ‘Green for Green’ has utilized some Campus Ecology materials (including *Green Investment*, *Green Return* and *Ecodemia*) as resources made available to workshop participants. The existence of Campus Ecology was noted via slide presentation, and participants urged to investigate its programs.

Other programs or resources of Campus Ecology have played roles in support of the workshop instructors during 2001 and 2002, including the *State of the Campus Report*, online case-studies, monthly network updates and (most recently) the Driving Sustainable Markets Teach-In. Participation by Campus Ecology personnel in training clinics held during Ball State University’s Greening of Campus conferences and in its Creating a Sustainable Future course (the capstone for the university’s Clustered Minors program) have also been beneficial to workshop instructors and affiliated personnel.

OUTREACH, EDUCATION AND PRESS

As currently constituted, “Green for Green” provides one mechanism to address the COTE Mission Statement and the newly adopted university Strategic Plan by making opportunities available to expand environmental/sustainability literacy campus-wide (directly) and in the local community (indirectly). Recent efforts have begun to extend the outreach of “Green for Green” through involvement of key community leaders who are engaged in environment/sustainability initiatives (e.g., Indiana Department of Natural Resources, the solid waste district and the area’s recycling agency, local chapter of the Audubon Society, a local land trust, local community environmental outreach/education programs). The purpose of this involvement has been, primarily, to engage workshop participants by helping them learn more about local resources, but has had the secondary benefit of increasing the interest and participation in campus environment/sustainability initiatives by local community leaders.

Education about “Green for Green” has been primarily via campus-wide announcements (in early years, via conventional campus mail; more recently, exclusively via e-mail) with some word of mouth providing additional information. Education within “Green for Green” has increasingly stressed the use of electronic media available via the Internet, with an emphasis on websites from NGOs and governmental agencies whose focus is on environment/sustainability. It is hoped that campus-wide publicity via campus newspapers or other publications can be used to expand the interest in “Green for Green.” Eventually, similar publicity is needed to expand the focus to personnel other than faculty.

REVIEW AND REPORTING

An annual report about “Green for Green” is sent to the Assistant Provost, whose office directly oversees the funding of the workshop. We are gathering more data. A report about “Green for Green” will be made to the Council on the Environment at its first meeting in the academic year, providing COTE the opportunity to review the merits and emphases of the workshop.

CLOSING REMARKS

In one post-workshop evaluation received recently, the respondent wrote that his “spouse can’t wait until next year when the workshop is offered; she teaches in my department and wants to participate.” This suggests how life-transforming a learning opportunity like this can be; most participants indicate their wish to participate again and that they have made major adjustments in their own living.

How to ensure that individual learning and life-transformation is returned to the campus or community requires some accountability. While “Green for Green” has been successful in its mission and its impact on a substantial percentage of the faculty at Ball State University, there is opportunity to refine its content as well as tighten its connection with campus greening. Finding ways to hold faculty accountable for what they gain, and stressing the need for their individual development to bear fruit --inside the classroom, inside their academic unit, inside their local community --requires a concerted effort and support from many levels of the institution.