

To: All AF&F Employees

From: Hal Craft

Date: April 11, 2005

Re: Our Efforts to Support the President's Sustainability Initiative

Dear Colleagues:

Some of you may know that April is Cornell Campus Sustainability Month. Many of you may also know that sustainability and environmental issues have been important to me for a long time, as they have been for many of you. For that reason, I have long been gratified by the strong tradition AF&F has had in encouraging and developing environmentally responsible initiatives. It is in that vein, and in the spirit of the month, that I write to you, asking for your continued, even increased, attention to and support of environmental thoughtfulness in the way we go about our responsibilities at Cornell.

To be sure, AF&F has had a long history of managing university operations with a serious eye toward resource conservation and environmental protection and responsibility. Some of these efforts have been pretty straightforward, such as recycling, discharge management, and some energy conservation procedures, but others have been very creative, such as Lake Source Cooling, a potential wind farm, and other, very sophisticated means of energy conservation. I have been enormously impressed, and grateful, that most of these initiatives have been conceived and implemented by staff in the normal course of their work. If you're interested, you might check Cornell's sustainable campus website – www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu.

Currently there are two organized efforts, and a third forming, to help our operational practices to continue to be consistent with our environmental stewardship role within the university. The Kyoto Task Team, chaired by Lanny Joyce, is devoted to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases; the Green Purchasing Task Force, chaired by Eric Ludewig, seeks to identify environmentally responsible products and to make purchasing of them easier and more transparent. A "Green Building" Task Force will be created and led by John Kiefer to consider the environmental implications of our new building designs and construction techniques.

It was also gratifying to me that President Lehman, in his State of the University address in October of last year, highlighted "sustainability in the age of development" as one of "three great challenges for our world...three great opportunities for our university", where Cornell can make contributions that are "uniquely significant and meaningful".

Quoting the President:

“A third challenge concerns sustainability in the age of development. Technological progress and economic development have brought unprecedented levels of material comfort to our generation of participants in the global economy. At the same time, those phenomena have raised a series of new issues that tend to be grouped under the broad heading of “sustainability.”

For a variety of reasons, the current mode of life on Earth cannot be sustained indefinitely. Our technologies consume scarce resources that would ultimately be exhausted. They damage ecosystems in ways that would ultimately prove inimical to human life...

Sustainability problems have a characteristic structure. They require some form of adaptive innovation, some form of substitute approach, to be developed and implemented before time runs out. They require a scheme of gradual transition -- not so quick as to be destabilizing, but not so slow as to be inadequate to the challenge presented. And in the long run they can be solved only with approaches that are economically viable.”

If you'd like to view the speech in its entirety, visit:

http://www.cornell.edu/president/speeches_2004_1029.cfm.

As a result of the president's priority, I expect that sustainability, in its broadest sense, will become further emphasized in Cornell's teaching and research activities. I believe this should give us further encouragement, and additional resources, to continue to pursue our environmental stewardship role. At a very minimum, it should encourage a campus culture that is even more receptive to environmental initiatives, and a broader pool of intellectual talent on sustainability matters from which we can solicit advice and support.

So, in the spirit of Sustainability month at Cornell, could I ask you to do, or think about, a few actions that could make a difference? Of course I'm aware that not all of these apply to everyone – but some do.

- (1) Comply with safety, health, and environmental regulations. This may seem self-evident, but there are still occasions when a “shortcut” causes the release of toxics in a workplace, or inappropriate material to be disposed via a sink drain, dumped on the ground, or into a storm sewer (and hence to the lake).
- (2) Think about the environmental impact of your workplace. For example, can you use recycled products to a greater extent? How about printing on both sides of the page? Can even a small amount of energy be saved by adjusting the lights in your area, or turning off your computer monitor when you leave for the day? Little changes, times 1500 staff members in AF&F, adds up.
- (3) Consider public transportation or car pools if you're not already doing so. You

may have received recently a request to fill out a survey regarding transportation and parking. One of its objectives is to make commuting to and from the campus easier and more efficient. Your suggestions and information can help.

(4) For those involved in design of new buildings or renovations, give environmental considerations equal weight with aesthetics in building design. In the same vein, consider defining economic viability more broadly, that is, there may be circumstances when it is appropriate to pay more to incorporate some environmental features.

(5) If you would like to have input into the ongoing Cornell Sustainable Campus Initiative, contact our intern at sustainability@cornell.edu, or participate in the events scheduled for this month which are listed on the sustainable campus website.

I could go on, but I think you get the point. Anything you can do to help will help the university – and the environment. Many thanks.

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