

**Campus Environment Committee Final Report**

**Academic Year 2012-2013**

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**Charge 1: Examine the impact of the proposed Innovative Learning Institute on the academic environment at RIT.**

After much discussion, the committee determined this charge to be too vague. It was unclear if the term “academic environment” at RIT meant buildings and space utilization or if it was referring to the learning environment and experience of students. Clarification was requested from the Executive Committee several times but the request never received a response. Therefore the Campus Environment Committee (CEC) was unable to complete this charge.

**Charge 2: Finalize the RIT definition of “sustainability” for AASHE STARS assessment purposes.**

The Sustainability Tracking Assessment Rating System, or STARS, requires participating academic institutions to define sustainability in the curriculum, sustainability focused and related courses, and sustainability research.

The Committee reviewed the work begun by the 2011-2012 CEC as well definitions developed by other participating STARS institutions. The Committee was unanimous in its desire to ensure that ethics and equity be incorporated into the definition.

The central question that most of the discussion focused on was whether the definition should be anthropocentric:

*“...meet the needs of the current generation in an equitable manner without jeopardizing future generations.”*

or biocentric:

*“...meet the needs of the current generation in an equitable manner without jeopardizing future generations of all life.”*

The Committee could not reach consensus on this topic, but a majority supported the anthropocentric definition. Therefore the Committee agreed to accept the anthropocentric version as a working definition in order to complete the initial STARS report; however, it recommends the executive committee review the issue to determine if it should be brought before the full Academic Senate for discussion.

*Working Definition:*

At the Rochester Institute of Technology, the term sustainability encompasses holistic approaches to the understanding and resolution of ecological, economic, social, and ethical problems, with the goal of working within and restoring the natural systems and resources

necessary to meet the needs of the current generation in an equitable manner without jeopardizing future generations.

Sustainability courses provide students with an understanding of the systemic interactions and the integration of economic, social, and environmental connectedness.

Focused courses have sustainability at their core, concentrating on the systemic interactions of economic, social, and environmental systems, or examining an issue or topic using sustainability as a lens. In focused courses there is a strong emphasis on critical thinking, problem identification, and problem solving.

Related courses incorporate sustainability as a distinct course component or module or concentrate on a single sustainability principle or issue.

At RIT, the term research refers to: Creativity, Research, Innovation and Scholarship.

Sustainability research contributes to the understanding of systemic interactions and to economic, social, and environmental connectedness.

**Charge 3: Review the access, awareness, and contributions of museums, collections, galleries, etc. as they inform the cultural environment at RIT.**

It was determined that an inventory of the above mentioned items was needed in order to complete Charge 3. Through the information gathering process, it came to the Committee's attention that RIT Archive Collections maintains an inventory of artwork and collections on campus, with artwork broadly defined as: "unique items and collections of value". Some of the collections reported by committee members were not listed in the existing inventory. That information was shared with Becky Simmons, RIT Archivist, and may be added to the inventory.

The University Art Advisory Committee will be developing a website and app to locate collections, artworks, and exhibition spaces on campus. The Committee believes this project will help increase awareness and utilization of these assets.

**Charge 4: Review how RIT can better utilize/promote its campus resources (managed spaces, wetlands, forests and agricultural fields) to enhance the learning experience of students and visitors to campus.**

The committee has developed a survey with questions based on a map of the campus super block. The intention is to better understand how and with what frequency the various natural areas on campus are utilized. The survey tool is still being finalized and the questions need to be reviewed by the IRB before the survey can be disseminated. Given that the academic year is coming to a close, the survey and this charge should be carried over for the 2013-2014 CEC to work on.

**Charge 5: Consider ways in which the CEC can reach out to campus groups involved in environmental and sustainability initiatives to improve communication and coordination between these groups.**

The committee reviewed the existing communication strategies between campus groups involved in environmental and sustainability initiatives on campus. They include:

*gRIT (GreenRIT)*

[gRITnetwork@yahoogroups.com](mailto:gRITnetwork@yahoogroups.com) is a listserv and networking group for members of the sustainability community at RIT.

*Social Media*

RIT Sustainability maintains facebook and twitter accounts sharing updates on RIT's sustainability initiatives, events, and interesting articles.

*NTID Sustainability Blog*

NTID's sustainability committee maintains a blog with meeting minutes, updates, blog posts and video logs about NTID's sustainability efforts.

Due to time constraints the committee was unable to explore ways to increase coordination and communication beyond existing methods. The committee therefore recommends that this charge also be carried over for the 2012-2014 CEC committee to complete.