

No Longer Waiting for Someone Else To Do It: A Tale of Reluctant Leadership
Peggy F. Barlett. In, *Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change*.
Peggy F. Barlett and Geoffrey Chase, eds. Cambridge: The MIT Press. 2004.

Chapter Profile: Emory has 6000 undergraduate students in Arts and Sciences, 5000 graduate students in graduate programs and professional schools in law, business, theology, nursing, medicine, and public health, on a campus of approximately 630 acres.

Frustrated, I waited over three years for someone else to step forward to galvanize campus action toward sustainability at Emory University. Though valuable efforts were underway—in recycling, in reducing the harm of new construction—no one was fostering a more profound campus-wide questioning, based on the awareness that our daily lives contribute to the degradation of the earth’s natural systems. The campus ethos seemed untouched by the front-page news of Atlanta’s declining air quality, water pollution, traffic congestion, and deforestation. In the summer of 1999, a decision to build a disputed road through beloved campus woods generated anger that simmered for months among faculty who normally expressed no environmental concern. For me as an anthropologist, the question of how my workplace might change was connected to a larger question about how the transformation of Western industrial society towards sustainability could come about. How do we step forward to so radically different a future?

Margaret Mead taught us that cultural change is led by small groups of thoughtful people, working together. Small groups at Emory were already working on university committees, and an Environmental Studies Department was just forming, yet broad opposition to “the road” had no mechanism to come together, no way to reflect upon the difficult trade-offs involved in the decision, and no way to channel more constructively our love of the woods and concern for the regional environment. Reluctantly, I decided to step forward to see if it were possible to nurture the formation of small groups of thoughtful people to work toward campus change. This chapter is an abbreviated account of three years of work¹, and I include my doubts and disquiets as well as my delight, in the hope that others who hesitate will find the encouragement to step forward into their own unwelcome spotlight.

If change comes from small groups, then how we foster small groups matters. As faculty, administrators, and staff, few of us think about such things, nor do we act in accord with the philosophy that change comes through relationships. A university such as Emory is really “a small city,” with complex connections and disconnections among graduate, undergraduate, and professional schools. With no faculty union or cohesive tradition, the institutions to undertake such cultural change were not in place. I could only dimly perceive the need for some preliminary organizational steps to build trust, share information, and find visible projects to raise environmental awareness.

In this chapter, I will recount how several new organizations emerged organically over time at Emory and describe the steps we took to foster effective group process. I

begin with the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Environmental Stewardship and its two major projects: efforts to restore a small campus woodland, adjacent to the Quadrangle, and a campus-wide Environmental Mission Statement. The Ad Hoc Committee is a broad coalition of faculty, students, staff, and alumni, and its efforts were directed towards the larger campus ethos and operations. Other projects followed, directed more at faculty and the teaching and research dimensions of sustainability: the Faculty Green Lunch Group and the Piedmont Project for curriculum development. Though there have been bumps in the road in each of these activities and their continuation is not guaranteed, with hindsight I can say that the rewards have been enormous, the personal growth substantial, and the responses of others both inspiring and gratifying.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Environmental Stewardship

I first heard about Indiana University's Council on Environmental Stewardship at the 1999 Orion Society Conference "Fire and Grit," an inspirational summer gathering of nature writers and grassroots groups from around the country. The language of "stewardship" resonated for me. It was an important concept in my childhood religious upbringing, and it seemed to me that it would provide legitimacy in the Emory context, where campus activism is rare. Emory is a Methodist institution, with a well-known Theology School, and no one can argue with the assertion that we are stewards of valuable resources, not only our monetary endowment, but also lovely forests, several creeks, and the gentle hills over which campus buildings are clustered. The Orion Conference also introduced me to the Penn State Campus Environmental Indicators website. Once I saw its detailed discussions for improving campus operations and clear recommendations for "first steps" and "later steps," I realized the rationale, scientific knowledge, and practical information there would let us begin at Emory. I thought, "With this to fall back on, we *can* move ahead."

The controversy over "the road" created the urgency to establish an organization to facilitate information sharing and action. I began by floating the Indiana University Council on Environmental Stewardship idea with about a dozen colleagues and friends. They were positive, but urged that the group keep a low profile, using the label "ad hoc committee," in order to seem less threatening. Heartened by a sense that such a group might be useful, I then sent out an email of invitation to all the faculty, staff, and students that I and my friends thought might be interested (about 70 people) and asked each to pass the word on. My first hurdle was the decision about who should sign the email. None of my friends was interested in helping to organize the group, so I decided it was more honest to go ahead and sign it alone. My hope was that a group would emerge to share leadership, and my name would fade into the background.

On a late September afternoon in 1999, 21 people gathered to explore the possibility of an Ad Hoc Committee. My second hurdle was how to facilitate the meeting. If the group was diverse, I was afraid people might be wary (this concern turned out to be valid), and I was anxious that students and staff not feel dominated by faculty who love to talk. I wanted participation to be broad, to release the creativity of

the group. With considerable trepidation, I decided to take a strong facilitator role and to use ice-breaker techniques that I had learned in group dynamics workshops.

As the group gathered, I passed out scrap paper and asked them to jot down responses to two questions: “What concerns do you have today about environmental issues at Emory?” and “What is the vision you’d like to see for the future—what are some pieces of how you would like it to be?” When it was time to start, I shared a brief introduction about my sense of the ferment on campus and the need to educate ourselves. I explained the Indiana University model and wondered whether an organization to promote environmental stewardship was right for Emory at this time. I emphasized that environmental engagement need not be a Puritan hair shirt, but it might be an opportunity for us to move in some satisfying directions. Then, I posed two questions for the rest of the meeting: who are we and what do we want to do? I suggested that we go around the room with introductions and in addition to sharing names and university affiliations, that we share something from our list of concerns. This whole Introduction took about five minutes, then shifted the focus to the rest of the group. Some people spoke calmly about air pollution or population growth, but others shared with deeper personal language about loss of biodiversity or how the university’s use of resources was personally painful.

Then, in order to break up the somewhat stiff interaction in the room, I asked that each person stand up and find someone in the room they did not know, and requested each pair to spend five minutes introducing themselves a bit further and sharing some part of the second question about their visions for Emory’s future. To my relief, people accepted this unusual exercise, and the room babbled with voices. I was pleased to see a stiff faculty member conversing comfortably with an undergraduate student whom I believed knew very few people in the room. When we reconvened to brainstorm about next steps, the discussion was lively, most people contributed, and I think these two exercises helped to build greater comfort within the group. One volunteer offered to create a listserve for future communication (which worked very well), and another urged that we meet again to get to know each other better.

At the second meeting three weeks later, we skipped the second group-building exercise, but we did introduce ourselves again in a more lengthy manner. Attendance was about the same with some new faces; more undergraduate and graduate students came, fewer faculty, and several new staff members attended. We also rearranged the furniture to put chairs openly in a circle, rather than sit behind a U-shaped table, which seemed to make interaction more relaxed.

Looking back, I realize that our second meeting was an important lesson to trust the wisdom of the group. I had been reading business and organizational development literature that emphasized systems thinking and learning organizations, but I had considerable skepticism about the stories I had read (Capra 1996, Jaworski 1996, Katzenbach and Smith 1994, Senge 1990, Wheatley 1992). That day, the discussion ebbed and flowed for over an hour, exploring what we might do as a group and on which dimensions of Emory’s functioning we might focus first. Time was running out, people would soon start to leave, and no consensus was emerging. I was nervous that attendance

for a third “planning” meeting would be low. A landscape architect from Facilities Management was talking about some efforts on campus and was using official names for streets and locations—names that are not in common use. Faces were blank, so I stopped the flow of the conversation to check one of the terms: “How many of us know where Baker Woods is?” Only three people raised their hands. The speaker shifted gears a bit, tension eased, and then a graduate student from public health offered the suggestion that we get someone to give us a tour of some of these forests. “How can we think about good stewardship of our resources, when we don’t even know what they are?” she asked. Bingo. We’d found a clear next step. The group loved the idea, I knew of a prestigious Biology professor, recently retired, who would be perfect to lead us, and the energy in the group rose. We little imagined that such a simple suggestion would lead to powerful and long-lasting results.

Just for the record, it may be helpful to note that at the time we also planned several other foci of action that were never realized. I also worried about our failure to coalesce around one coherent and visible project. In addition, John Wegner, botanist in Environmental Studies, had spent part of most days in the summer of 1999 watching and guiding the removal of trees and the construction of “the road,” but few knew of his ameliorative efforts. I think now that there would have been benefits had the group found a single, clear focus, but our diversity encouraged a broader range of activities to emerge later. John’s decision to engage intensively with Facilities Management and construction personnel, however, built trust and later support for environmental issues. I also was disappointed that a team of senior faculty colleagues did not emerge to join me in those early meetings. I thought about giving up; though it sounded like fun, I was not sure that walking in the woods was heading us in a useful direction. A friend whose own time was already over-committed gave me encouragement: “Just keep calling the meetings and a year from now things will be different.” Dubious, I filed that advice away.

Reluctant Visibility

There were lots of reasons I felt I was not the appropriate person to lead campus environmental change. As a social scientist, I knew only a little about ecology, the history of the environmental movement, and current issues such as global climate change or acid rain. My anthropological teaching about Latin America led me to feel reasonably competent about issues such as deforestation in the Amazon, but I didn’t know beans about light bulbs or even what is a VOC (volatile organic compound). When engaging other academics in debates about carbon trading or genetically modified foods, I found it hard to be persuasive. Even in the realm of behavioral change, presumably closer to my social science training, there were worlds of applied psychology, organizational development, and persuasive homiletics that might be brought to the service of environmental causes, but were closed books to me. Surely, I felt, other scholars whose work was more centrally related to environmental issues would stand up and lead us, and I could play an energetic but supportive role.

My 23 years of experience with Emory politics and governance, in committees and as Department Chair, also made me hesitant to step outside my disciplinary expertise. Emory has a tradition of relatively weak faculty governance, and our committee system is

cumbersome and often ineffective. Open faculty meetings have not been locales for thoughtful dialogue, and many good ideas have failed to gain support. The voices of a curmudgeonly, cynical minority are loud, and standing up for positive movement—even, a campaign of action—that might involve the daily lives of peers is virtually unknown. In addition, women’s voices are less often heard in public discourse at Emory (though in a series of dramatic changes, that pattern has shifted in recent years). I felt that a woman leader—and a liberal social scientist to boot—would be less effective in the relatively conservative Emory context.

At the same time, my intellectual interest in agrarian economic development was intrigued by the emerging international paradigm of “sustainable development” and noted the ways it harmonized with fundamental anthropological understandings. Active in building a neighborhood watershed alliance, I was also stimulated by learning more about the city and bringing social science insights to bear on urban environmental dilemmas. As the Fall semester rolled on, and other, more likely leaders were too busy or unwilling to step forward, I remained convinced that the time was right for the Ad Hoc Committee to contribute to environmental movement on campus. I listened to another friend who argued that campus action needs a point person, and that person should be me: “No one else can do it right now.” With the privilege of tenure and strong networks to various parts of the university, I decided that if someone like me was unable to set aside for a time the mandates of “publish or perish,” who could? Slowly, I built up the courage to step out front and began to articulate more publicly the vision for Emory and to accept a more visible role in campus publications and in dialogue with decision-makers.

Lessons from Grounding Ourselves in Place

On a misty Saturday morning in November, 1999, with a vee of geese honking overhead, a dozen individuals drawn from almost every professional school and division of the university met for our first woods tour. The walk was magical, the learning about the place where we work was rich, and the experience out-of-doors was the kind of “time-out” that builds camaraderie. It also greatly deepened our appreciation for the Baker Woodlands, a three-and-a-half acre patch of woods we toured (which I had personally referred to in the past as “the gulch”).² With over 100 plant species, it is a lovely, relatively healthy piece of Piedmont forest. But it faced serious invasion from English ivy and streambed erosion from new pavement upstream (a new parking deck and an addition to the library were the main culprits). The tour leader, Bill Murdy, expressed his dream of major ivy removal to protect the rare wildflowers now slowly disappearing.

There was some enthusiasm for the idea of an ivy pull, and the whole Ad Hoc Committee embraced it. New people came forward to help with publicity and preparations, and in February, 2000, eighty people gathered on a Saturday morning to load truck after truck with ivy. Several more such restoration events, together with planting of native azaleas and other shrubs, led to a glorious Baker Woodland in Spring, 2002, in which many new blooms of trillium, oxalis, sweet shrub, and wild azalea amazed us all.

Regularly scheduled woods walks became an important way to have fun while learning important environmental lessons. Each time, new people joined the group, drawing folks from all over the campus. But the tour leaders' time was limited, and I mused about ways to reach larger numbers. Someone suggested a self-guided walking tour, and so I asked eight experts from around the campus to write a small pamphlet, and all of them gave up precious August days to work on it (Barlett 2002). With the support of the Office of the President, we published a brochure that outlined a walking tour of ten campus sites of particular environmental importance (both challenges and successes). [The brochure is available on line: www.environment.emory.edu].

Our experience supports the work of Davey, Earl and Clift (1999), who found that learning about local impacts of environmental processes is the best way to engage university stakeholders. Several classes and new student orientation activities now use the walking tour, and many participants report that it profoundly shifts their awareness of the campus world through which they walk each day. During one tour with administrators, we stood in a parking lot and learned the way creek organisms are harmed by the heated water of summer rains. The person standing beside me exclaimed, "Wow, I never thought about that." Her eyes widened, "But, of course, it would do that." A pause: "This tour is so *important*. We need to find a way to bring this to the Board of Trustees." The brochure is now in its second printing and has become an important tool for environmental awareness on campus.³

The Wisdom of the Group, Part II

Building on the camaraderie of the woods experience, the Ad Hoc Committee began to take stock of university environmental functioning, using the Sustainability Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) developed by University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (Calder, Clugston, and Rogers 1999) [www.ulsf.org]. To strengthen the dialogue in our first SAQ discussion, I felt we needed a good range of faculty, staff, and students to be present. I made several dozen personal calls to people I thought would have valuable information and whose participation in the conversation might energize planning. About 30 people showed up, and it was the first time that many of us became aware of the substantial efforts already underway in several university units. Alternative transportation had programs to support free bus passes for employees, carpools, van pools, electric vehicles, and natural-gas-powered shuttle buses. Recycling was gaining administrative support. An important baseline study of Emory's forest resources had been completed years ago, and its continued effectiveness in guiding campus planning was discussed. A limited range of appropriate courses were found in various schools.

No consensus emerged, however for next steps for the Ad Hoc Committee. Toward the end of the meeting, a student spoke up in frustration, "We can't really assess how well Emory's doing because we don't really know where we want it to go." Others supported this idea, "Yes, we need a policy!" A subcommittee was born to study other schools and return with a draft environmental policy. Though the minutes for February show that many other efforts were underway (plans to attend a regional Second Nature workshop, an Earth Day vendors' fair for office managers, an art show), the decision to

move toward a policy—later renamed the Mission Statement—had far-reaching impacts on campus awareness.⁴

Building grassroots awareness was an important next step for the Ad Hoc Committee, and the Mission Statement gave us the opportunity to engage with more constituencies, strengthening the process of cultural change, and discovering more about how different sectors of the university see environmental issues. Our hope was that even if the formal adoption of the Mission Statement floundered from political opposition for some reason, the *process* of consultation would raise awareness, itself a useful step (Mumford 2001).

To begin drafting our mission statement, the guiding subcommittee of eight (four faculty, two staff, and two students) used the International Institute for Sustainable Development's Policy Bank to study examples from other schools [<http://iisd1.iisd.ca/educate/policybank.asp>] (Mumford 2001). We consulted with the whole Ad Hoc Committee on general length and tone, wrote a draft text, and then revised it with input from the larger group. With the revised draft in hand, we solicited formal support by email for the mission statement process from a wide range of Ad Hoc Committee supporters, senior administrators, faculty, and student leaders. As the names first trickled, then poured in, we copied a list of 37 supporters on the back of the draft text. We learned quickly that in our consultations, people scanned the names right away. It was reassuring to them that a university Senate president, distinguished faculty in Law, Public Health, Medicine, and Theology, as well as several key Facilities Management leaders and graduate and undergraduate students were willing to be publicly supportive.

The Mission Statement Consultation Process

In retrospect, our decision to use a consultation meeting format to build support for the campus-wide Mission Statement turned out to be very important, though we also made some mistakes. Over eight months, the consultation process involved twenty-two formal meetings with groups from all parts of the campus: Food Service, Campus Life, Libraries, Human Resources, Business Management, Facilities Management, Purchasing, plus the campus-wide Employee Council and Student Government Association. Meetings at Emory's two-year affiliate, Oxford College, were held separately with faculty, staff, and students. Support was requested from all relevant University Senate committees. In general, the Ad Hoc Committee asked for 10-30 minutes in an already-scheduled meeting of the unit, usually with its leaders or management staff. We did not find an easy way to meet with the rank-and-file of most units.

One place I was comfortable taking the lead was in using my longevity at the university, my status as a senior faculty member, and my professional ties with people all over campus to gain access to busy meeting calendars. I decided to meet privately with all the Deans because I knew a number of them personally, and I solicited their advice about how best to consult with their faculty and promote environmental action within their schools. In retrospect, for those Deans and administrators who did not know me personally and who were less aware of environmental issues, it would have had more impact to meet with a heavy-weight group of Ad Hoc supporters, rather than one person.

The Deans advised against discussing the Mission Statement draft in a regular, full faculty meeting, recommending instead an open invitation to a lunch or breakfast gathering over a previously-circulated document. We followed this advice, and in most cases, a faculty member within the school convened the gathering, and anywhere from half a dozen to twenty faculty in each school discussed the draft text. Suggestions for wording changes led to some valuable revisions—and more names of supporters.

The consultation process itself, developed from the ideas of Karen Mumford in Environmental Studies and Mary Elizabeth Moore in Theology, involved five steps, and their sequence turned out to be critical to the surprisingly positive response. First, the two to four Ad Hoc Committee members presented a brief “preamble,” introducing the history of the Ad Hoc Committee and how the Mission Statement came to be written. We meanwhile passed around a sign-in sheet asking for names and email addresses. Then, introductions were requested to legitimize participation from all present. In addition to saying name and area of responsibility, each speaker was invited to “name an environmental issue that concerns you personally, maybe something here in Atlanta or at Emory or something international.” The person responsible for the preamble would then model what we were looking for: “I’ll start. I’m Karen Mumford from the Environmental Studies Department, and an issue that concerns me today is the loss of trees here in Atlanta as we continue to grow so fast.” We found that virtually everyone had something heartfelt to say about environmental concerns. By the time introductions were finished, we had no need to make a case for why Emory should adopt a Mission Statement—the case was made for us!

After the preamble and introductions, our third step was to ask how the unit had already responded to environmental concerns. To our surprise, most units were proud of several actions and were delighted to tell us about them. We, too, were gratified to learn of these activities, and it shifted our sense that “Emory hasn’t done much” to “We’ve done more than we thought.” Karen wrote up all these activities, and we tried to get campus publications to do stories on them, but with only a little success.

We found it important next to read the whole Mission Statement aloud, because its rhetoric was appealing, and a review of its points helped focus discussion. Time for comments was short or long, depending on the meeting’s agenda, and then we closed by distributing a copy of the “Tufts Dining Strategic Plan” from *Greening the Ivory Tower* (Creighton 1998:292-299). This handout provided a very clear example of how the food service at Tufts University took a general mission statement and translated it to specific outcomes, strategies, and action steps. Several administrators found it helpful to have a concrete example of where a Mission Statement might lead. At an appropriate point during the meeting, we asked for support and invited new signatories. To make that process even easier, we sent a follow-up email to all who attended the meeting, thanking them for their time, asking for any further thoughts, and offering information on how to subscribe to the Ad Hoc Committee’s listserv. We actually got only a few new participants in this way, but it seemed to help spread awareness of the group and its activities.

Some of the consultations were friendly conversations, and people seemed curious and open to the Ad Hoc Committee's presentation. Other groups were defensive or wary. Our open style and the fact that the consultation started with lots of listening on our part usually shifted the atmosphere. Some groups were hurried and distracted, but discovering that colleagues were worried about air or water quality—and maybe even cared passionately, suffering along with an asthmatic child or a vulnerable elder—encouraged the group to pay more attention. Most consultations created an atmosphere in which participants recognized, “These issues are *important*.”

One of the surprises for me in the consultation process was that our work sometimes brought relief. Several people came up to us afterwards and expressed gratitude that “someone is finally *doing* something” or “this is so overdue, thank you for bringing up these issues.” Many workers at Emory have, in fact, heard worrisome environmental news and want to act. Learning of the existence of the Ad Hoc Committee was a relief to the worry or guilt they feel, and we tried to follow up with these individuals to offer opportunities for them to act. It was affirming to me to learn there were others in unexpected quarters of the university who were waiting, too, for someone to take the lead.

Spring Semester of 2001 saw the completion of the consultations, and the Mission Statement was placed on the University Senate's agenda for a formal vote of adoption in February. One mistake we made was to streamline the presentation to the Senate in deference to its crowded agenda. I was delegated to be the sole spokesperson, and we thought our careful grassroots work and support by two Senate committees and by the Senate President (and the informal signal of support from both the President of the university and the Provost) meant the vote would be easy. Our list of supporters now had 90 names drawn from all parts of the university, including endowed chair professors and a vice president. Unexpectedly, a representative from the Medical School, a unit of the university that had shown little interest previously in the Mission Statement and that had declined two requests for meetings or consultations, read a lengthy statement in opposition. My naming of all the groups that supported the Mission Statement was outweighed by this strong counter voice. The Medical School argued that affirming environmental priorities might inhibit the rapid physical plant growth they felt necessary for their future academic excellence. This threat was not balanced by any particular awareness of the links between health and the environment or benefits to the Medical School of embracing a greener approach to hospital operations or even Medical School curriculum. It was also clear that our decision to make a quick presentation left some Senate members without any concrete ideas of what kinds of environmental change might ensue from adopting the document. After some difficult discussion, the vote was tabled until the March meeting.

Several Ad Hoc Committee members, and especially those with ties to the Medical School, then began a series of hurried visits with key department heads, and there were intense negotiations over the wording of the document. In retrospect, we should have tried harder before the Senate vote to find Medical School leaders for formal consultation or informal dialogue. The March meetings produced several wording

compromises, the new document was reluctantly approved by email by the Ad Hoc Committee supporters, and a new presentation was prepared for the Senate. This time, the Mission Statement effort was described by four individuals, and the truly broad nature of the supporting coalition was more evident. Examples from green computing, solar power options, and SUNY Buffalo's green office forums illustrated positive examples of change. The vote was nearly unanimous in favor, and the Senate went on to ask the President to appoint an implementation Task Force, to recommend a management system to turn our fine rhetoric into reality. Exhausted, we ended the Spring semester with a late-afternoon celebration and a sense of real progress from two years of Ad Hoc Committee effort.

Follow the Energy: The Faculty Green Lunch Group

While the woods walks, ivy pulls, and the Mission Statement effort were emerging as useful avenues to build campus awareness, I was troubled that only limited numbers of faculty and students were involved. On many campuses, students provide the real energy toward campus greening, but student environmental interest was not strong at Emory in those years. Faculty mentorship is critical to supporting student action, which suggested the need to foster faculty involvement. Though perhaps some eighty faculty were quietly or openly supportive of the efforts of the Ad Hoc Committee, most felt their scarce time could best be used for research and teaching.

Discouraged, I discussed this dilemma with Howard Frumkin in Public Health, and he suggested we "go where the energy is" and form a "faculty environmental interest group." Lance Gunderson, the head of Environmental Studies, pledged his support and the cost of box lunches for two meetings. The Provost kicked in an equal amount of money, which allowed us to set up four dates for the Spring, 2000, semester. The Faculty Green Lunch Group was born (Barlett and Eisen 2002). The lunchtime format spanned an hour and a half, bridging two teaching periods. The format evolved into a twenty-minute presentation by a faculty speaker about current research or teaching related to environmental issues, followed by discussion. Attendance was most commonly between 15 and 20, though once as high as 29. Slowly, a collegial group solidified, leading to broader efforts to affect teaching and research than I would ever have dreamed.

Creating community requires that we know and trust each other. With such a diverse group of faculty, I pushed a tradition of introductions with queries. Though some faculty have gently suggested we can dispense with "the queries," I have just as gently encouraged us to start each meeting by saying our names and departments and answering an open-ended question that allows for self-reflection, creativity, or humor. For example: "What was something you feel grateful for today?" *Getting my lawn mowed after three weeks!* "How did you engage with the natural world over the break?" *I finally got to see the 400-year old poplar in North Carolina.* "What was something interesting you learned recently?" *That 17% of undergraduates think "a lot" is one word* (Barlett and Eisen 2002:5). Putting all voices out into the room allowed shyer people to contribute equally and lets us get to know one another without the competitive posturings that can sometimes afflict faculty discussion groups. The way faculty chose to introduce

themselves also acknowledged the whole person, with family travails and outdoor experiences, as well as intellectual interests.

The dynamism of the discussion and the loyalty of the following—even among those who have teaching or committee conflicts and cannot come regularly—was unexpected. “It’s really a community,” said one. Faculty were interested in being educated on issues, especially by peers who are willing to talk across disciplinary boundaries. Once a semester, the topic focused on a teaching dilemma, and these discussions tended to have the highest turnout. We also had 30 people show up for a post-lunch tour of one of Emory’s new “green buildings.”

The Piedmont Project at Emory

The Faculty Green Lunch Group became the seedbed for the Piedmont Project, Emory’s effort to “green the curriculum.” I was mulling over the question of how to foster deeper engagement with environmental issues in the curriculum when I went out to Arizona to participate in the Ponderosa Project workshop in May of 2000. The possibility of a course requirement for all students was nil at Emory. We had just completed a painful curriculum revision and inserting a new requirement would not happen soon. I liked the way Northern Arizona University wove sustainability issues into the fabric of intellectual life. Would my colleagues at Emory be willing to engage in two days of lectures, discussions, and pedagogical exercises? Would enough people be interested in changing their courses?

Arri Eisen, faculty member in Biology and head of the Science and Society Program, joined me to draft a proposal for a summer program for 2001, to support the development of twenty new courses (or course modules), and we shared it with the Green Lunch Group. Nearly a dozen people expressed immediate enthusiasm. The University Teaching Fund supported the proposal, and what came to be known as the Piedmont Project was born. In the two years we have run the project so far, we have followed closely the NAU model, and Geoffrey Chase and Paul Rowland facilitated the first workshop. The two-day workshop and kick-off dinner are held immediately after graduation. Three or four resource experts describe how environmental issues connect to their fields, and many small break-out group discussions allow the twenty participants to get to know each other, broaden their thinking about both content and teaching methods, and reflect together about what are our ideal educational outcomes.

A very enjoyable part of the workshop are the woods walks each day after lunch, led by Eloise Carter, an enthusiastic ecologist of the Piedmont. The workshop is held at the edge of campus, with nearby woods to showcase local flora, the damage of invasive species, and water pollution issues. Once again, our deeper connections with the *place* where we live and the joy of spending time outdoors not only strengthens environmental knowledge, but deepens the connection among group members.

A follow-up meeting in August involved a fieldtrip to Oxford College and some fascinating aquatic ecology in the campus pond. “It was an intellectual feast,” said one

participant. “And the part where we looked through the microscope and saw all that stuff, it was fascinating. I could have done that for hours.”

Enthusiasm for the Piedmont Project was very strong. When asked what they liked best, most participants echoed the person who said, “The chance to learn from a wonderful group of Emory colleagues.” “I liked the group, the creativeness of the other people about their courses,” said another. “I didn’t realize I was going to enjoy the group so much. It was a really big thing for me,” added a third.

Why has the Piedmont Project generated such enthusiasm, especially among the majority who had not been involved before with campus environmental issues? There are probably as many reasons as there are participants. A strong format and great facilitators are crucial, as well as the fact that participants’ own expertise is affirmed, and they move toward environmental issues from the security of their own specializations. It is also an opportunity to return to our original intellectual curiosity and love of learning. Some like stimulating debate about issues, but probably all appreciate the rare chance to have fun in nature with colleagues—and to get (modestly) paid for it.

The satisfactions of joining our daily educational work with personal values and discovering that those commitments are shared is an important dimension of the Piedmont Project, echoing the gratitude and relief expressed during the Mission Statement consultations. Said one faculty member, “It matters to me that I sense a certain moral commitment [among the participants].... Everyone who signed up for this workshop believed these things really matter. It let me throw myself into it.” Another commented that what stood out for her was “meeting people who were passionate...this was an aspect of [friends] I hadn’t known before. [It] was eye-opening...a community of like-minded people.” And another said, “Maybe how we identify as a person and as a professional are separate, and maybe with environmental issues they’re brought together. Maybe we have a belief in the importance of these issues, so we put aside chasing the resume, recognizing that ‘it’s something bigger than you.’” A scientist recalled, “We were all part of a movement, pulling together in something important...friendship with action.”

The Piedmont Project will probably need another five years to reach a critical mass to embed sustainability issues firmly in the curriculum. For the second and third summer (2002, 2003), new faculty leaders have come forward to help. With able staff support from Science and Society, my Biology colleague and I provide continuity without being overworked. Each new participant broadens campus awareness. Some course revisions have fostered new research directions and professional opportunities, unforeseen in the beginning of course revision. Secure funding is a challenge in a time of budget constraints, but the Green Lunch Group and the Piedmont Project seem to have worked as vehicles to allow engagement in the university’s sustainability efforts. Though it took work to get the ball rolling, many faculty now have loyalty to these efforts, and it builds legitimacy for environmental change. The affirmation and enthusiasm of colleagues has also been a source of renewed energy for its leaders.

Conclusion

Each of the environmental activities devised to transform Emory's culture has served to restore some of the intrinsic rewards of the academy—collegial engagement, connection to socially relevant issues, and the intellectual curiosity of the academic life. Building community and establishing, over and over, trusting personal relations is crucial. Emory still lacks a coherent university-wide program of environmental efforts (though the President's Task Force has now made far-reaching recommendations), but the respectability of advocating for environmental concerns is vastly different now, and many independent "green" activities are bubbling.

In retrospect, the Ad Hoc Committee built momentum by sweating over ivy, sharing our wonder at mature forests, and working on the Mission Statement, highly visible early successes. I think many of us genuinely enjoyed the diversity of the group, with engineers from facilities management, students with different majors, lawyers, theologians, and administrators with various portfolios, all coming together to share information and try to make a difference. We found, from the library to purchasing, from recycling volunteers to Environmental Studies faculty, there is a hunger to connect. We also relished the kinesthetic, experiential learning about the place where we are located. Grounding ourselves in the campus spaces has been a delight.

One component of the success we achieved was the signals of support from the Provost, the President, and several Vice Presidents and Deans, who at several pivotal points helped reassure some who feared high-level disapproval of our efforts. Affirmation from the top, joined with massive attention to the grassroots, was important at Emory. Several administrators provided funding at crucial junctures, which reinforced the viability of initiatives. Also important was that over a decade of work by the Senate Committee on the Environment, Facilities Management Division, Alternative Transportation, Recycling, and Purchasing laid the groundwork for campus awareness of willingness to act.

It will take persistence to build on these early steps, and I hope new leaders will continue to emerge. But I no longer worry that having only one person to start the ball rolling is a poor start. I am ready to step back from the limelight, but I am no longer a reluctant leader, and I know that someone has to do this basic administrative and group maintenance work. Someone has to reserve the meeting rooms, facilitate the agenda, send out the notices, and think about the long term. Someone has to create the space in which dialogue can occur, and model the trust in the wisdom of the group. I have learned that if we go where the energy is, the group will expand. It has also been a lot of fun.

What are the lessons for me? I have learned that things that seem at first to be a failure may have some later payoff. I also learned to let go of ideas when the energy for them has died. There may, actually, be a benefit to a non-scientist in a leadership role, in that it decenters the place of the "expert" and invites broader participation. It certainly keeps me learning more science! I have also learned it is important to keep articulating why we need to be better stewards of our resources, to reinforce our resolve and to highlight these values for those who have yet to attend to them. This repetition of our

purpose builds the need for action, and I have learned that in spite of my shortcomings, I can sometimes nurture a group voice, and I find enormous satisfaction in watching environmental efforts unrelated to the Ad Hoc Committee unfold across the campus.

Where did I find ways to sustain myself as a leader? I went to a lot of workshops, learning from other schools. I took to heart advice from a Second Nature conference to “find five people you really enjoy being with and gather each month.” At least twice a year, I take quiet time to get out my list of long-term goals and reflect on how we are doing and what would be the most fruitful next steps. I have not been afraid to use my own money from time to time. I think of it as a support to myself to hire a student helper or skip the hassle of getting a department budget to cover an expense. Also important, I have let in others’ affirmation for what we are doing. Friends who choose not to join activities might once have disappointed me. Today, I am grateful for their words of support, and I listen less to the curmudgeons and cynics who believe that nothing can happen. I also try not to feel naïve as we celebrate the baby steps. We need to feel the satisfactions of our movements forward. After two years of making campus action my professional work, I began to feel a tug towards research and writing, of which this volume is a part. Of course, I am aware that the privileges of tenure make my decision to shift the nature of my “work” more possible for me than for many others. In the end, only our internal wisdom knows whether we have been good stewards of our “wild and precious life” (Oliver 1992,94). For me, there is no doubt that the joyful learning and the satisfactions of campus change are worth the costs. Ultimately, we cannot know the results of our actions, and it has been important to me to act with as little attachment to outcome as I can manage. As the ivy has receded, the Mission Statement adopted, the Piedmont Project established, I am aware that things could have turned out very differently. All we can do is seek the steps that seem wisest. We each contribute our few drops to the flowing river of cultural change.

1. Parallel to the efforts described here are several major developments in Facilities Management that resulted in three “green buildings” on campus and the adoption of LEED guidelines for campus construction (Wegner 2002). Though I have emphasized here the various efforts to build grassroots groups and to change the Emory ethos, it is possible that Emory’s LEED construction has had even more long-term impact to raise environmental awareness because of the widespread media attention it received. Other environmental efforts that cannot be included in this discussion are the founding of Friends of Emory Forest, the development of the Lullwater Management Plan and the No Net Loss forest policy, and liaison with Peavine Watershed Alliance.
2. Baker Woodland is adjacent to the main quadrangle of the undergraduate campus of Emory. The forest affected by the new road is much larger and at the eastern edge of campus, across a major thoroughfare.
3. The walking tour effort was actually part of Millennial Year events which included a major all-campus workshop (“Nurturing a Green University”) led by Second Nature, and also conference appearances by David Orr and E.O. Wilson.
4. The Second Nature Southeast Regional workshop stimulated immediate action toward incorporating LEED principles into the Whitehead Medical Research

Building, then under construction. This building has now been awarded silver LEED certification.

References Cited

- Barlett, Peggy F. 2002. The Emory University Walking Tour. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* 3(2) 1-5-112/
- Barlett, Peggy F. and Arri Eisen. 2002. The Piedmont Project at Emory University. In *Sustainability in Higher Education* edited by Walter Leal Filho. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Capra, Fritjof. 1996. *The Web of Life*. NY: Anchor.
- Calder, Wynn, Rick Clugston, and Thomas Rogers. 1999. Sustainability Assessment at Institutions of Higher Education” *The Declaration* 3(2): 1, 17-18. Washington, D.C.: University Leaders for a Sustainable Future.
- Creighton, Sarah Hammond. 1998. *The Greening of the Ivory Tower*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Davey, Andy, Graham Earl and Roland Clift. 1999. Driving Environmental Strategies with Stakeholder Preferences—A Case Study from the University of Surrey. In *Sustainability and University Life* edited by Walter Leal Filho 47-66. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Jaworski, Joseph. 1996. *Synchronicity: the Inner Path of Leadership*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Pubs.
- Katzenbach, Jon R. and Douglas K. Smith. 1994. *The Wisdom of Teams*. NY: Harper Business.
- Mumford, Karen G. 2001. Developing a Campus-Wide Environmental Policy: “It’s All About Process...”. In *Conference Proceedings, Greening of the Campus 4: Moving to the Mainstream*. 267-270. Ball State University, September 20-22, 2001.
- Oliver, Mary. 1992. *New and Selected Poems*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Senge, Peter M. 1990. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. NY: Currency/Doubleday.
- Wegner, John. 2002. Emory University, Building Design. *Campus Ecology Yearbook, 2001-2*. Washington, D.C.: National Wildlife Federation.
- Wheatley, Margaret J. 1992. *Leadership and the New Science: Learning about the Organization from an Orderly Universe*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Susan Barlett, JoAn Chace, Geoffrey Chase, Rebecca Chopp, Anne Farber, Howard Frumkin, Kathie Klein, Julie Mayfield, Marc Miller, Mary Elizabeth Moore, Karen Mumford, Bobbi Patterson, Laurie Patton, Debra Rowe, Sonya Salamon, Steven Sanderson, and John Wegner for inspiration, critiques, and suggestions for this chapter.