

Go Green! ¡Viva Verde! Committee Minutes

Thursday, May 1, 2008, 2 p.m. AS 103C

Attendees: Kim Corbin, Fine and Performing Arts; Camille Fiorillo, Library; Irene Scharf, Library; Russ Wagner, ESOL; Lance Sandberg, Science; Brad Chandler, Science; Valerie Gomez, Reading; Margarita McAuliffe, ESOL; Karen Mahaffy, Art; Thomas Murguia, Writing Lab; Mary-Ellen Jacobs, English; and Denise Barkis Richter, Communications.

Denise called the meeting to order shortly after 2 p.m. The minutes of the April 3, 2008, meeting were approved. Denise will forward them to Vince to post on our Go Green! webpage, which may be found on our college's homepage.

Three new committee members were welcomed: Valerie Gomez, Reading; Karen Mahaffy, Art; and Thomas Murguia, Writing Lab. We are thrilled to have you on board!

A continuous screening (8 a.m., 10 a.m., noon, 2 p.m., 4 p.m., and 6 p.m.) of the Academy Award-winning film "An Inconvenient Truth" took place on Earth Day, April 22, 2008, in the Student Center Annex. The screening was sponsored by Club Earth and the Go Green! ¡Viva Verde! Committee with funding from the Student Activities Fee Committee. Denise created posters for campus-wide distribution that announced the screening and offered 10 action items to help curb global warming. Thanks to Greg Pasztor, Communications Department, and Dan Rodriguez and Nancy de la Torre, Student Activities, for making the screening happen.

A giant THANK YOU to Camille Fiorillo for pulling together our very successful PACfest 2008 booth! We gave away more than 200 trees, 100 compact fluorescent light bulbs, 500 reusable canvas bags, and scads of environmental information. Thanks also to Greg Pasztor for getting the trees from CPS; Camille for getting the CFLs from CPS and the environmental info from a variety of sources; Vince Bosquez for donating the bags; and Sheila Hatch for coming up with the "green quiz" people filled out to get the reusable bags. Thanks also to all of the Go Green! ¡Viva Verde! Committee members (Camille, Greg, Dorothy, Sheila, Irene, Deborah, Lance, Sandra, and Denise), Club Earth members, and Brad Chandler's Environmental Science students who helped out at the booth! (Volunteers received a VIVA VERDE t-shirt. FYI: 62 t-shirts are left to use as "rewards" for getting involved with our campus' green movement.) All in all, PACfest was a great educational experience, and attendees seemed very receptive to learning how they could make an eco-difference.

Denise gave everyone a handout of committee members' e-mails for subcommittee e-meetings along with a *Community College Journal* April/May 2008 article titled "Sustainable Education: Community Colleges as Environmental Champions" and *San Antonio Express-News'* "Living Green: Trim Your Waste" special section. Both are filled with noteworthy information and ideas.

The college's president, Dr. Ana M. "Cha" Guzman, signed Palo Alto College's Declaration of Environmental Sustainability on April 17, 2008, after Greg Pasztor, Camille Fiorillo and Denise Barkis Richter explained the Go Green! ¡Viva Verde! Committee's vision for making Palo Alto College an environmentally friendly campus. The president is very supportive of the committee's work, and she said that she'd like to have Robert Triana, superintendent of Facilities, and Bobby Garza, director of Distance & Extended Education & Community Outreach (and the college's CIP liaison), get involved.

Brad Chandler offered to give the committee Tri Beta's "display case" in the Student Center to showcase our green movement on campus. Denise will work on getting the display together.

Environmental Citizenship: Russ Wagner, Sheila Hatch, Larry Jackson and Irene Scharf
From Russ:

We could increase our efforts to inform and educate our students, faculty and staff through/by:

- 1) Informational publications- Flyers, Go Green webpage, PALS/faculty-student e-mail.
- 2) Go Green display case (in the Student Center)
- 3) Monthly Guest speaker, forum and/or hands-on green activity (i.e. planting wildflowers, building birdhouses)
- 4) Sustainability component to various courses
- 5) CE courses/certificates (i.e. Master Naturalist)
- 6) Facts, Information, surveys on Green webpage.
- 7) Nature trail (indigenous plants/trees/flowers around soccer field)

By providing information above we can certainly reach those who are not informed. I think we may be able to reach others by presenting the importance of conservation, not from a civic duty/responsibility perspective, but from an economic and or popular culture perspective (e.g. conservation/recycling saves money, engaging students in fun, tangible, and hands-on ways).

Recycling and Solid Waste: Kim Corbin, Sandra Gonzalez-Lamb, Leandro Esparza and Mary-Ellen Jacobs

From Kim: The current District contract for recycling with Abitibi (for paper and cardboard only) is expiring. District Purchaser Karen Gottfried has prepared a request for proposals for a new recycling contract. The new contract specifies the recycling of paper and cardboard and adds plastic, glass and aluminum. These last three will be on a 3-month trial, so that if there are any problems, that portion of the contract may become null. The entire contract will be for a year, with three possible one-year extensions. It is expected that Vista Fibers will submit a proposal. This company services the city of San Antonio and several area colleges, among other customers. Members of the District Recycling Team, including our Sandra Gonzalez-Lamb toured the Vista Fibers facility. I believe the visitors were impressed. The District Team will review and evaluate submitted proposals in late May. Out of a possible 100 points in the evaluation, 85 are dedicated to pricing of the service. Barring the unforeseen, a new contract will be in place by July 1. It will then be up to the District team to design strategies for publicity, education and implementation at each District address. At PAC, I think we'll need to target by building, as well as by department and office. We'll need go-to people in each area who can monitor and trouble-shoot. Northwest Vista has practices in place that we should be able to borrow and use.

Natural Habitat and Indigenous Wildlife: Lance Sandberg, Kirk Williams, Greg Pasztor and Valerie Gomez

From Kirk: 1. Establish a Texas Parks & Wildlife "Wildscape". We have most of the components in the newly landscaped area by the EL building. I have not looked at the requirements in some time but one of y'all can just to confirm it. We may need to plant a few more plants in the Fall to finish it out.

2. Wildflower Area—The President has expressed interest in a wildflower area to the east of the Administration building. The wildflower seeds would need to be planted by the end of October. The Horticulture department would buy the seed—primarily it would be bluebonnets and Indian blanket as it is not an area that we realistically could leave native other than through the Spring. Our students could do this in collaboration with other interested people. I can coordinate with grounds people to make sure they don't mow it until it seeds. We will probably need some no mow signs still.

From Greg: 3. Additional "Wildscapes" (maybe these can all be put together in one proposal. The two little basins/ponds on campus (the ditch west of the Admin Building

and the pond north of the Maintenance Building) could be planted with natives and turned into small motts or sanctuaries for birds & amphibians. Currently they seem to be mowed & whacked like any other institutional landscape. Perhaps some tree plantings around them and appropriate understory? Maybe work in conjunction with Mitchell Lake Audubon?

4. Begin planning to take care of the drainage and wetlands that extend from Villaret to 410 on the west end of campus. Cha has expressed interest in a nature trail. This is something I'm sure is being "Master Planned" but perhaps we could have some input. Again, the drainage is mowed and none of the understory that naturally would occur is allowed to grow. This could be a rehabilitation project to restore a riparian area.

I like the idea of putting the Wildscape proposals together and partnering with TPWD, Audubon, etc. for support and very importantly--to gain attention for PAC's efforts so that they serve as an example to our Community.

From Valerie:

5. Creating a "butterfly/hummingbird garden" to attract even more of these creatures to our landscape. Although we already have a beautiful garden area by the EL building, perhaps we could expand that concept by adding more areas like that around campus over a period of years. The art department could assist us with providing their creativity with beautiful garden sculptures.
6. Adding birdhouses throughout campus to attract and retain wildlife. We could also set up a day where we can set up birdhouses or create pinecone seed feeders to hang on our trees on campus. An obstacle to adding birdfeeders is that they need to be refilled with food so this may not be an option. Birdhouses are maintenance free but require people to buy and donate and eventually set them up.
7. Sponsoring a community wide educational program communicating the importance of wildlife preservation. This should be an expert in the field. Of interest would be information on how we as individuals can sustain such an endeavor in our own backyards.
8. Consider the idea of using barrels on campus to catch rain water. Ideally, these rain barrels could be placed near planting that require more water.

Air Quality: Margarita McAuliffe

From Margarita:

- 1) Bike and inline skating paths on campus
- 2) Bike racks on campus and junker bikes (for students/staff to borrow and ride from one end of campus to the other)

- 3) Talk to City about marking bike lanes (along Villaret)
- 4) Rideshare (contact AACOG to set up rideshare program on campus)
- 5) Talk to VIA about a shuttle from downtown to PAC and/or the Chancellor about an ACCD shuttle that runs every 30 minutes between SAC, PAC and SPC (Russ' idea!) for people who want to park and ride (UTSA does that between their two campuses! VIA runs it.)

Water Conservation: Brad Chandler

From Brad: We could increase efforts to conserve water by: 1) Studying the feasibility of separating our potable water supplies from our irrigation water and switching to graywater offered by SAWS; and 2) Estimating the costs of retrofitting our restrooms with low-flow toilets and automatic flushing systems. In one academic year we can expect to reduce our potable water use. Obstacles include cost and cooperation. Resources to overcome these obstacles include helps from SAWS and our Facilities Department. We can reward our campus community for water conservation by estimating our monetary savings by not using potable water, which is more expensive, and converting these savings into student Green Scholarships. We can evaluate the environmental impact of water conservation by comparing water use annually.

Energy Consumption Reduction: Dorothy Ulcak

From Dorothy: I continue to look for multiple ways to save energy (ex: CPS energy audit and affixing "Switch Off and Save Energy" stickers on all Palo Alto switchplates), and I am looking for others to serve on the subcommittee. I would like for us to sponsor a big campaign and kickoff in the Fall to promote education and awareness of the ways that we can more effectively "Green Up" Palo Alto and our individual homes, etc. We could ask for Student Activities to sponsor/provide funds for the event.

Green Purchasing: Camille Fiorillo and Esther Rodriguez

From Camille: We are in the process of determining if the paper and cleaning products used by the College are recycled and/or earth friendly. (District orders supplies in bulk for all of the colleges' Housekeeping Departments.) I suggested we host an event-- someone suggested a "green" tea!--for the person in each department responsible for ordering department office supplies to educate them on earth friendly alternatives. I also volunteered to compile a list of earth related holidays/events that we can use to coordinate events on campus. (Accomplished 5/02/08.)

Green Building/Renovation: Karen Mahaffy and Thomas Murguia

From Thomas:

- As was mentioned Friday, meet with current CIP architects and building contractors, along with John Strybos and Bobby Garza, to see if any green technologies have been incorporated into ACCD's new buildings. If so, highlight them in our Go Green! website. Also, see which future construction and renovation projects could include such steps.
- As was suggested, host a forum or speakers series on green building. Invite representatives from CPS Energy, City of S.A., AACOG, Metropolitan Partnership for Energy, to participate. In particular, ask them to highlight the *long-term* savings of building green.
- Investigate whether adding ceiling fans to classrooms would help reduce energy consumption.
- Research whether any ACCD colleges offer certificates, degrees, or continuing education courses in green building, and invite instructors to give talks and hold Q&A sessions about green collar jobs. If there are no such programs in S.A., see if PAC can start one.
- See if S.A. can have an initiative similar to the one in Cambridge, Mass.
- Have a "Did You Know?" section in our Go Green! site--or preferably on the main page of the PAC website. Include weekly, eye-catching factoids, such as: "As a rule of thumb, you can assume that each 5 mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional \$0.20 per gallon for gas." (<http://www.fueleconomy.gov/feg/driveHabits.shtml>).
- Include links to sites that track state and federal energy legislation.

From Karen:

I would also like to include in our initiatives a strong push towards sustainable practices, attitudes and building and not just the purchase of "green" products and technologies. There are so many products and services that have latched onto the "green" movement which do not contribute to any positive change (i.e., the resources expended to produce). I think it is important to provide the resources for people to be able to make their own informed decisions.

Thanks to all of the subcommittee members for their valuable brainstorming and planning! The subcommittees will kick-off their year-long green endeavors in the Fall of 2008. In the Fall of 2009, the Go Green! ¡Viva Verde! Committee will publish a "Green Report Card" to assess the college's environmental progress. Denise reminded the committee that we're starting at zero in most places, so progress is likely!

Via e-mail, Sandra Gonzalez-Lamb reported that the District Recycling Committee would like to use Palo Alto College's VIVA VERDE logo/"look" for the District's recycling effort that will encompass all five Alamo Community Colleges and the

District offices. After discussion, the committee's consensus was that we were honored that the District liked our VIVA VERDE logo, and we would allow the District to use it. (Of course, we would like for Palo Alto College to get credit for originating it!)

Deborah Dixon led Club Earth members on an urban ecosystem tour of the San Antonio River Walk. Members of the Go Green! ¡Viva Verde! Committee expressed interest in a similar tour for faculty/staff members. Lance reported that more than 20 students are on Club Earth's e-mail list.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m. The first meeting of the fall 2008 semester will take place during convocation week (the week of August 18). Place and time TBA.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Denise Barkis Richter, Ph.D.