

## DRAFT

### **PROPOSAL FOR SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS TASK FORCE ENGAGEMENT AND STUDENT/FACULTY SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION**

(Re: Sustainability Educational Effort on Campus Exemplified by Prof. Craig Gerlach's course on Anthropology and Regional Sustainability to be held Spring Semester 2004.)

As a contributing scholar to the concept of sustainability at the UAF campus and as faculty advisor for the Sustainable Campus Task Force, I would like to add some perspective to the proposal to use this class as an experiential and hands-on effort to get students fully engaged in the concept of a sustainable future. An examination of the tools readily available at UAF and in Alaska for such an educational and professional effort is also helpful. To give a deeper background for this exploration I also look at the original philosophical base for the land grant university system.

The land grant university system was part of the establishment of the Homestead Act and is a uniquely American idea. It is rooted in the concept that giving universities, particularly state universities which are aimed at educating the middle class and rural, agricultural population, the tools to help them succeed and use the best fruits of university research to make their lives better and to improve their standard of living. In order to do that, the use of land grants, actual grants of land rights to universities, to enable them to sustain, by whatever means they saw fit, the university by either selling or renting the land for use in perpetuity to help them continue the education of the people.

The University of Alaska's Fairbanks Campus has always been the land grant campus, although our land grant has been minimal and bears more scrutiny (see for instance a study on our university's land grant history by Prof. Terrence Cole). The major point of bringing up all this philosophical history is that the land grant university is founded upon what is essentially a sustainable concept. Indeed, the Natural Resources Fund, which is now under the auspices of the University of Alaska Foundation and President Hamilton, is the operating financial vehicle that has been developed with the income from the University's land grant sources.

It is with this in mind, that I suggest that it would be appropriate to establish funding mechanisms for several aspects of sustainability education at the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus. One should be a support of courses at the upper division, undergraduate level, such as Prof. Gerlach's course. Another method would be to fund graduate students in sustainability to prepare a professional skill set for professionally trained people who can serve as scientifically empowered sustainability experts for managing the State's resources. This argument is entirely consistent with the use of the land grant concept and the application of land grant income to the furtherance of study of sustainability for both the campus and regionally throughout the State of Alaska. This will become ever more important in the future as fossil fuel resources

decline along with availability of that revenue, and it becomes necessary for us to make a transition to a renewable based, sustainable economy.

Several steps have been taken toward sustainability education, and some educational efforts are ongoing. These further steps need to be taken so that the funding mechanisms for supporting such education are also provided to bright young students, and to recruit and hire faculty who can purvey the information required for these students to help them succeed in a sustainable world.

Finally, it should be clear to any scientifically literate, ecologically informed faculty at a university that this is not only an important step, it is a crucial step in preparing the future scholars and leaders of our civilization. We must give them the tools to work toward a sustainable future. An unsustainable future is not a future. It is a dead end. The only future choice we have is to work toward sustainability. That is why these proposals at this time in the University's history are crucial to our success and crucial to the success of our students, and Alaska.

Let me suggest some funding levels as a start for such efforts. For the undergraduate students, I suggest course support and continuing development of student support for concentrations in the area of sustainability. This would have to be a cross-disciplinary effort, as sustainability is really a wide-ranging common denominator base for many disciplines of study at the University. For this purpose I suggest: two \$5,000 undergraduate traineeships would be excellent. Likewise two \$10,000 graduate level traineeships in sustainability issues should be pursued. These could be made available through the Natural Resources Fund in collaboration with IGERT faculty or other faculty members who have substantial ecological or northern studies focus to their work.

Finally there is the concept of building or enhancing facilities on campus to make them more sustainable. For this I suggest the use of the BP petroleum income money that the University Foundation handles. The reason I point to that money is that it's directly given to the University from fossil fuel resource income. The highest possible use would be to use this income toward development of a sustainable campus. It is not clear to me what level of support is necessary or appropriate at this time but I put that "on the table" as a very important and feasible means of actually beginning a building process toward a sustainable campus. Since this is a nascent idea, all of these suggestions are open to further development. I am providing a faculty leadership role in bringing them to the attention of administrators, funding agencies, and particularly the UA Foundation through the Natural Resources Fund, a source of sustainable money into the future, for a sustainable future.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Seifert  
Professor, UAF

19th November 2003  
cc: Craig Gerlach