

2005-2006 Year-End Report
Campus Environment Committee (CEC)
Standing Committee of the University Senate

Charge: It shall examine all aspects of the campus environment, including but not limited to safety, security, facilities planning, state of facilities, and general appearance of the campus. It will consult with and advise the Assistant Vice President for Facilities and Services.

1. Events/Activities of 2005-2006

Faculty and staff member participation has continued to be high throughout the year. Despite date and time changes, the participation of the undergraduate students has not improved. We have been fortunate to have a strong voice from the Graduate Student Organization. The schedule for the new term in September will be developed with active student attendance in mind.

We are also fortunate that the Assistant Vice President for Facilities and Services, our official contact, Barbara Chernow, and the directors under her jurisdiction, as well as the ongoing support from Dr. Richard Mann, Vice President for Administration have all taken an active role in support of the committee. If Barbara Chernow cannot attend a meeting she has always sent a personal delegate. All of the Facilities and Services staff deserve special praise for their efforts of hearing our concerns, seeking our opinion, and collaborating with us on the development of the many and varied subcommittees all with specific outcomes. They have been very open to interactions with members of the Committee; in turn we look forward to continued collaboration with them in the future.

Highlights from the agenda include:

- The University Senate approved in September 2004 a proposal from the Campus Environment Committee for an Environmental Master Plan (EMP). Among other purposes, such a plan is designed to help site future buildings, determine which parcels of land are not buildable, locations of flood plains, and to inventory existing structures. Since that time finances and competing priorities needed resolution before the EMP could be implemented. As a parallel development the state of New York purchased the Southampton Campus from Long Island University, as a Stony Brook University branch campus. This new campus has environmental sustainability as a major academic priority. Since this branch campus was purchased the administration has indicated they will proceed with development of a Request For Proposal (RFP), and to include both the main and Southampton campuses within its scope.
- The acquisition progress of the Gyrodyne property has been completed for placement of the Center on Wireless Technology, a New York State “Center of Excellence,” and related research facilities. Of continuing concern is the development of access roads from the research park in the Gyrodyne parcel to Stony Brook Road, and potentially on to Nicolls Road. One of the original roadway proposals required a road to be cleared through the forested area of south campus, informally called ‘Clara’s

Woods,” to a new junction with South Drive, near Nicolls Road. This road could still be constructed.

- Acquisition of the Gyrodyne property coincides with a greenbelt proposal from the community-based Stony Brook Environmental Conservancy (SBEC). This greenbelt will encompass a five-mile arc of public and private natural lands. The arc begins on campus property at the intersection of 25A and Nicolls Road. The greenbelt proposal is still in development and acquisition of the Gyrodyne parcel is a key link in the chain of properties. With the State of New York’s decision not to purchase the entire Gyrodyne parcel it created a break in the continuity of the greenbelt. Unfortunately, roadway construction began on the Gyrodyne acquisition before a rescue effort could be organized to remove rare and endangered plants from the path of the construction equipment.
- Another key parcel in the greenbelt is the Ashley Schiff Park Preserve. Thirty-six years after its official designation the Ashley Schiff Park Preserve now has a single designated oversight board and a growing network of supporters. The Ashley Schiff Management Committee, which originally included representation from both the Campus Environment Committee and the Office of Facilities and Services, was merged into the Friends of the Ashley Schiff Park Preserve (FASPP). As an oversight committee, the FASPP leadership is to be consulted before any groundskeeping, trail maintenance, or other action is taken that will impact the natural features of this designated parcel. The FASPP will also continue to identify supporters and advocates of this unique parcel and to fundraise for student scholarships and related programming under the current Stony Brook University capital campaign. Marketing materials have been developed and events such as seasonal educational (flora, fauna, and geologic) tours and an inventory of plants and animals are being scheduled. The FASPP Advisory Board continues to attract volunteers that have not been affiliated with the Campus Environment Committee or the University Senate in the past.
- Action on the long proposed campus hotel is still feasible, but continues to be on hold until community action to cease the development is resolved. This hotel, sited on a 1980’s state designated 14 acre ground lease located just east of the Administration Building parking garage, adheres to a floor plan similar to a Courtyard by Marriot. Once built, it will have approximately 130 rooms with a similar number of parking spaces. A continental breakfast will be served onsite. Lunch and dinner will be available at the nearby Jasmine Café, in the Charles B. Wang Center. No construction will be taken by the university on this parcel until the community initiated legal action is resolved.
- Traffic enforcement for faculty, staff, and students has been escalated to respond to an increasing number of parking infractions, problems with excessive speed, and selective attention paid to ‘Stop’ signs by some drivers. Both university Police Chief Young and Assistant Chief, Doug Little, have attended several meetings of the committee. They have indicated there are 21 miles of roadway on campus all requiring patrol and enforcement. They have also indicated that enforcement has generated a corresponding increase in fines. Graduating students are now denied their diplomas until their fines are paid. Faculty and staff can have their wages garnisheed if fines are not paid. Concerns including cross-walk signage and the safety network of blue lights have been reviewed during committee meetings.

- Because of ongoing concerns regarding traffic safety on campus the university contracted with Wiley Engineering to engage in a comprehensive traffic study. That study culminated in a public hearing that was held in the Student Union on March 29, 2006 and the pending development of a final report. Traffic signage, speed deterrents, pedestrian safety, and methods to ensure the smooth flow of traffic were all included in the study.
- The university has recently implemented a significant reconfiguration of the main entranceway to the campus. The intent was to enhance traffic flow and to minimize the bottleneck effect caused by backups at the guard station. A traffic circle or roundabout had been proposed for the area nearest the Administration Building which forms a junction of four roadways. Space limitations prevented the ability to construct a circular feature there, but one has recently been installed at the intersection of Circle Road and Marburger Drive. It is too early to accurately gauge the acceptance of this traffic feature by the general public.
- A 1.4 acre parcel of land near the front entranceway was not included in the original reconfiguration plans. Barbara Chernow asked that a subcommittee be created to develop a landscaping plan for this parcel. The subcommittee has had several meetings and native plants were recommended for this area. Instead of having staff or vendors actually do the plantings once purchased, a recommendation was made to have it done in conjunction with Earthstock and use the assistance of the Pride Patrol teams. Cost estimates are still needed for purchase of the plants.
- By request of the Executive Committee of the University Senate, the committee was charged with developing a comprehensive policy regarding smoking on campus. Several inconsistencies were evident with the current policy. There is a county-enforced 50 foot no-smoking radius around building entrances on east campus, but only a 15 foot perimeter at west campus building entrances. The current policy also allows for smoking in some of the dorms with a roommate's written permission and existence of a 'smoking hut' adjacent to the hospital, and smoking lounges in the Long Island State Veterans Home. In response to these inconsistencies, and after a few false starts, the committee, based on public health and equity concerns, recommended that all smoking should be banned on campus within a three-year period of time. (See Attachment A).

The three-year delay would allow the Admissions office the time to alert prospective students that Stony Brook is a smoke-free campus and to ensure that vendors, patients, and campus visitors are also informed. Once approved, during the interim period all smoking would be moved away from building entrances into centrally located no smoking areas. The only exception to this policy would apply to the permanent residents of the Long Island Veterans home. The residents do not have the ability to leave and smoke elsewhere. The proposal was presented for informational purposes during the May 1, 2006 meeting of the University Senate. It will be presented again for a vote during the October 2006 meeting of the University Senate.

Independent of these efforts SUNY-Upstate has already implemented a smoke-free policy in 2005 with little opposition. SUNY Chancellor Ryan has also asked that all

SUNY dormitories and student residences become smoke-free by fall 2007. Health, safety, and maintenance, were all cited as reasons for his recommendation.

No Change from Previous Years

- Concerns remain with pedestrians limited to walking in the streets on East Campus due to the lack of sidewalks, and the dangers associated with a bike and pedestrian path through the HSC loading dock. A special subcommittee was formed to address these concerns, but an implementation plan is still being developed.
- The campus hotel proposal continues to voice controversy. Many are outspoken in support of the hotel, but not in its current state-designated location on an unbroken forested parcel of land. The land lease, confirmed by the state legislature during the 1980s, cannot be moved to another location without legislative oversight. No action will take place pending the resolution of a community initiated lawsuit to stop development. When approval is given, construction costs will be paid by the developer and rent will be paid to the university as a landowner by the hotel management.
- To promote a better understanding of issues facing the committee all meeting minutes from the 2005-2006 academic year have been placed on the Campus Environment Committee webpage of the University Senate website at <http://naples.cc.stonybrook.edu/Admin/usenate.nsf>.

2. Noteworthy Changes of 2005-2006

Many of the changes that have occurred have had a positive impact on the campus environment. The Friends of the Ashley Schiff Park Preserve (FASPP), as a new entity, was created as an advisory board to promote environmental education, to raise funds in conjunction with the current capital campaign, and to create a list of individuals that support these endeavors. It recently absorbed the jointly administered Ashley Schiff Management Committee (ASMC).

The Gyrodyne property acquisition has been completed through the use of eminent domain. Construction has already begun on the new parcel. A road cut has recently been added from the construction area on the parcel to Stony Brook Road. Concerns are still being raised as to whether the road cut will be extended across the forested area of south campus to intersect with South Drive, thereby disturbing the remaining flora and fauna in the area.

Many older buildings are still undergoing renovations, and the hospital parking lot has been modified in conjunction with major hospital renovations. Once completed, these projects promise to provide the university community with a substantial increase in the ease of access, quantity, quality and diversity of services.

Unfortunately, as was the case reported by the committee last year, the construction of buildings and the accompanying parking expansions are significant threats to the natural campus environment as well, bringing the issue of careful campus planning and "smart growth" to the forefront. Seemingly poorly coordinated and short-sighted planning are

continuing factors in campus sprawl. This trend results in destruction of contiguous forest tracts and the permanent loss of the wooded nature of the campus and their pedagogical role as outdoor laboratories and classrooms. Because of the irreversibility of these losses, and the impending clearing of substantial amounts of forested area in South Campus relating to the single access point for the Gyrodyne property, and for the planned campus hotel, the timing of an Environmental Master Plan is more crucial than ever.

As a positive note, on December 5, 2005 the University Senate approved a request from our committee to increase the number of members to the same as the other standing committees. This action gave the committee three additional voting members. There is one new academic member each from Natural Sciences, Arts & Humanities, and Social & Behavioral. The number of professional staff representatives and students remains the same.

3. Recommendations

Specific recommendations follow from these concerns and in some cases continue recommendations made in the current Stony Brook University Five-Year plan (2005-2010).

- a. A motion was approved during the first fall 2004 meeting of the University Senate for a comprehensive campus-wide Environmental Master Plan (EMP). The plan has not yet been implemented. However it should soon be posted as an RFP, and have potential environmental review of both the Southampton and Stony Brook campuses of the university. In addition, the proposed campus hotel is on hold pending legal action to stop development. This comprehensive plan should include "forever wild" set-asides of forest, "conservation/recreation development" of other forested areas, and include the environmental, historical, and recreational use of existing and newly acquired lands.
- b. A comprehensive transportation plan that considers alternative modes of transportation with equal weight to the construction of new parking should be developed. The construction of new parking spaces should only be undertaken after expansion of non-automobile modes of transportation has first been explored. A campaign should also be expanded strongly promoting the use of South P lot, the NuRide commuter program <www.NuRide.com> and the campus buses for visitors and commuter students.
- c. Continued capital investment should be made in the recycling program along with specific initiatives to improve the effectiveness of litter pickup are still necessary. It should also be noted that as significant achievements have been made, substantial work remains. For example, the recycling program has been making steady gains in the rate of recapture of paper and containers. A proposal had been made then rejected by the administration to have a waste transfer plant installed on campus, possibly at the South P lot to promote additional recycling. There is an academic justification for this function to be centralized. At this time there are three academic waste management programs on campus but none for laboratory facilities. Such a recycling center would help address both the academic and the practical need for such a facility.

d. Full implementation of the campus-wide indoor and outdoor smoking ban is also recommended. As a major employer, the university negotiates on an annual basis with major insurance carriers on behalf of the faculty, staff, and students. As a health care provider, preventable smoking related health conditions must also be treated at great expense. Continuing tolerance of the detrimental health aspects of second hand smoke, inconsistencies with the smoke-free areas at building entrances, and a chronic problem with smoking related litter justifies the need for a single equitable policy for all faculty, staff, students, and visitors.

e. Overall the members of the Campus Environment Committee seek the opportunity to fulfill their advisory function and to offer advice and commentary at the earliest opportunity in the planning process. Particular values to stress are disturbing the fewest trees possible to achieve the goal and to recognize that as an institution of higher education the physical environment is as important as the classroom environment for research, pedagogy, and being a good neighbor to the broader community.

This report is compiled by Bill Dethlefs, Campus Environment Committee Chair, and Mary Woodward, Vice-Chair, based on communication with committee members representing various campus constituencies, from archival materials, and from meetings with university administrative officials. Comments from the community are welcome (wdethlefs@notes.cc.sunysb.edu and mwoodward@notes.cc.sunysb.edu).

Attachment A

Recommendation to the University Senate Executive Committee on a campus no-smoking policy, as initiated by the Campus Environment Committee, on April 28, 2006

In response to the request by the Executive Committee of the University Senate to reconsider previous recommendations made regarding this policy, the following recommendations are made:

Effective fall 2006 smoking will be limited only to pre-designated areas on campus. These areas are yet to be determined, but will allow for existing limitations as noted for dormitories, the hospital, and the Long Island Veterans home. In a time frame not to exceed three years a total ban on smoking is to be implemented campus-wide. This ban will follow a policy recently implemented by SUNY Upstate Medical University that affects all faculty, staff, students, patients, and visitors.

Justification: A ban on all smoking removes two problems with the existing policy; the varied size of the non-smoking radius at campus entrances (15 feet versus 50 feet), and the problems associated with smoking-related litter. It also addresses the role that the university plays as both a health care provider and major employer with an obligation to help contain both the costs of providing quality health care and negotiating lower health insurance premiums for faculty, staff, and students, along with the development of wellness programs. The continuing tolerance of any smoking behaviors on campus can no longer be justified.

A copy of the SUNY Upstate 'No Smoking Policy: Smoke-Free Campus' policy statement and press release are attached for your review.

Campus Environment Committee 2005/2006

Charge: It shall examine all aspects of the campus environment, including but not limited to safety, security, facilities planning, state of facilities, and general appearance of the campus. It will consult with and advise the Assistant Vice President for Facilities and Services.

This proposal was presented to the full University Senate on May 1, 2006 for informational purposes. It is to be presented again during the October 2006 meeting of the University Senate for a vote.