

2004-2005 Year-End Report
Campus Environment Committee (CEC)
Standing Committee of the University Senate
December 2005

This report is compiled by Bill Dethlefs, Chair; Mary Woodward, Vice Chair, Professor Robert Aller and members of the Campus Environment Committee.

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 2004-2005

Faculty and staff member participation, particularly by a core group, has been high throughout the year. Despite changes to the schedule student participation has not improved. The schedule for the new term in September will be developed with active student attendance in mind.

We are fortunate that the Assistant Vice President for Facilities and Services, Barbara Chernow and the directors under her jurisdiction, as well as the ongoing support from Dr. Richard Mann, Vice President for Administration have taken an active role with the committee. If Barbara cannot attend a meeting she will send 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. They have been open to interactions with members of the Committee; in turn we look forward to continued collaboration in the future. Regular updates on the progress toward the acquisition of the Gyrodyne/Flowerfield property, the status of the proposed campus hotel, and the front entrance reconfiguration have been welcome additions to the committee meetings.

Highlights from the agenda include:

- The approval in September 2004 by the University Senate of a proposal from the Campus Environment Committee for an Environmental Master Plan. Among other purposes, such a plan is designed to help site future buildings, determine which parcels of land are not buildable, demarcate the location of natural flood plains, and to inventory existing structures. The proposal was approved unanimously during the full Sept. 13, 2004 meeting of the University Senate. Teresa Durkin a principal with Andropogon Associates introduced the concept of a campus-wide environmental plan during a presentation to the CEC on February 26, 2004. Her comments, and her article "The Role of the Landscape in Creating a Sustainable Campus," stressed the importance of universities being stewards of their lands and the need for a comprehensive Environmental Master Plan (EMP) to guide future land use planning. This concept was embraced by the committee, and the idea was tested during the final meeting of the University Senate on May 3, 2004. The comments were favorable to such a plan and suggestions were made to expand the plan to include historical and recreational uses for the campus property, in addition to specific environmental considerations. Supporting documents are posted on the CEC website.

- Monitoring the acquisition of the Gyrodyne property continues for placement of the Center on Wireless Technology, a New York State “Center of Excellence.” Of concern, if the property acquisition cannot be completed in a timely manner alternative siting of the Center on Wireless Technology will be explored. Placement within the area at the South P Lot is one probable alternative.
- 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. Its realization depends on willing cooperation between the various landholders. The concept has been formally endorsed by the Brookhaven Town Planning Board Advisory Committee on Open Space. The wooded arc begins on campus property at the intersection of 25A and Nicolls Road. This proposal is still in development and acquisition of the Gyrodyne parcel and University participation are a key link in the chain of properties. Kettle Hole Park, on the east side of Nicolls Rd., would also be considered a portion of the largely continuous greenbelt.
- Another key parcel in the Greenbelt is the Ashley Schiff Park Preserve. Thirty-five years after its official designation the Ashley Schiff Park Preserve now has both a designated oversight committee and a growing network of friends. The Ashley Schiff Management Committee (ASMC) includes member representation from both the Campus Environment Committee and the Office of Campus Operations and Services. As an oversight committee, its membership 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 potential impact of feral pets on the preserve was examined and communication was opened between the CEC and campus groups who operate these programs. As of the Fall 2005 semester this committee was absorbed into the Friends of Ashley Schiff Advisory Board.
- The Friends of the Ashley Schiff Park Preserve (FASPP) was developed this year to generate a list of supporters of this unique parcel and to fundraise for 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 a ‘BioBlitz’ (a 24 hour inventory of plants and animals) are being planned. The FASPP Advisory Board has attracted new volunteers that have not been affiliated with the Campus Environment Committee in the past.
- Action on the proposed campus hotel is still feasible, but is on hold until community action to cease the development is resolved. This hotel, sited on a 14 acre ground lease just east of the Administration Building parking garage, adheres to a floor plan similar to a Courtyard by Marriott. 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, which opened in the Charles B. Wang Center in September 2004. The committee had written a position paper against the site of the hotel dated February 9, 2004, addressed to Dr Mann with copies sent to Barbara Chernow, Brent Lindquist and President Kenny citing an overtaxed infrastructure and an aversion to cutting down the woodlands at the front entrance. The position paper also recommended alternative sites on campus for the hotel but was told by Dr Mann that it would be too difficult to change the state approved land lease that was established in the 1980’s and to adhere to the new rules and regulations associated with current land leases.

- Parking on campus, particularly West Campus, remains problematic. There are a number of open lots on West Campus, which are free for permit-holders. However, the single parking garage adjacent to the Administration Building is often at capacity. In addition, the State of New York requires all parking garages to be self-supporting through user fees. As was discussed over the last year the number of free or subsidized parking spaces campus-wide is an item in union contracts. Therefore new parking structures cannot be easily financed. The South P Lot has a surplus of parking spaces and is free. Faculty, staff, students, and visitors should be encouraged to use it whenever possible.
- Of major concern to members of the Committee was implementation of a questionable entrance roadway reconfiguration, approved in 2001 by senior administrators. The rationale for the reconfiguration of the main entranceway originally was stated as due to a high incidence of traffic accidents. Administrators then stated they wanted to enhance traffic flow and to minimize the bottleneck effect caused by backups at the guard station. Members suggested that better signage would be a superior alternative than razing trees that block the campus from Nicolls Rd. Bob Aller and Malcolm Bowman provided documentation as well as calling for a traffic circle which would have been less ecologically damaging. The CEC members voted to have the entrance design reevaluated and possible alternatives considered in a more open forum before beginning construction. Documentation has since been provided by Greenman-Pedersen, an engineering firm that the main entrance area constituted the most dangerous intersection on campus, although alternative designs to achieve a safer intersection were not explicitly compared. Before the configuration began, a rescue effort was granted to remove valuable plants prior to roadway construction. Plants under study by a student in Ecology and Evolution were lost as were mature oaks that were part of a simultaneous expansion of Stadium Road.
- Pedestrian safety: In recent months, the university has added additional signage at each stop sign and crosswalk, repainted all crosswalks on campus, hired traffic engineers to conduct an evaluation of traffic safety issues on campus and investigated the addition of other traffic safety devices. Prior to this the committee members had recommended a combination of both signage and enforcement to control speed and stop sign violations. In related concerns on East Campus; due to the lack of sidewalks, the need to reroute the campus shuttle bus away from the entrance to the hospital, and plans for a bike and pedestrian path through a loading dock, a subcommittee was formed to address these concerns. (Notes from a draft position paper are posted to the Campus Environment Committee website dated Dec. 1, 2004).
- Besides those listed above, additional subcommittees included waste management and recycling, permeable asphalt, and an effort to support the naming of a grove of trees in honor of Richard Oringer, DDS, 1992. (Dr. Oringer was a faculty member in the School of Dental Medicine, who was killed in a tragic accident at the intersection of Nicolls Rd and South Drive). It was then learned that the SUNY system no longer permits memorial set-asides without a substantial gift to the University. Instead, a memorial garden at the School of Dental Medicine will be named in his honor.
- Committee endorsement was also given to the newly enhanced community outreach website called "In the Greater Community." This campus-based website is found at <<http://www.stonybrook.edu/sb/community>>. It is designed to highlight a wide range of activities of community interest, including planned construction.

- To promote a better understanding of issues facing the committee meeting minutes have been placed on the Campus Environment Committee webpage of the University Senate website <<http://naples.cc.stonybrook.edu/Admin/usenate.nsf.>>

2. Noteworthy Changes of 2004-2005

Many changes have occurred this year at Stony Brook University that impacted positively on the campus environment. The Friends of the Ashley Schiff Park Preserve (FASPP), as a new entity, has an advisory board developed 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. The jointly administered Ashley Schiff Management Committee (ASMC) installed an informational kiosk at the main trailhead of the Preserve. The proposed campus hotel and the Gyrodyne property acquisition are both advancing toward closure as new assets to the campus environment. Many older buildings are still undergoing renovations, and the HSC parking lot for faculty and staff of the Health Sciences building has been expanded in conjunction with major hospital renovations. These projects promise to provide the university community with a substantial increase in the quality and diversity of activities.

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, bringing the issue of careful campus planning and "smart growth" to the forefront this year. Seemingly poor coordination and short-sighted planning are continuing concerns with campus sprawl. This trend results in destruction of contiguous forest tracts and the permanent loss of the wooded nature of the campus. Because of the irreversibility of these losses, and the impending removal of substantial amounts of forested area for a single access point to the Gyrodyne property, and for the planned campus hotel, the timing of an Environmental Master Plan is more crucial than ever.

3. Recommendations

Specific recommendations follow from these concerns and in some cases continue recommendations of the current Stony Brook University Five-Year plan (2000-2005).

a. A motion was unanimously 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 by the administration. It has been deferred pending closure of the siting of the Gyrodyne acquisition. Exact location of the buildings cannot be determined until the land is accessible. In addition, the proposed campus hotel is on hold pending legal action to stop development. The final EMP should include "forever wild" set-asides of forest, "conservation/recreation development" of other forested areas, and include environmental, historical, and recreational use of existing and newly acquired lands.

Authorization for an EMP would compliment the Stony Brook University 2000-2005 Five-Year plan regarding Campus Facilities, particularly in the sub-category, *6.4 Improve*

Campus Appearance. Two bulleted items and their expected year of completion are as follows:

- Develop a master plan for the location of additional campus buildings and the development of campus grounds. (2003)
- Begin implementing the master plan for the location of additional campus buildings and the development of campus grounds. (2005)

b. Many of the most significant roadway construction projects of the last year were planned in 2001 or before. This includes the reconfiguration of the front entranceway and expansion of Stadium Road. Although the business necessity was justified by the Administration, the timely opportunity for comment by the Campus Environment Committee was limited.

c. A comprehensive transportation plan that considers alternative modes of transportation with equal weight to the construction of new parking. The construction of new parking spaces should only be undertaken after non-automobile modes of transportation are given further consideration. A campaign should also be developed strongly promoting the use of South P lot and the campus shuttle buses for visitors and commuter students.

d. 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 though 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 and 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 remains 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.

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, consistent with past resolutions by the University Senate, and to recognize that as an institution of higher education that the physical and natural 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, 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).

Appendix 1

From "**The Five-Year Plan: 2000-2005**". Stony Brook University, Office of University Communications, Administration 144, Stony Brook NY 11794-0605

Listed below are the goals for Facilities and Services to be completed in 2004 and 2005.

6. CAMPUS FACILITIES

VISION

Stony Brook will be an attractive, accessible, and safe campus. Recent landscaping has greatly improved the appearance of the campus, but much remains to be done. It is still difficult to navigate the campus by car and on foot, making improved signage and the redesign of campus entrances high priorities for welcoming visitors. Improved parking and transportation will alleviate annoyance.

6.1 Improve campus safety and accessibility

GOALS

The Stony Brook campus will be safe and accessible. It will be effectively protected from physical, chemical, and radiation safety hazards.

SPECIFIC ACTION

- Implement the plan to improve the accessibility of all campus academic and recreational facilities for students and staff with disabilities. (2005)
- Develop and implement a plan for improving the convenience, appearance, and safety of campus walkways. They should follow natural pathways and be adequate for the expected volume of traffic. Two heavily used areas that need special attention are the wooded area between the Engineering and Math-Physics parking lots, and the South Campus. (2004)
- Develop and implement a comprehensive Environmental Health and Safety policy. (2004)
- Inventory potential environmental hazards on campus and significantly reduce identified hazards. (2005)

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE:

Vice President for Administration, Vice President for Student Affairs, Vice President for Research

6.2 Improve campus signs and directions

GOALS

Stony Brook will have new entrances, signage that is attractive and effective, and a new campus map.

SPECIFIC ACTION

- Improve the principal entrances to the campus to make them more attractive and less confusing. Extend this planning to include important on-campus locations, such as the intersection of North Loop Road and Student Activities Center Road, the intersection near Roosevelt and Kelly quads, and the exit from the Dental Care Center parking lot. (2004)
- Make building entrances more obvious and welcoming, with structures, planting, and/or signage to let people know they are in the right place. Entries should be labeled with directional names (e.g., "West Entrance"), to make it easier to identify building locations. Entrances to the Health Sciences Center are of particular concern. (2005)

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE:

Vice President for Administration

6.3 Implement an effective transportation system and improve parking

GOALS

Stony Brook will have an effective transportation system and parking facilities that are adequate to meet demand and pleasant to use.

SPECIFIC ACTION

- Implement the plan for improving existing transportation facilities and expanding parking throughout the campus. (2005)

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE:

Vice President for Administration, Executive Director of University Hospital

6.4 Improve campus appearance

GOALS

Stony Brook will be an attractive campus with welcoming outdoor spaces for students, faculty, and staff. Landscaping around the co-generation plant and near the railroad station will make University structures less obtrusive to the neighboring community.

SPECIFIC ACTION

- Implement the plans for campus landscaping and for maintaining and improving the exteriors of campus buildings. (2005)
- Complete the top-priority campus-appearance improvement projects identified every year. (2005)
- Develop a master plan for the location of additional campus buildings and the development of campus grounds. (2003)
- Begin implementing the master plan for the location of additional campus buildings and the development of campus grounds. (2005)
- Develop and implement a coherent plan to improve the area around the co-generation plant and between the railroad station and the playing fields. Hide unattractive and noise-generating structures by a well-designed barrier of trees. (2005)

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE:

Vice President for Administration