

Summary Report
And
Plan of Action
Sustainability at Grand Rapids Community
College
(2004-2010)
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Submitted by

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I. Summary and Statement of Purpose

President Olivarez called together a team of GRCC faculty and staff on January 31, 2002 to begin planning a strategy “for taking a leadership position in introducing sustainability principles into its academic, operational and community work.”

(see GRCC Greening the Campus Team booklet)

Since that time the team has met regularly and taken the lead in the three areas listed in the statement of purpose above. Evidence of this can be found in the Greening Team reports to the Provost submitted over the last two years.

(Report to the Provost, 2003, 2004)

After nearly 21/2 years of work the Greening Team believes that it is time to institutionalize sustainability at Grand Rapids Community College, making sustainability one of the principal components of “how we do business” at the institution. The College’s commitment to this is illustrated by the signing of the Talloires Declaration (University Leaders for a Sustainable Future) in 2004.

II. Plan of Action for 2004-2010

The Greening Team, keeping in mind the Mission, Vision and Values of GRCC, has developed both short-term and long-term goals. This alignment can be best described by referring to the team's three components of sustainability, Curriculum and Instruction, Physical Plant and Facilities, and Community Engagement.

A. Curriculum and Instruction

The team, in line with strategic priorities 1 (Improve the learning process) and 2 (Redesign services to increase student success) is pursuing the following goals:

1. Application for an Environmental Protection Agency grant which will bring sustainability principles and practices to the middle schools and high schools of Western Michigan. Our first application was denied (2003-2004) but we will be improving our application and re-applying this year (2004-2005). If awarded this project would continue for three years.
 - a. Update – We will shift our application for this project to NOAA, since their grant funds are more appropriate to this project.
 - b. Timeline – Submit grant application during the 2005-2006 academic year

2. Place recycling containers to all building on campus.
This project will not only make for a cleaner and better campus environment, it will enhance the learning environment by teaching better environmental practices.

Timeline: This project should be completed during the 2004-2005 academic year.

First phase completed

3. Continue to teach SS120: Environmental Studies at GRCC. This course has been offered twice now and has had a very positive response from the students who took it. Each time it is taught it will be improved, and new technologies adopted to make it a better course. To this end we have already integrated Blackboard and web-site technology. Approximately 50 students have completed this course so far, and at least 20% have expressed an interest in continuing in this field of study.

Timeline: Ongoing

4. Offer new course in environmental studies as appropriate, with the possible long-term outcome of a certificate or transfer program. At present we are assessing course materials for a second offering, "Preserving the Legacy": Introduction to Environmental Technology, which is offered in a telecourse format. If approved the second class would be offered during the 2005-2006 academic year.

Timeline: On hold as we assess our offerings

5. Develop curriculum guides for transfer students interested in sustainability/environmental studies. This work is in progress. Gary Burbridge has met with Kathleen Owens to identify our primary transfer institutions and potential programs available in these areas. Transfer guides will be developed for student use.

Timeline: These should be available by the end of the current academic year (2004-2005).

Update: We are waiting for course equivalencies from Aquinas College.

6. Add student representation to the Greening Team. This began in 2003-2004 and will continue.

Timeline: Continuing

B. Physical Plant and Facilities

In conjunction with Strategic Priorities 4 (Leverage Technology) and 5 (Grow, allocate and protect our resources) the Greening Team is working on the following:

1. Support the Facilities Department's energy audit of campus buildings. All buildings will be audited for energy usage and suggestions for savings and improvements will be made based on the audit reports.

Timeline: This process will begin during the Fall semester, 2004 and will continue until

completed – over an approximately three year period.

Update: Continuing

2. Work with the Facilities Department to make improvements in the use of recycled materials and environmentally safe products. To this end the college is already purchasing and using only recyclable carpeting and will be installing recycled or recyclable furniture wherever possible, including outdoor seating and tables.

Discussion about recycling electronic equipment has begun.

Timeline: Continuing

3. Encourage and support the installation of a Green Roof on the Applied Technology Center. This installation will begin during the Fall semester 2004. Additional green roof systems will be considered for other buildings on campus.

Timeline: On hold due to budget constraints.

Exploring grant opportunities to complete the ATC.

4. Collaborate with the grounds crew to install additional Rain Gardens on campus. Currently one is in place on Fountain Street, with another planned for the Bostwick Commons and a third to be placed near the new surface parking lot on Lyon Street.

Timeline: Third Rain Garden installed, Summer, 2005

5. Support the current installation of a rainwater management system under the new surface parking lot on Lyon Street. This system will reduce the rate of storm water runoff thus reducing pressure on the city's wastewater system. The city of Grand Rapids will be studying this system as a model for future city parking lots.

Timeline: Completed

6. Installation and management of a three bin recycling system in GRCC buildings see above, I.A.2). The college will continue with the paper and battery recycling program already in place.

Timeline: Phase one completed.

C. Community Engagement

In association with Strategic Priority 6 (Strengthen relationships with our community partners) the Greening Team will continue to develop links to community organizations around sustainable practices.

1. Develop links between GRCC's Training Solutions department and the Sustainable Business Forum in enhance opportunities for sustainable business applications in the community. Preliminary contacts have been made and meetings will take place during the current academic year (2004-2005).

Timeline: continuing

2. Host and co-sponsor a conference developed by the Sustainable Business Forum on the GRCC campus in May 2005. Initial discussions have taken place between the chair of the Greening Team and a representative of the SBF.

Timeline: Conference held at GRCC, May, 2005

3. Develop a series of presentations by experts in the environment and higher education. This series would begin during the current academic year (2004-2005) and continue into the next. Initial discussions have taken place.

Timeline: On hold

4. Continue to co-sponsor the Green By Design Conference along with Steelcase. GRCC co-sponsored the first conference and has been invited to participate again. Two GRCC representatives sit on the planning committee and plans are well under way for a conference tentatively scheduled for September, 2005.

Timeline: Continuing

5. Ongoing project through the Student Activities office in cooperation with Nike for the recycling of running shoes.

Timeline: Completed

6. The college is participating in a cooperative effort with the Grand Rapids Public Schools and other organizations to explore collaborations and partnerships

in environmental education, such as the creation of a small high school based on Peter Wege's concept of economicology.

Timeline: Continuing

7. The Green Team chair recently participated in a symposium sponsored by the Mayor of Grand Rapids called "Sustainable Pathways of Progress." This symposium focused on developing sustainability initiatives linking the private and public sectors.

Timeline: Completed

8. Continued development of the Greening Team web site, including additional links to other organizations and the addition of streaming video from GRCC's television channel and presentations made at the Healing Our Waters conference.

Timeline: continuing

9. Participate in the Sustainability Partners consortium with the City of Grand Rapids, the Grand Rapids Public Schools, Grand Valley State University and Aquinas College.

Timeline: Continuing

Update: Partnership agreement signed, August,

2005

IV. Securing Funding

Funding for the various projects described above will come from a variety of sources. We are currently actively pursuing a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency, NOAA, and are exploring grant funds from the Department of Energy to support our energy audit. In addition we receive a grant each year from the Wege Foundation to support our sustainability efforts.

It is sufficient to say that with a limited general fund balance it will be important to secure outside resources wherever possible.

Therefore we continue to explore funding from external sources from both the private and the public sector.

Where GRCC funds are required, it must be demonstrated that the initial expenditures will be recouped in the short or long-term due to savings from the adoption of changes. An example of this might be the matching costs we will incur from the energy audits, which we will recoup through energy savings within our buildings.

While this report does not give a detailed analysis of each initiative described, it does give a “flavor” for some of the work being done by the Greening Team, and the projects planned for the future.

Each project will be described in greater detail in project reports as those individual actions are carried out.

It is clear that the work of the Greening Team is an important aspect of the work of GRCC. The projects described are clearly linked to the College's Strategic Priorities and can also be linked to the College's Strategic Outcomes (Ends) as well.