

Energy and Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes

April 29, 2013

2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Room 325, Burruss Hall

Present: Fred Selby, Kayla Smith (for Sherwood Wilson), Debbie Greer (for Savita Sharma and Dwight Shelton), Steve Mouras (for Jason Soileau), Denny Cochrane, Rob Lowe, John Randolph, Becky Saylors, Tom Tucker, Paul Winistorfer, James Dale, Catherine Goggins and Drew Gallagher.

Absent: AVP Facilities Representative, Althea Aschmann, Georg Reichard, Bruce Ferguson, Frances Keene, Nancy McGehee, Tom Tucker, and Michael Painter.

Guests: John Chermak.

Call Meeting to Order and Welcome Guests

Chair Fred Selby called the meeting to order and welcomed the E&S Committee members and guests to the final meeting of the 2012-2013 Academic Year.

Approval of Agenda

The Committee approved the agenda as proposed.

Approval of Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes from the February 25 meeting. The originally scheduled March 18 meeting had been previously cancelled due to several key members either having other scheduled commitments or having been fully committed to STARS data collection and the March 19 data submittal.

Old Business:

1. Virginia Tech Climate Action Commitment (VTCAC) Subcommittee Update – Final Review and Vote

Fred Selby updated the Committee with the news that the revised VTCAC proposal (Resolution 2012-13D) had successfully passed both readings with the Commission on University Support. The resolution was scheduled for its first reading with the University Council later that afternoon, with the second reading tentatively scheduled for Monday, May 6.

2. VT Sustainability Plan (VTSP) Subcommittee Update

Steve Mouras reported that the VTSP Subcommittee continued to meet in April and continued work to update the sustainability plan. The primary focus initially is to integrate and align the original Sustainability Plan (and tasks) with the AASHE STARS credit categories.

3. Office of Energy and Sustainability (OES) Undergrad Intern Program

Steve Mouras informed the Committee that a recruiting process is now underway for the AY 2013-14 OES Student Intern Program to identify 10-15 student interns to be

members of three teams within OES. An email will be issued shortly which will provide more detail. Committee members were encouraged to forward the recruiting information on to any student they deem to be a viable candidate.

4. Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) Submission

Denny Cochrane reported that Virginia Tech has achieved its second “Silver Rating” from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) in recognition of sustainability achievements through its Sustainability Tracking, Assessment, and Rating System (STARS) program. STARS is nationally recognized as the primary management tool for benchmarking progress toward becoming a more sustainable campus. OES has the lead for gathering and submitting Virginia Tech data and information for STARS.

Virginia Tech received an overall score of 63.30 under the current STARS version 1.2, which represents an increase from the university’s first rating of 61.91 under STARS version 1.1 submitted in August 2011. STARS consists of 135 separate credits that fall under three separate categories: (1) Education and Research; (2) Operations; and (3) Planning, Administration, and Engagement. In addition, an institution can receive up to 4 points for Innovation Credits. Virginia Tech’s score of 63.30 includes an increase for six credits, a slight decrease for three credits, and points for three new credits. Four Innovation Credits were submitted this year, one more than was submitted in 2011. Virginia Tech’s rating may be viewed on the AASHE STARS website: <https://stars.aashe.org/institutions/virginia-tech-va/report/2013-03-19/>. Virginia Tech’s score is the highest achieved to date by any college or university in Virginia and is the third highest score among Atlantic Coast Conference institutions. With its score of 63.30, the university ranks in the top 20% nationally, and is just 1.70 points below what is needed to achieve a Gold Rating. The Silver Rating is good for three years.

5. 2012-2013 Request for Proposal for Student Organization Sustainability Initiatives (Green RFP) Status Update

Denny Cochrane reported the Coca Cola Company is supportive of Virginia Tech’s proposal to establish a partnership whereby the Coca Cola Company would provide a portion of the funding for 2012-2013 Green RFP Program. Ongoing discussions between the Office of Budget and Financial Planning, OES, and the Coca Cola Company have resulted in a delay in the announcement for the approved proposals for this year. While the delay was unfortunate, the potential benefit was well worth it. In a conference call held last Friday, the Coca Cola Company representative agreed to provide an additional \$25K for the Green RFP Program this year which brings their total funding support to \$30K; in addition, they agreed to continue the dialogue for future years. This is the first year of a 10-year contract that the Coca Cola Company has with Virginia Tech and a similar amount of funding support is anticipated to be available in the future. The Office of Budget and Financial Planning will expeditiously handle the necessary documentation. A formal announcement for the results of the Green RFP Program should be forthcoming within the next week or so.

6. RecycleMania 2013 Update

Denny Cochrane stated that RecycleMania 2013 concluded March 30. The eight week international competition featured 523 colleges and universities in the United States and

Canada. Final results were released on April 12 and Virginia Tech received an overall ranking of 185 out of 273 schools participating in the Competition Division (also ranking sixth out of 13 Virginia schools participating; a highlight was Virginia Tech's receiving a ranking of 55 out of 156 schools in the Food Service Organics category.) Full results can be viewed at: www.recyclemaniacs.org (open this link to the home page, locate the "announcements" section on the right side, and click on the "final results are now available" link. Virginia Tech is in the "Competition Division." Virginia Tech results can also be viewed for the eight individual categories of the competition.) For academic year 2013-2014, one of the planned OES Intern Teams will be assigned to support and enhance this program.

New Business:

7. 2013 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award

The 2013 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards recognize the significant contributions of environmental and conservation leaders in two categories: sustainability and land conservation; awards are presented to businesses, industrial facilities, non-profit organizations and government agencies. Virginia Tech participated in the sustainability category and Denny Cochrane was pleased to announce Virginia Tech was awarded a Gold Medal for its "Sustainability Program." A copy of the certificate signed by Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell and Secretary of Natural Resources Doug Domenech is provided (see "E&SC 042913 Attachment 1 – 2013 Governor's Award – Certificate.pdf").

The 2013 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards were presented during a formal ceremony in conjunction with the 24th Annual Environment Virginia Symposium hosted by the Virginia Military Institute on April 10 in Lexington, Virginia. Secretary Domenech (Virginia Tech Class of 1978) presided at the awards ceremony and presented Virginia Tech its framed medal (see "E&SC 042913 Attachment 2 – 2013 Governor's Award – Recipients.jpg").

In the photo (from left to right) are: Doug Domenech (Secretary of Natural Resources, Virginia Tech Class of 1978), Rob Lowe (Virginia Tech Environmental Engineer), Steve Mouras (Virginia Tech Director of Transportation and Sustainability), Alyssa Halle (Virginia Tech Graduate Assistant, OES), Denny Cochrane (Virginia Tech Sustainability Program Manager, OES), David Paylor (Director, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality), David Johnson (Director, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation), and Jason Soileau (Virginia Tech Assistant Vice President, Office of University Planning).

This is the fourth Governor's Environmental Excellence Award (GEEA) Virginia Tech has received in the past six years. This includes the following:

- 2013 Gold Award for its Sustainability Program
- 2011 Gold Award for its Sustainability Plan Implementation
- 2009 Bronze Award for its Tree Campus USA Tree Planting Initiative
- 2008 Bronze Award for the Sustainability Week Project (a "Green Partnership" with Virginia Tech, the Town of Blacksburg, and the local citizens group Sustainable Blacksburg).

8. Earth Week 2013

Denny Cochrane applauded the Environmental Coalition for once again planning and implementing Virginia Tech's Earth Week Program. Grace Friedhoff served as the Earth Week 2013 Coordinator. Denny Cochrane noted she did an absolutely outstanding job in organizing 24 events and in creating the website showcasing all activities. Virginia Tech President Charles Steger, Blacksburg Mayor Ron Rordam, the Dean of the College of Natural Resources and Environment Paul Winistorfer, and University Distinguished Professor John Seiler participated in our Earth Day 2013 Celebration Ceremony and participated in the planting of our very special Sycamore Tree on the Henderson Lawn (see "E&SC 042913 Attachment 3 – Earth Day (1).jpg", "E&SC 042913 Attachment 4 – Earth Day (2).jpg", and "E&SC 042913 Attachment 5 – Earth Day (3).jpg").

Later in the week many volunteers planted an additional 10 native trees on that lawn alongside College Avenue which completes the landscaping for the Promenade Project on the Virginia Tech side (see "E&SC 042913 Attachment 6 – Earth Week – Arbor Day Tree Planting Flyer.pdf"). Special thanks go to Lynn Davis, Communications Director in the College of Natural Resources and Environment for handling all promotional material and external media coordination for the Earth Day Celebration, and to Carrie Norman, Communications Manager for the Office of the Vice President for Administrative Services, for doing a first class job in promoting Earth Week 2013 in many on-campus venues.

9. Y-toss 2013

Denny Cochrane announced that Ytoss 2013 will take place May 10-16 during student move-out. Ytoss is a partnership with the YMCA at Virginia Tech and the university. As the name implies, the goal of Ytoss 2013 is to encourage students leaving their residence hall and special purpose housing to consider placing "reusable" furniture, appliances, electronic equipment, fans, lamps, and so forth that they no longer need into prepositioned PODS storage containers for future reuse, rather than simply discarding these items into the trash receptacles whose contents go to the local landfill. The YMCA at Virginia Tech will store those items inside the PODS containers throughout the summer, and will sell these items at a very reasonable price to entering students in the fall during student move-in. Last year the sale was conducted inside McComas Hall. As a point of reference, Ytoss 2012 collected nearly 13.5 tons of reusable material and sold nearly everything collected.

Alya Wilk is the current Student Programs Coordinator for the YMCA at Virginia Tech. Alya has assembled a tremendous student leadership team, and would really appreciate having faculty, staff, and student volunteers. All members and guests are encouraged to consider volunteering for Ytoss 2013. If you are interested, please contact Alya Wilk at 231-3734, or via email at ayla@vtymca.org.

10. Divestment

Catherine Goggins and Drew Gallagher discussed the formation of a student-led "Divest Virginia Tech", a movement that is working to push Virginia Tech to divest its \$600 million endowment from fossil fuel companies as a method of combating climate change and the abuses of fossil fuel extraction. Divest Virginia Tech is part of a larger international movement happening on campuses, in congregations, and in municipalities.

Catherine and Drew shared a “Divest Virginia Tech” video that can also be seen on the internet (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNuQ0gkGLc0>.)

“Divest Virginia Tech” is asking the Virginia Tech Foundation to stop financially backing companies that are based on fossil fuels. Divestment, the purposeful removal of investments from these companies, has been impactful in the past, both economically and socially. The students feel that divestment from fossil fuels is financially wise and aligned with Virginia Tech's values, research, and environmental ratings; they welcomed the opportunity to continue the discussion with anyone who is interested.

11. Open Discussion

No items were raised for open discussion.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned.