Feb. 24, 2014

Southwestern College Sustainability Council

Present: Allison Shields, Allyson Moon, Steve Wilke, Sara Weinert, Jackson Lashier

Steve reported that a company from Lawrence has made a proposal for solar projects on campus. They analyze how much power the solar panels will make, and we pay them over time from the resulting utility bill savings. “We are sitting on the cusp of solar power.” Because we are a non-profit we would not receive some of the tax breaks solar power gives to other businesses. Allyson reported that a bill in the state legislature has been proposed that would give some of these benefits to non-profits. The campus installations would be mostly rooftop panels. At this point it would not save the college money but would be a break-even proposition. Steve and the president are trying to make this an element in the next capital campaign.

Jason Speegle hosted a climate and energy conference.

The recycling project is progressing. The city will collect recycling from behind the student center and from the theatre tech center. This semester we are trying to build a uniform look so that students and others will know where recycling bins are—are they in the right places? Are they properly identified? The goal will be to walk through the plan in April and see how far we are along. We also will do a thorough campaign next fall about what can be recycled, where it happens, etc. Jason plans some educational sessions. How do we educate people about the importance of recycling?

* Labels on containers.
* Recycling containers and trash containers at the same place.
* News release talking about the range of recyclables.
* Demonstration at BuilderCamp. Orientation leader training?
* Allison will talk to Green Team about this educational effort.

We are continuing to struggle with paper waste in our printing. We have an amazing amount of misprinted materials, material going to the wrong printer, etc. We are looking at an additional system that would allow people to swipe cards to print, leading to more accountability in printing choices.

Accomplishments:

* Sustainability minor is now on the website. This is one of the few minors not associated with a major. Rick Cowlishaw is going to try to find a way to bring faculty up to date about that minor. Allison is in the minor because she had almost completed the requirements.
* A student, Anthony Brazilla, was selected for the Sodexo sustainability internship. He is collecting data around sustainability. This helps Sodexo prioritize. Our best return on investment still is conservation rather than on generating energy through new methods. This is difficult to budget and hard to raise money for.

Other items:

* Allyson reported that Grace United Methodist Church is working with Kansas Interfaith Power and Light. Rabbi Mohti Lieber is politically active and a resource for a variety of sustainability issues. We haven’t had students who are politically active with sustainability issues. Jackson suggested this would be a good opportunity for our new political science faculty member to intersect with students. Allyson pointed out it will take a group effort and can’t be limited to one person.

Next meeting will be April 28, 11 a.m., Kibbe Conference Room

Submitted by Sara Weinert